

Enduring Voices

Women of the Tennessee Valley: 1861-1865



Nancy M. Rohr

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was originally intended to cover Huntsville and Madison County women in the era of the Civil War, but it grew far beyond those boundaries.

The ability to write and record their thoughts differentiated these few Southern women from most. A woman's family might not define who she was, but she was clearly viewed as a product of this upbringing. Likewise, a woman's husband almost never expressed in writing who she was, even as the War progressed, however, life events cannot be separated from the background of relatives and in-laws, husband, and children, so closely intertwined during those years. It is difficult not to include every woman's name and the names of her children, but genealogy is nebulous, particularly for African Americans.

Unfortunately, the day-to-day personal lives of these women still must be left to guesses and informed assumptions; their writings comment, for the most part, on events they witnessed first-hand or were told to them. No attempts have been made here to recreate or embellish the daily horrors of war – sounds of guns and cannons, smells of wounded and dying men, animals and perpetual dust in the air, or the sights of blood, filth, death, and bloated bodies. Those atrocities should never stray too far from a reader's mind as one makes their way through this work. During the Civil War, the unthinkable became daily occurrence.

Many people kept lines of understanding and communication open and available to me. Lee Freeman at Florence Lauderdale County Public Library entered the fray with such eagerness. David Malbuff, a direct descendent of Priscilla Larkin, was generous enough to share her journal and his insight into their family. Deep thanks to Louise Huddleston and Doris McDaniel at the University of North Alabama in Florence; Athens Limestone County Archivists Rebekah Davis and April Davis; in Moulton, Wendy Hazle of the Lawrence County Historical Society; Jennifer Petty and Cookie Sharp at the Scottsboro-Jackson Heritage Center.

Thanks always to Deane Dayton without whom there would be no book. Also, thanks to Thomas Hutchens, David Lily, Brenda Youngblood, and Shalis Worthy, of the Heritage Room at the Huntsville Madison County Public Library. Continued appreciation goes to Linda and Ralph Allen, Donna Dunham and Betty Brown as valued sounding boards, and my family who listened so patiently to my stories of discovery. Alex Rohr began to edit this work, then Abby Dunham spent untold hours editing and offering insightful viewpoints.

We owe all the women who wrote something down – a journal, a letter, a memoir, or a scrap of paper with pencil or pen – a debt of gratitude. They never could have imagined that, over 150 years later, anyone might consider reading, or even studying, their words of pain, hope, fear and faithfulness: their enduring voices.

INTRODUCTION

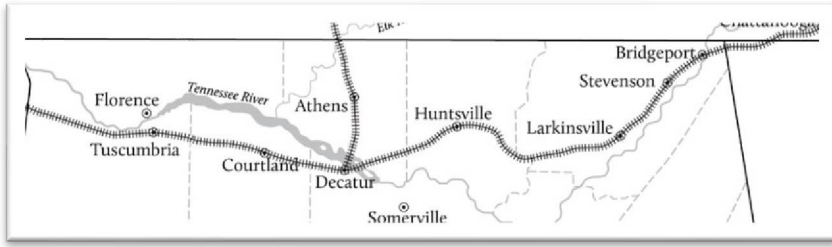
It Requires Courage to Endure

Until recently, Southern tradition has continually reaffirmed that a woman should be noted publicly only at the time of her marriage and death. In his writings, Judge George Washington Lane could not bring himself to reveal even that much; his mother's cemetery marker reads simply, "My Mother."

Southern women are often portrayed as the weaker sex, seldom expected to do anything praiseworthy. This myth of Southern womanhood, so dramatized in popular novels and films, was applied mainly to the upper classes, in which a woman aspired to be known for her beauty, gentleness, modesty, and domesticity. She might be idolized by her family as she faithfully labored toward the humble sphere allotted her in heaven. Her reward would not be found in this world. This idealized woman was sheltered to such a degree that her husband or a male family member was required to accompany her publicly at all times, ostensibly for protection. An upper-class woman never travelled alone, nor even appeared on the street unescorted. The woman who did would likely find that her neighbors no longer considered her a lady at all.

Local histories have treated Southern women – girls, teens, single maidens, married, poor, widowed, free, enslaved – no better than any history related to the United States. Given that American Civil War studies averaged at least one new published book per day for many years (there are enough memoirs, autobiographies, biographies, diaries, re-enactments, slick-paged coffee table books, maps of troop placement and battles to bring to mind the Grand Ole Duke of York who marched his men up a hill and marched them down again), accounts of women's lives during this tumultuous time have been on the short list of books in print until contents of recent studies were revealed.

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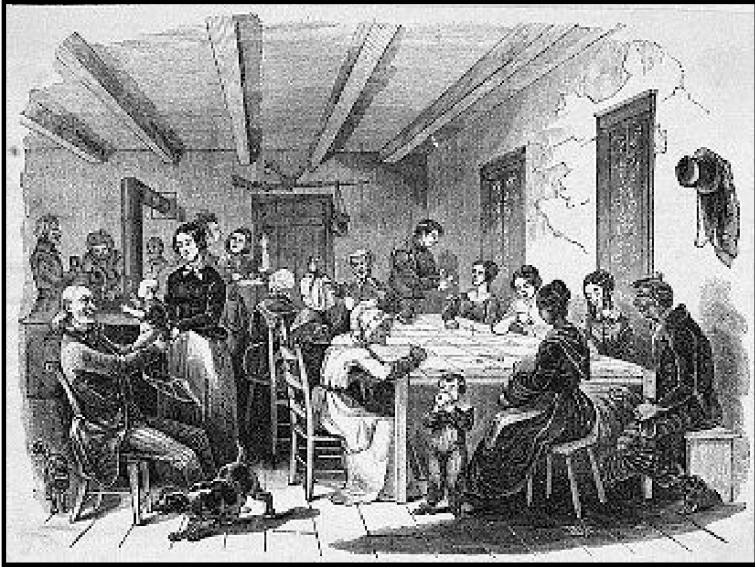
North Alabama During the Civil War

Consider the recollections of Judge Thomas Jones Taylor of Madison County, Alabama, which are typical of his day. There is no question that they serve as a fine chronicle of his times, leaving the reader eager for more stories and details, but he barely acknowledged the presence, let alone *role*, of women during the Civil War. He first mentioned the wife of early settler Joseph Criner who made bread for John Hunt as he prepared to locate the Big Spring. She is not even identified by name. Taylor admired Mrs. Coons and Mrs. Barclay of old Virginia and was particularly fond of William Fleming's "amiable and accomplished" wife, Sally. These sophisticated, myth-like aristocratic women were worthy of note.

Judge Taylor gave detailed descriptions of pioneer men with limited tools (hoe, axe and rifle) performing the nearly impossible tasks of hunting, girdling trees, cutting timber, splitting rails, raising cabins, driving oxen, cutting, chopping, grubbing, planting, hoeing, and harvesting. The end result of this strenuous labor produced the necessary first crop that would see them through the season into the next year: corn. That difficult year, essentials in very short supply like salt, coffee, tea, flour, meal, and sugar, were traded for valuable items with animal skins and corn whiskey, an agreeable byproduct of corn.

In those early years, Taylor claimed that settlers "did not eat much idle bread." With the men busy with backbreaking labor, however, what were pioneer women doing? Enough, as it turns out, to dispel the notion that they were "idle" in any sense. The fact of the matter is that pioneer women and their children rode or walked every step of the way beside men along countless miles of unknown wilderness. Once at their destination, a woman established the household in the back of a wagon, lean-to, or under a grove of trees until a cabin was completed. With time and labor, the log cabin might eventually become a log house. The pioneer woman's hands were busy preparing and cooking food, as limited as it was, with invaluable tools of her own: skillet and kettle. The days of a pioneer woman included any combination of washing, scrubbing, weeding, hoeing,

picking, shucking, preserving, cooking, spinning, weaving, sewing, and quilting.



Pioneer Women Quilting

This woman helped her neighbor in childbirth and, when possible, received help when it became time to deliver her next baby. She might be in an isolated setting for childbirth in some instances, with only her husband and children to help. (Many women delivered their babies alone.) She tried to teach her growing family manners and social behavior, moral values, and, in some cases, to read and write. She sat up with the sick and prepared the dead for burial. All the while, she wondered about the family she'd left back home; would she ever see, or even hear from them, again?

Judge Taylor's account is not an exception in the history of American women. Taylor refers to his mother as Miss Johnston, she "with her kind loving face," but, once again, with no first name. Women's first names were seldom legally relevant; men had all rights to their wives' inheritances. In this case, the Taylors did well with two or three slave families from her legacy in Georgia.¹

¹ Judge Thomas Jones Taylor. *History of Madison County Alabama and Incidentally of North Alabama*. Eds. W. Stanley and Addie S. Hoole. (University, Ala.: Confederating Publishing, 1996, Rpt.), *passim*.

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It was accepted as the man's role to keep accounts, pay taxes, vote, serve in the militia, prepare his will, and hold property (land and enslaved people). A closer look reveals that a number of women were involved in the legal system and court records. In her extensive study of early land records of Madison County, Margaret Cowart gave details for over 3300 purchasers; among them were almost 200 female names.² These women may have inherited family property or were widowed and required to sign legal papers. All types and classes of women resided in the Tennessee Valley. They struggled every bit as hard and certainly worked as hard as men to manage their lives and those of their family.

The intrepid traveler Anne Newport Royall visited north Alabama twice. She was a frequent letter writer and an outstanding observer of the countryside and its people. Travelling from Virginia in 1818, she was eager to see the new territory south of Tennessee. With disgust for that state she wrote, "I am afraid they indulge too great a fondness for whiskey. When I was in Virginia it was much whiskey; in Ohio too much whiskey; in Tennessee, it is too, too much whiskey."³

Mrs. Royall found much to admire in the new lands of the Alabama Territory. "I have seen no state or country equal to it. The people [are] wealthy, and generous, the land rich, the fields large, its river deep and smooth, its lofty bluffs, its majestic trees, its dark green forests – altogether grand."⁴ Of Huntsville's leading lady, Mrs. Royall wrote, "Mrs. Pope is one of your plain, undisguised, house-keeping looking females; no ways elated by their vast possessions, which I am told are the joint acquisition of her and her husband's industry. Report says, she is benevolent and charitable, and her looks confirm it."⁵ At the time, this was no backhanded compliment – it was an honest and convincing description of a dignified woman.

² Margaret Matthews Cowart. *Old Land Records of Madison County, Alabama*. (Huntsville: self publ. nd., *passim*).

³ Bessie Roland James. *Anne Royall's U.S.A.* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Press, 1972), 74.

⁴ Sarah Harvey Porter. *Life and Times of Anne Royall*. (Cedar Rapids, IA: Torch Press, 1906), 55.

⁵ Anne Newport Royall. Ed. Joseph J. Kwiat. *Sketches of History, Life and Manners in the U. S.* (New Haven: Johnson Rep. NY: 1826), 14.



Pope House Overlooking Huntsville (HMCPL)

Mrs. Royall wrote little about common women; they were hard at work in their homes with little time or resources to entertain her. Most pioneer women at that time dressed in home-spun and were generally illiterate. Some might have the ability to haltingly read from the Bible, but few women knew how to write or cipher numbers. For Black women both in bondage and free, learning to read and write was forbidden under penalty of law. Only educated women of the upper classes had the leisure to read ladies' magazines and novels of the day (not to mention the largesse to acquire them). Fortunately, letter writing among them was frequent and some kept journals and diaries.

Within his 122-page work, *Historic Huntsville*, author Gen. Edward Betts noted the male and female population totals from early newspaper reports, but mentioned no women by name, save four. The first was a billboard he observed for a traveling troupe of actors, and the second was the indomitable Virginia Clay and her newspaper editor niece, Miss Susanna W. Clay. He later described the Williams Street edifice that Gov. Thomas Bibb erected for his daughter, Mrs. James Bradley. In his account, the gift reflected far more upon the magnanimity of the giver than its beneficiary.⁶

⁶ General Edward Chambers Betts. *Early History and War Record of Public Men*. (Montgomery: Barrett and Brown, Rpt. 1872), 51, 85, 95, 96.

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General Betts listed the men responsible for roadways by name – White’s Turnpike to Ditto’s Landing and George and Thomas Fearn’s Canal. John Brahan and LeRoy Pope formed the Bible Society with help from a few other leaders. Reverend Robert Donnell, a noted preacher, established the first of many Cumberland Presbyterian Churches in North Alabama, soon followed by the Baptists and other denominations. Never once did General Betts reflect on the people sitting alongside men in buggies on roadways, in pews, or working on church grounds to prepare a church supper. Betts *did* acknowledge that “families came” and “families did increase.” He spent two pages explaining the city name change from Twickenham back to Huntsville, and no less than five pages describing the American Code of Honor appropriate for acceptable dueling behavior. On the topic of corporal punishment for criminals, however, Betts pointed out that the public whipping post required, at the very least, “thirty-nine lashes well laid on his or her bare back.” Criminal punishment seemed to be one category in which male and female were viewed as equal.⁷

Shortly after the first land purchases, a new class of women like Judith Pope appeared on the frontier. These women’s husbands had already surveyed the land and chosen the most desirable sites with better soil, water and, of course, neighbors – people like themselves. The planters had travelled earlier with people they enslaved to clear land, so these women sometimes arrived to find their first house already built. As he made his way through Madison County in 1835, Lucien Minor described the home of his host, Judge Minor, as:

merely of hewn logs, chinked with stone and pointed with lime mortar... but the furniture is much more elegant than is commonly seen in two-story framed houses... Nothing is more usual here than to see a log-cabin dwelling with a splendid carriage standing under the shed.

And, “going in you behold a mahogany sideboard, tables, and beaufets [buffets], with superb services of china and plate [sterling silver] imported carpeting, etc., etc.”⁸ A professional class of lawyers, doctors and merchants soon followed into north Alabama with great prospects of personal gain. Some of these men had the means to build both town and plantation homes.

⁷ Betts, *passim*.

⁸ Lucian Minor. Ed. James Russell Lowell. “A Virginian in New England Thirty-five Years Ago” *The Atlantic*. Vol. 26, (August 1870), 175, 176.

Introduction

During this time, settlers of all classes found themselves building homes and businesses in a land already inhabited by people who were resentful and could become swiftly hostile. Pioneers feared a disruption in the status quo of relationships with local Indians and remained vigilant against possible Indian attacks. This dread easily transitioned to a terror of slave uprisings later.

Well-to-do women excelled amid the “refined” household activities of the plantation kitchen. This included regular duties at the smokehouse, the storeroom (filled with daily supplies necessary to run the households, White and Black), clothing (making, cleaning, and mending), making medicine, processing food and managing livestock for the subsequent slaughter (whose preservation for winter came with its own set of difficult requirements). Garden and dairy activities, candle and soap making, weaving and spinning, bedding, and rugs required well-informed abilities, even if these ladies of the house did not perform the tasks themselves. Household work was never finished; there was always one more thing to manage. A second family group, the enslaved people on the farm, needed just as many basic requirements. Enslaved Black people lived on corn, pork, milk and occasion treats of whiskey; this food had to be produced and distributed, as well. Shoes and clothing – two sets, one for winter and another for summer – were essential. One sock required about one full week of knitting, and each person, enslaved or free, needed at least one pair every year.⁹ Mrs. Pope mostly likely did not participate in the actual work load, but her management skills were remarkable. These women and their children spoke and wrote with confidence that reflected good education, access to money, and social skills – all signs of their position in the community.

While all but ignoring the fates and lives of the actual laborers in these homes, early historians at least acknowledged what a grand accomplishment it was to manage a household that exceeded ordinary pioneer life. In order to entertain a professional class of merchants, doctors, lawyers and politicians at parties or small social visits, or even to exchange proud pleasantries with them in town, pioneer standards would not do. Entertainment must be raised to an art form.

What of those women sandwiched between the rough pioneer class and the elite lady of the plantation or town house? Beyond their extensive homemaking and childrearing duties, many women found themselves in desperate need of monetary income, a need which compounded during the years of the Civil War. The bitter irony of this unenviable situation was

⁹ Catherine Clinton, *Plantation Mistress*. (NY: Pantheon Press, 1982), 28.

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that everyone, no matter their social class, was aware that “working,” or performing any type of labor, was considered disgraceful. Northern woman might take little note of these social niceties as social mores began to relax, but given the cultural constrictions on Southern women, it was almost unthinkable that a lady of the South “face and transact business with any and every body” off the street or boardwalk.¹⁰ How, then, was poor widowed Martha Northcutt to feed herself and her seven daughters? What would become of the wife and children a father had abandoned? Bartering, a system which served country people well, required possessions worth trading, and there was little extra among most people. What were acceptable employments for women driven by necessity to seek them, and where could they be found? First and foremost, chances to earn were far more easily found in town. As late as 1840, however, only one in nine Americans lived in towns of 2,500 people or more; most lived in remote settlements and isolated farms.¹¹ This rural scattering of homes was more prevalent in the South than northern landscapes. Beyond the basic difficulties of earning a living, women seemed to be faced with circumstances set up to specifically prevent them from it.

The 1850 Federal Census listed women who were heads of their households but enumerated no occupation for them. Ten years later, however, the 1860 census revealed a few female teachers of children’s schools in the countryside. William J. Cosby of Hays Store district gave no hint of employment for any women on the updated form he completed, opting to list all women of his district as “domestics” if 17 years or older. Fortunately, Theo. Acklen of Huntsville kept meticulous records, noting one woman as an instructress, two women as landladies, three as housekeepers, two dressmakers, one midwife, one baker, one confectioner, one free person of color cooking at a boarding house, one poetess (aptly named Ann Word), 23 seamstresses, 17 washerwomen (all free women of color), 11 mantua makers, eight teachers and one female student. (This student, Kate Moore, was the exceedingly wealthy daughter of recently deceased Dr. David Moore. She was, according to the census records worth \$60,000 in real estate and \$257,000 in personal property.) As the Civil War loomed, both White and Black women were forced to reckon with the need for employment and money. I.O.U.s and personal notes were

¹⁰ Drew Gilpin Faust. *Mothers of Invention*. (New York: Random House 1996), 81.

¹¹ Gail Collins. *America’s Women: 400 Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines*. (New York: Harper, 2007), 93.

Introduction

of little value now; Confederate bills would soon become worthless, as well. Yankee dollars might do, or, better yet, silver or gold.

It took the Civil War longer to reach north Alabama than many fronts, but when it did, it swiftly and forever altered residents' limited understanding of warfare. Excited Southern men and boys eagerly volunteered to go fight and kill at least one Yankee before the War was done. A quick and easy Confederate victory was cheerfully expected; this did not occur. In April of 1862, the Confederacy enacted conscription for men between the ages of 18 and 35 for the duration of the hostilities. A second act in September of that same year took men aged 18 through 45, and in February 1864, 17 through 50-year-old males were drafted. Difficulties and complications emerged on every front. President Davis campaigned for men everywhere to enlist, or at least not avoid conscription, and return to the fray if they had previously deserted. Small arms were not available; numerous men went into service armed only with their squirrel rifles, shotguns, knives, fowling pieces, and pikes. Three of every four White men of military age served in the Confederate army, removing breadwinners from households, leaving behind only women and enslaved people to manage the home front.¹² Simultaneously, each state demanded men for its home defense militia. Only the young, lame, crippled, and elderly were officially allowed to remain behind to defend the home front, although deferments were allowed for essential duties at home.

Not every male was eager to serve. Remaining behind, however, took creativity. "Strange and terrible diseases were developed, and... health began to break down. It was the day of certificates – for old age, rheumatism, fits, blindness..." and other disabilities. Skilled labor took an upswing as "harness making, shoe making, charcoal burning, carpentering – all these and numerous other occupations supposed to be in support of the cause secured exemptions. As a result, the 'home stayers' were a sorry lot."¹³ Any man who enslaved more than 20 people was excused, leading many to label the hostilities "A rich man's fight and a poor man's war."

¹² James M. McPherson. *Embattled Rebel*. (NY: Penguin, 2014), 26, 57; Robert Bentley, Forrestfield. (NY: Grafton, 1903) 214; Faust 30.

¹³ Walter Fleming. *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*. Electronic Rpt. First Rate Publishers. n.p.

To the Men of Madison County:

For many dreary months you have had little or no communication with other parts of our Confederacy; and must be in want of accurate information touching some important laws passed by our Congress and State Legislature. It is important that you should be speedily and correctly informed as to such of them as relate to the organization of Military Forces—to exemptions and details from military service, as well as those which regulate and restrain the impressment of private property by military authority.

I find that many erroneous impressions exist in our community in relation to these matters; and since it is not probable that our mail facilities can be re-established for several weeks, or that those laws or the military orders issued in accordance therewith, will be re-published soon in our newspapers, I propose to meet you at the

Court House in Huntsville,
ON MONDAY NEXT, 19TH INST., at 11 O'CLOCK, A.M.,
and supply you with such information as my freedom from the terrible scourge to which you have been subjected, has enabled me to gather.

S. D. CABANISS.
HUNTSVILLE, DECE. 15, 1864.

P. S.—I am authorized by the Military Authorities at Huntsville to say, that no person need be deterred from attending the Meeting because of any apprehension of arrest on account of his liability to conscription, or because of his being absent from his command without leave. No arrest will be made on that day for such cases, nor any horse be impressed.

S. D. C.

Conscription 1864

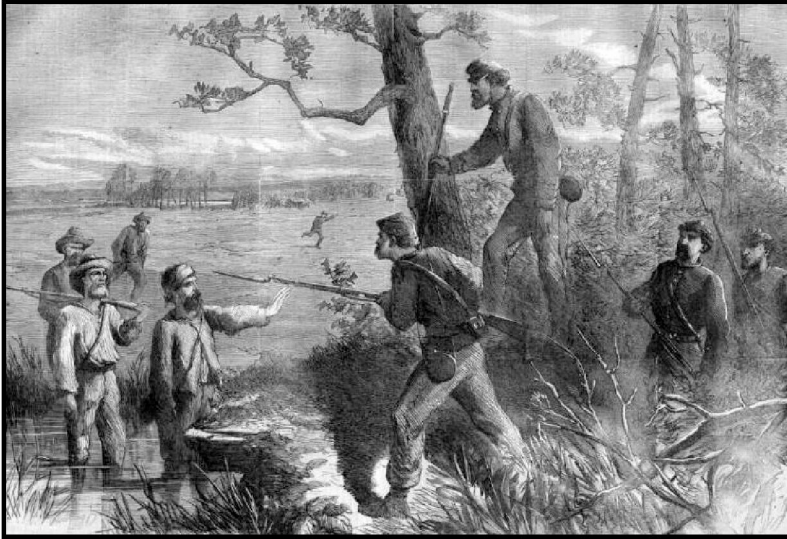
Other individuals and groups of non-combatants lingered in neighborhoods and nearby mountains; they were called various unflattering names such as “Tory,” “mossback,” and “deserter.” Renegades became fugitives, hiding out wherever they might, often near their families. Everyone was aware that Tories or Union sympathizers remained close at hand. In 1862, a Union raid steamed up-river aboard three gun-boats chasing the Rebel ship *Dunbar* after the Battle of Fort Henry. According to the Associated Press, “Every where along the river they were received with astonishing welcome by numerous Union families... and at the towns along the river the old flag was... hailed with loud shouts of joy... Old men cried like children at the sight of the Stars and Stripes... Large numbers were anxious to enlist under the old flag.” 250 men filled the steamers’ crews.¹⁴

Little good was said of “mossbacks” who avoided conscription by hiding in the mountains (the name deriving from the idea that they hid until moss grew on their backs); they were called cowards and traitors, and were treated as such. Deserters who left their comrades, even if only for spring planting, soon had a bounty on their heads. “Homemade Yankees” emerged as men now sided with the North as the painful result of losses in

¹⁴ Qtd. In *Harper's Weekly* March 1, 1862.

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battles, lives and money. Renegades, bushwhackers, or guerrillas often combined traits of one another, terrorizing neighbors by stealing, plundering, and even killing as they avenged old injuries. This was often payback for personal insults, real or perceived.



Deserters (civilwardaily.com)

As army sizes surged, so did the demand for food and animals to feed and carry them. Both sides took and destroyed supplies, leaving those back at home (read: women and children) with little or nothing. Adding to their misery, the Confederacy instigated a “tax in kind” allowing “tax collectors” to take food, stock, and supplies whenever and wherever they wanted (corruption by authorities quickly followed). By August of 1862, Marshall County had already appointed an agent to distribute salt and money to destitute women and children.¹⁵

In May of 1863, Union General Grenville Dodge reported his raids in the plantation-rich area near Town Creek, Lawrence County. He captured “about 40 prisoners, 900 head of mules and horses, 60 bales of cotton...” which resulted in the destruction “of three tan-yards, five [cotton] mills; took the towns of Tuscumbia and Florence, and destroyed about 60 flatboats on the Tennessee River... A large number of refugees and negroes joined us...” Furthermore, he confiscated:

¹⁵ Roberts, Frances Cabaniss Collection, Univ. Alabama, Huntsville. Special Collections and Archives, Series 1, Subseries C, Box 15, folder. 1.

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a large amount of provisions and destroyed at least 1,500,000 bushes of corn and a large quantity of bacon... I turned over 500 animals to Colonel Straight [Streight], and broke down at least 400 more cattle, sheep, cows and hogs... [we] used by the thousands, and I did not leave a thing in the valley that I considered would in the least aid the enemy. We have rendered useless for this year the garden spot of Alabama.¹⁶

This was probably no exaggeration; following the extreme drought of the previous summer, even the most basic foods were now in crippling scarcity. The entire state suffered. In the spring of 1863, Mobile women rioted for bread.



Mobile Food Riot

Obtaining food became one of the most difficult challenges of survival on the Southern home front, and women who had no identity or power before the law suddenly found themselves family breadwinners. Enslaved women, freewomen of color, a few Native Americans, as well as a vast number of nameless women, left few records. Subsequent

¹⁶ Official Records (OR) Series 034, p. 0246 (Chap. XXXV).

generations were left to wonder, *What did they do? How did they do it?* Even the side stories and vague anecdotes in the following journals and letters shed much-needed light on these queries.

Near the end of his slender volume of Huntsville history, Judge Betts wrote of conditions during “The War” that rang almost myth-like. Women “...from the first, gave untiringly, lavishly, and cheerfully of their very best for the success of the Confederacy. Their labors were consecrated upon the altars of love and devotion... years of untold and indescribable hardships and privations, they suffered and endured without a murmur, as only women can suffer and endure.”¹⁷ Betts’ lavish praise was well-meaning, but reductive. Each woman of north Alabama had her own personal wartime struggles which may have borne no resemblance to her neighbors’. Records women left behind, written in in their own words, are far more insightful and illuminating than tired legends or long-perpetuated stereotypes. The following women, soon to be introduced by their own writings, offer confirmations of events and factual accounts via diaries, letters and memoirs of their lives as they attempted to survive those terrible years.

Several counties of north Alabama bordering the Tennessee River contained women who recorded their lives during the Civil War years. To name only a few, Cassie Fennell in Marshall County, for instance, wrote almost daily; the Little Rebel, Ellen Saunders, spoke from Courtland, and twelve-year-old Sallie Independence Foster shared her family life in Florence. While it was against the law for Black women to learn to read or write during the War years, it is fortunate that many were willing to give statements to the Southern Claims Commission years after the conclusion of the war. In written statements, many White women also only left their “X” of testimony. Several Madison County women wrote of their days during and around the War, including Mary Jane Chadick and Mary Ann Cruse; the Clays wrote countless letters to one another. Rowena Webster, the Wharton sisters, and others wrote memoirs so that future generations might hear their stories. In particular, Octavia Otey emerges from these narrators as a sharp, perceptive woman in the prime of her life writing of these dire days in Madison County. No hero ever spoke more plainly or meaningfully as she wrote in her diary, “If it were not for our poor children, I would want to die... It requires courage to endure as well as to do.”¹⁸

¹⁷ Betts, *passim*.

¹⁸ Mickey Maroney. Ed. “Civil War Journal of Octavia Wyche Otey” *Huntsville Historical Review*. Vol. 18 #3 (1991), 4.

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Editing Techniques

The numbers of voices of Madison County, Alabama women during the Civil War quickly expanded to include those of women of other north Alabama areas simply because they, too, called to be heard. Women of surrounding counties suffered hardships equally as harrowing, compelling, tragic and triumphant as those in Madison County, and it became impossible to set these stories aside. The conflict was cataclysmic, leaving no Southern life untouched. Observing the everyday goings-on of women from different cities and landscapes reveals patterns of those effects, from poorest enslaved Black women to wealthiest plantation wife. Current-day researchers and readers can easily find information about any Civil War battle, its strategy, and aftermath, but the lives women – roughly half of the population – have been obscured or ignored until relatively recent times. These diaries, memoirs and letters give us a doorway into the lives of these brave, resourceful women.

As these are women's stories, there is absolutely no intention to consider battles; that will be left up to other editors of other stories. These writers (young girls, in some cases) wrote down the events of their days and recollections of the drama they remembered from that tumultuous time. Note that these were not typical Southern women: their education shows throughout. Grammar was not always consistent; the spelling was occasionally flawed, and Southern vernacular shines throughout. Before delving into these histories, it is important to understand the spelling of the word "Negro," no longer used in today's vernacular – and capitalized when it was a common occurrence – was then spelled "negro," without the capitalization. No slight or insult is intended herein; the words remain exactly as written.

Regarding the original material, the source is noted in the first footnote, and the use of the word *passim* denotes that continued usage will follow scattered throughout the chapter.

There has been an attempt to retain all surnames mentioned; otherwise, there would be accounts of even fewer voices. When referencing family dates, the Federal Census for 1860 was commonly used as a baseline. For instance, when writing about 1863, the information was adjusted from 1860 to that year in the paragraph. This was done to avoid additional footnotes, of which there are already many.

In the majority of readings obtained by this editor, stories of Black people were typically included as a last chapter, an afterthought, or, until recently, not at all. As the war encroached upon north Alabama, most Black women were enslaved people, abused, overworked, neglected, or a

Introduction

combination of these. Their futures and those of their families were in the hands of a cruel social structure which did not view them as human beings. The Civil War brought changes for these women, some welcome, but most overwhelming. Remaining at the plantation during the War would mean more work, increased resentment from owners, and an escalated risk of retaliation for the sympathy they received from the north. While White women's husbands and sons marched off to battle, they had at least some sense of where their loved ones were going, and why. They had access to news and letters. Many believed in the "Cause" their loved ones were fighting for. Black women watched family members set off into a completely unknown world, whether it be battle or a run for freedom. Would they find friends? Would they even find food?

The War's conclusion brought little relief for Black women. Should those remaining women stay to work for previous owners, find some sort of new employment, or flee into the unknown, risking their lives and those of their children? Their choices were heartbreaking and impossible; opportunities for employment were scarce. The odds of success were entirely against them. For these reasons, this work begins with their voices, as recorded by others.

Photographs, unless otherwise noted, were obtained from the Huntsville Madison County Public Library (HMCPL). Pencil sketches are from *Harper's Weekly* magazine.

Any errors contained herein are totally this editor's as she has studied, expanded her thinking, and continued to learn. Finding an endpoint to the journey down this tenuous trail of information has been almost impossible. Fortunately, this trail and its subsequent journey may now be handed over to the reader.

ENDURING VOICES

MADISON COUNTY

In a World Not of Their Making

Nameless Black Women

Few written memoirs or letters exist from American Black women who were kept in bondage. In most Southern states, it was against the law for slaves to be taught to read or write. Writings of the few literate people of color were of no interest to most Southern Whites. "Slave women were everywhere, yet nowhere. They were in Southern households and in Southern fields..." but it would seem that "few sources illuminate the interaction of slave women in their private world."¹⁹ With so few written accounts, it is difficult to get an exact idea of the lives of these women before, during and even after the American Civil War.

Northern Abolitionists voiced strong disapproval of the practice of slavery; those voices consistently hovered in the background of Southern society. Vocal abolitionist of the day Henry Ward Beecher acknowledged, "a slave is not for the purposes of law any longer to be ranked in the category of human beings, but that he is a piece of property..." "...and the law did not blush, nor do the judges blush nowadays who interpret that law. Persons held to service..." are "things" or "chattels."²⁰ Before the War, however, United States Federal Census listed the value of enslaved people in the same column as that for personal property, such as a man's horse or his wife's jewelry.

Furthermore, many men "believed any enslaved woman belonged to her master in every way, and therefore he could use (or misuse) her for whatever productive or reproductive purposes and personal gratification he might wish."²¹ Contrary to English common law, a Black child's status in

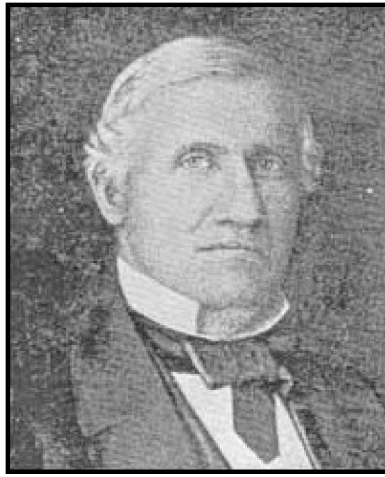
¹⁹ Deborah Gray White. *Ar'n't I a Woman?* (NY: Norton, revised edition, 1999), 23.

²⁰ J. T. Lloyd. *Henry Ward Beecher: His Life and Work.* (London: Walter Scott, 1887), 249.

²¹ Adele Logan Alexander. *Parallel Worlds.* (Charlottesville: Univ. Virginia Press, 2010), 21, 23.

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the United States was determined by that of her mother. Any offspring of an enslaved mother belonged to the master, but a baby born to a free woman of color, no matter who had impregnated her, was free. A small number of leaders in the South spoke for outright abolition, suggesting instead a gradual freedom or education for enslaved people. In his younger days, Huntsville's Dr. Thomas Fearn wrote his friend Clement Clay, "I am convinced that nature has bountifully contributed everything to render Huntsville the garden spot of the fairest country on earth." His reverie did not include slavery, "that foulest blot in our national character, that damning curse entailed on us by our forefathers."²² By 1860, however, Fearn himself enslaved 22 people.



Dr. Thomas Fearn

James G. Birney, an elite attorney, one-time mayor of Huntsville, and representative for the American Colonization Society moved his family north to Kentucky to the relief of many in North Alabama. He later became the first abolitionist candidate for the U.S. presidency through the Liberty Party. Northern visitor Anne Newport Royall must have offended the sensibilities of her hosts in Florence, Alabama when she offered the

²² Clement C. Clay Papers, Southern Historical Collection, UNC, Chapel Hill, #692.

following toast one evening: “Health to the sick, Wealth to the brave, A husband to the widow, and Freedom to the slave.”²³

On farms and plantations, less domestically skilled enslaved women worked alongside men in the fields; they were expected to perform three-fourths the work of a man. When the overseer blew the rising horn early each morning, they plowed, sowed seeds, rounded corn, and chopped cotton, stopping long enough only to deliver their babies. Corn not only had to be picked, but shucked by hand, as well. Cotton must be picked as late as March or April of the following year, or until the ground was needed for planting the next crop.²⁴ Once picked, the cotton seeds had to be painstakingly removed by hand from the boll. Enslaved women had their own children to feed and their own quarters to keep up after the day’s work in and around the big house.

Speaking with voices of remembrance, the WPA Slave Narrative Collection revealed the narratives of many former slaves of Alabama, offering sounds of the past in dialect tones. Martha Bradley was an enslaved woman who not only worked in the fields, but carried big logs; her enslavers added straps on her arms to force her to haul even more. In cotton-picking time, enslaved people stayed in the field until after dark and, if necessary, picked by lantern light. As if Martha’s labor wasn’t enough, she recalled:

One day I was workin' in de field and de overseer he come 'roun and say sumpin' to me he had no bizness say. I took my hoe and knocked him plum down. I knowed I'se done sumpin' bad so I run to de bushes. Marster Lucas come and got me and started whoopin' me. I say to Marster Lucas whut dat overseer sez to me and Marster Lucas didn' hit me no more.²⁵

Martha was fortunate that time. Another woman who had lived enslaved wrote, “No matter whether the slave girl be as black as ebony or

²³ Sarah Porter. *Life*, 53. Anne Newport Royall, an extraordinary and insightful reporter of her day, also commented, “Slavery! Nothing can soften thee! Thou art Slavery still.”

²⁴ Lucian Minor. Ed. James Russell Lowell. “A Virginian in New England Thirty-five Years Ago,” *The Atlantic*. Vol. 26, (August 1870), 175; Bentley, Robert. *Forrestfield*. (NY: Grafton, 1903), 4.

²⁵ Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slaves in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves: Vol. 1, AL, (WPA), Gutenberg Project eBook #36020, accessed 2011, Martha Bradley.

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as fair as her mistress. In either case, there is no shadow of law to protect her from insult, from violence, or even from death.”²⁶

Amy Chapman, a woman who had been enslaved by Governor Reuben Chapman and his wife Felicia, remembered:

He had a lot of slaves caze [because] he had a heap of plantations, but him an' his wife stay most of de time in Huntsville. Us had a mean oberseer, an' since Marse Reuben warn't never at home, dem oberseers useter treat us somp'n awful. One day Marse Reuben come home an' when he foun' out dat de oberseer was mean to de slaves he commence to give him a lecture, but when Miss Ferlicia tuk a han' in de business, she didn't stop at no lecture, she tol' dat oberseer dis: 'I hear you take my women an' turn dere clothes ober dere haids an' whup 'em. Any man dat's got a family an' would do sich a thing oughter be sham' of hisself, an' iffen Gov. Chapman can't make you leave, I kin, so you see dat road dere? Well, make tracks den.' An' Mistis, he lef' raght den. He didn't wait for no coaxin'. He was de meanes' oberseer us ever had... Dat oberseer was de fus' one dat ever putt me in de fiel', an' he whupped me wid de cat er nine tails when I was stark naked.” "Yassum, I kin tell you things about slavery times dat would make yo' blood bile, but dey's too turrible. I jus' tries to forgit.”²⁷

A number of select Black women worked within the big house as cooks, laundresses and maids who waited on the master's family; others served as wet-nurses or mammies for the White children of the house. In memoirs and letters of this “peculiar institution,” enslaved people were seldom called as such by their “genteel” owners, but euphemistically referred to as “servants.” Enslaved men and women of color lived throughout every county in the South. Almost none of these quarters still stand today. Few want reminders of slavery in their own back yard.

Like enslaved people on plantations, those kept in bondate in towns were housed in back yards or an attached room at the back of the house. If the homeowner was quite wealthy, they might maintain separate quarters for them.

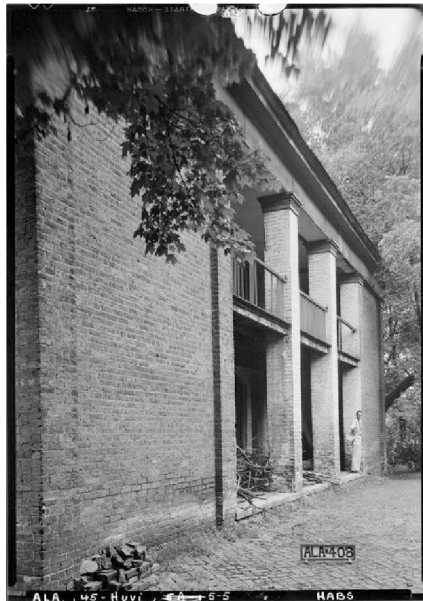
²⁶ Ibid., Martha Bradley

²⁷ Ibid., Amy Chapman.

Madison County



Cabaniss Slave Quarters (HABS)



Clay Slave Quarters (HABS)

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Enslaved women rose before dawn to light the fires and start breakfast, spending their days cooking, cleaning and tending to family and guests. Others were house maids or personal maids who accompanied their mistress everywhere. Not every enslaved person forced to work in the family home was as fortunate as Alabama born Charity Anderson:

“I kin remember de days w'en I was one of de house servants. Dere was six of us in de ole Massa's house. Us did'n' know nothin' but good times den. My job was lookin' atter de corner table whar nothin' but de desserts set.” Well trusted, she had charge of all the keys of the house, and her duty was to wait “on de Missis' and de chillun.”

Her other duties included washing, ironing, knitting and weaving. Jennie Bowen's mother at the big house carded and wove for the enslaved people who made calico for summer and wool for winter. Jennie, luckier than some, tended to three children at the big house who taught her to read and write.²⁸

Both in town and in the countryside, some enslaved women and their children became unacknowledged second families for their White masters, whether they wanted to be or not. Most people, Black and White, had knowledge of second families, but no one discussed them in polite society under any circumstances. In 1835, Rufus C. Rathbone of Madison County freed two enslaved women, “mother and daughter, the elder a yellow woman about 32 years of age... and her daughter about seven years of age (almost white).” Apparently, Mr. Rathbone planned to marry within two months, and Betsey and her daughter, Sarah Ann, were (understandably) not wanted on the plantation by his wife-to-be. He recommended her as a first-rate house woman, “not surpassed by any servant within his knowledge.”²⁹

Well aware of the stringent manumission laws, George Steele, a prominent architect in Huntsville, prepared his will with care. Item seven of this 1855 document freed the Black family of Bess, a mulatto woman of about 23 years and her children: Ellis, a mulatto about nine; John, about seven; a mulatto boy, Charley about two; and, a bright girl, Emma, about one. They were to be moved to a Free State to have a new house purchased for them there, along with \$1500 for provisions. Steele's executor, his son

²⁸ Ibid. Charity Anderson

²⁹ Madison County, Alabama Deed Book #P, 371.

Madison County

Matthew, gave Bess \$265 in gold at the Huntsville railroad station as she departed for Cincinnati with her children.³⁰

As slaves were legal property:

southern law did not recognize slave rape as a crime, there was no legal sanction against masters who violated their slaves. Laws of the southern states certainly would not be used to preserve the pretense of respectability for African American females. The fear of local gossip or a Christian ethic, a watchful white mistress, or a knife hidden under a dress might sometimes prevent a rape.³¹

Adulation of Southern womanhood did not extend to enslaved women or the few free Black women of the South. Moreover, monogamy, boasted as part of Southern heritage, did not apply to all males. Young men were allowed to prove their manhood with enslaved women, willing or not. The large numbers of mulattoes noted in census records of the day prove an obvious blending of Black and White. White females who participated in miscegenation or were caught doing so became objects of scorn and disgust by all.

To acquire funds to purchase more acreage or pay off debts, those who enslaved people commonly sold them; conversely, they trafficked additional enslaved Black people if they thrived financially and anticipated “needing” more. By 1860, Huntsville had seven traffickers of Black people, or “Negro Dealers,” as they were listed in the city directory: Jacob Certain, Jas. Hickman, Thurston Lumpkin, Tom Moseley & Elias Spragins, Wm. Studdart & Jas. Wells. These men had far more worth in the 1860 census than most of their neighbors. Moseley valued his real estate at \$4,000 and his personal estate at \$50,000 while William Studdart had \$15,000 and \$60,000. These amounts reflect the number of enslaved people living on plantations, along with their value. Many sales or trades were made to pay debts or divide estates.³² According to the 1860 census, there were 14,573 men, women and children living in bondage in Madison County among a White population of 11,878. Black families were frequently torn apart; few traffickers – selling or buying – cared if separations happened among Black families. Many people in bondage

³⁰ Madison County, Alabama Will Book #1, 69-72; Chancery Court AA, 606.

³¹ Kenneth Greenberg. *Honor and Slavery*. (Princeton: Princeton Press, 1997), 37, 38.

³² *Williams' Directory City Guide and Business Mirror, 1850-1860*. (Huntsville: Coltart & Son, 1859 Rpt. Strode, 1972), *passim*; 1860 Federal Census.

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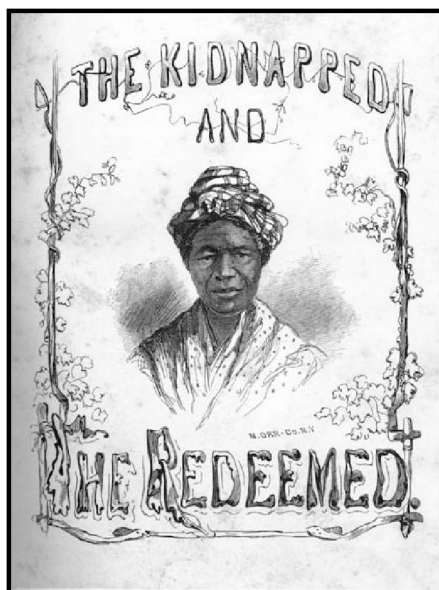
understood that they could be sold, and asked the auctioneer to sell their possessions “under the hammer” at the farm house or on the court house steps. This left them with less to carry and a bit of cash for wherever they might be sent.³³

After the Turner Rebellion of 1831 in Virginia, the long-standing fear of an uprising among enslaved people in the South became even more anticipated and dreaded by the men and their families who enslaved them. In 1856, Peter Sill, an enslaved man at that time, managed to purchase his wife, Lavinia, and their three children in Tuscumbia across the Tennessee River from Florence. He was aided by the Friedman brothers, two Jewish merchants in town. After reuniting with his family in Philadelphia, he described some events of 1840:

A panic pervaded the whole community. ‘The negroes intend to rise,’ was whispered with white lips by timid ladies in their morning visits; and every sigh of the night-wind through the lofty trees was interpreted by the fearful into the rush of black assassins. Old stories of negro insurrections were revived, and the most faithful and attached servants became objects of suspicion... This excitement, however, like that to which it owed its origin, at length passed away. The few old privileges were restored to the slaves, and the services of the patrols were no longer in constant requisition. Yet the confidence of the slaveholder is always imperfect, and easily shaken. When injustice constitutes the base of the system, how can faith adorn the super-structure? Some of the better class of servants about Tuscumbia have not to this day recovered from the effects of the suspicions which they then incurred. Many, in their joyful excitement, had run after the wagons that bore in procession the log cabin with its admirers, and cried, ‘**The year of jubilee is come! We all’s a gwine to be free!**’ These were almost crushed by the disappointment, and by the sufferings consequent on too frank an expression of their hopes.³⁴

³³ Joan E. Cashin. Ed. *Our Common Affair*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1996), 193.

³⁴ Kate E. R. Pickard *Kidnapped and Ransomed: Being the Personal Recollections of Peter Sill and His Wife Vina, ” after Forty Years of Slavery*. eBook Google, p. 161. When Peter and his brother Levin Sill, Jr. were children, they could not join their free parents in Philadelphia and were sold from Maryland to Lexington, then to Tuscumbia, Al. At one of those locations, Levin was whipped to death for visiting his wife without permission. Peter, his wife, and their three children made their way back to Philadelphia, where he was reunited with his mother after 42 years. His brother, William Sill, was a noted abolitionist, businessman and Underground Railroad Conductor whose carefully kept records helped families



Peter Sill's Story

The Civil War began with a telegram from Montgomery, Alabama by Huntsville native Leroy Pope Walker, Secretary of War for the Confederate States of America, to General P.G.T. Beauregard to commence firing on Fort Sumter in Charleston's harbor. Within one month's time, as news of the Civil War reached deeper into the South, violent actions caused separations and deaths within local Black families. Daniel Hundley of Mooresville wrote in his journal while he lingered to enjoy springtime hunting and fishing. On May 18, 1861, however, he reported on the swift action taken when a Vigilante Committee in Triana found a "most hellish insurrection plot among the slaves." Patrols were set up that night, which was something no one had ever seen before. He would not be closing his eyes for sleep, with reason, as it turned out. A Committee of Public Safety investigated shocking testimony and summarily hanged slaves Peter Mud, Andrew Green, Nick Moore and one or two free Black people. Many of the people Mrs. Elisha Rice kept enslaved were severely whipped; Hundley suggested that others would hang later.³⁵

reunite after escapes. Peter's nephew, James Thomas, graduated from Harvard Medical School in 1871. His niece, Caroline, graduated from Oberlin College and medical school in Philadelphia; she became a doctor. Wikipedia accessed 7/31/17.

³⁵ Daniel Hundley Journal, Archives and Special Collections, HMCPL, n.p.

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The American Civil War altered lives of everyone, forever. By spring of 1862 when Union troops invaded north Alabama, the South had already begun a policy of impressment of Black enslaved men for construction on railroads, forts, or wherever needed. During the first week of January that year in Madison County, for instance, 70 Black men, were “furnished by the Citizens of Madison County... for service at Fort Henry on the Tennessee River.” Just one week later, 44 more men were sent, and one can assume other counties supplied men to work on fortifications. It would not be enough; the February 6 battle at Fort Henry resulted in the first significant victory for General Grant and opened the Columbia and Tennessee Rivers for the Union.³⁶

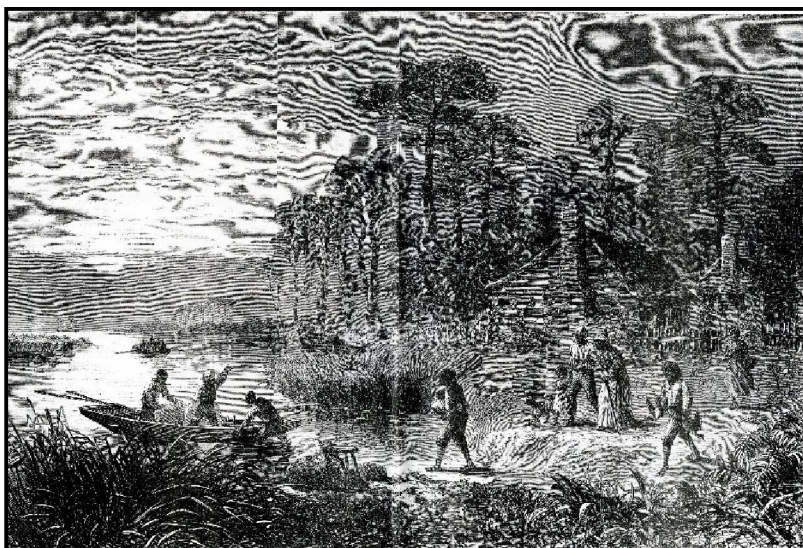
Rumor became reality when the invading troops arrived in Madison County in April. Any semblance of social order quickly eroded. The first official invasion proffered a Federal policy of a gentle warfare and returned escaped enslaved people to their traffickers. It was also known at that time in Madison County that Gen. Ormsby Mitchel used enslaved people as informants who were not returned to their traffickers. Soon, Black men (husbands, brothers, grown sons) all but disappeared, fleeing north to escape bondage and enduring impressment by Union and Confederate troops alike as workers.

With no one working the crops, food became scarce for White families as well as Black. Women might find work in a nearby town, as Mary Jane Chadick reported. These positions were always at the lowest, most menial level, however, because they had few skills to offer. Another option for Black women was to follow the army, serving as cooks or laundresses. Women with children were faced with the terrible choice of staying at the plantation – the only life they knew – or running to freedom into totally unknown circumstances. The trafficker’s absolute power resulted in the absolute dependency of enslaved people. Now, this system had been broken in a matter of months. For many Black women, fears of the unknown must have outweighed thoughts of the jubilations of freedom. Money was scarce; even those who had it could find few opportunities to buy food or clothing.

With able men absent, the burden of decisions regarding survival for herself and any scattered family members truly fell upon enslaved women. There was “no experience to guide people in so total a disaster, greater than any previous disruption by epidemic or economic depression or

³⁶ Madison County, Alabama Deed Book DD, 408.

natural calamity.”³⁷ In turmoil, scores fled their accustomed plantation life where everything was in disarray. Many displaced Black refugees from nearby areas made their way into Huntsville; the 1865 census taken after the War showed 2,442 Black residents, confined in a small area among the White population overcrowding the small town. Certainly, a glance at the first names given in that 1865 count shows more Black women living in town than Black men. (Earlier, the 1860 federal census in Huntsville showed 1,654 enslaved people among a total population of 3,634.) Finding food and clothing meant taking dangerous risks. There was often no place to go except tents, lean-tos, outbuildings, shacks, and doubling up in the already congested town. These Black women “had not survived enslavement to succumb to freedom.”³⁸



Leaving Home (Harper's, April 9, 1864)

At the plantation, Mrs. Otey talked about dividing the meat for her White family and the Black people she kept enslaved. In town, Susanna Clay wrote, “The negro is more to be pitied than blamed. They are ignorant and grasping, as we are, for a happier future.” Mrs. Chadick described seeing the Yankees impress Black people as they surrounded the church on Sunday. “Such a scare; some got away; and some hid. But other

³⁷ Anne Firor Scott. *Southern Lady from Pedestal to Politics*. (Charlottesville: University VA Press, 1970), 92

³⁸ White, 162

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men were run down by soldiers on horseback. It is really heart-wrenching.” Yet she wrote later, “There is a powerful charm in the word freedom.”³⁹

Testimony taken later for claims resulting from damages incurred during the War offers some understanding of the horrors faced by Black women in these times. In Madison County, an enslaved woman named Rachael Jones had married Claiborne Jones five years before the War. The ceremony had been conducted by their “old master” Willis Harris, not with a license, but by consent of their owners. During the War, Claiborne joined the U.S. army as a soldier in Co. C, 10th Reg. U.S. Colored Troops, and at his death in a Nashville hospital in 1865, Rachael was left with their four children, Sarah, 21; Senia, 16; Thomas, 14; and, Gable, age 12. Master Harris, “forced to go south of the River in January 1864 said he couldn’t feed us... 150 of us black ones, little and big and for us to make a crop on his land, rent free.” Her brother, David Crow, testified Rachael “hired out to wash and one thing and another, baked bread for the soldiers is where she got money to buy a mule” (an absolute necessity for any farming). Now the animal had been taken in broad daylight by Union soldiers, in broad daylight, along with her corn and pork; “she made that corn with her own labor and with the mule.”⁴⁰

Elizabeth Horton testified for Rachael, “She was begging some of the soldiers not to take the mule as that was all she had, [the soldiers] pulled corn into wagons, got all she had – five loads... We all went to the gate at the pike and begged them not to take it, we all went children and old folks.” These were big government, four-horse wagons and they did not even leave any shucks, 30 bushels to a load she said. Rachael’s hogs were lying under the house; “the men shot eight, pulled them out and piled them into wagon. There was “a mighty complaining to each other, starvation was sure.” They said “Uncle Sam would pay for the mule and wagon loads of corn taken – we one’s property.” The attorney writing for this case and other Harris former slaves wrote “there can be no doubt, that the cases originating on said plantation among said freedmen are just and meritorious.” The property taken “was the product of their own hard

³⁹ Nancy M. Rohr. Ed. *Incidents of the War*. (Hsv.: SilverThreads 2005), 111. This journal was written by Mary Jane Chadick, not as a record of her emotions, but her account as an eye witness to events during the Federal occupancy of her town. The original manuscript is located at Special Collections University of Arkansas Libraries, Fordyce Papers (MC1311) subseries 1, box 4, folder 8, Fayetteville, AR. (Hereafter cited as *Incidents*)

⁴⁰ Southern Claims Commission, Fold3, (SCC) Rachael Jones, #18679.

labor.” Rachael died in March as the claims were being prepared. Unfortunately for her orphaned children, the claims were denied.⁴¹

Senia McClelland, herself a claimant, testified that she was about 90 years old and had been with the old master for fifty-odd years. Her husband Hunter McClelland died seven years before, and their only child, Eliza Ann, now lived with her mother. “We owned poultry, chickens, turkeys and geese be we got free, but no property and he [Hunter] had silver and gold money he had saved up.” He “was a sharp-trading old fellow sure, and I went out and attended midwife cases... and that was always my own money. I am 100 years old or nearly. I remember George Washington. I was living in Old Virginia then.”⁴²

Work was all these women knew and, for many, was a kinder master than their legal ones. An exception to this rule was the owner of Nancy Jones and her husband, Marshall, headman, Alec Jones. Jones allowed his people some privileges, for instance keeping swine and cattle. By the spring of 1865 “the county was full of troops and labor was utterly demoralized.” Many enslaved people comprehended that they were now free of White owners, and some men joined the U.S. Army or followed along with the army for various jobs. Many, however, chose to stay and contract, or hire out, for wages. After the Yankees took all of “Old Master’s” fencing, Mr. Jones, who had over 5,000 acres and enslaved 105 people, gave them the use of all the land they could farm if they helped replace fences. Jones also allowed them use of the plows and mules. Nancy and Marshall Jones farmed and made a corn crop at that first chance. With their savings, Nancy attended to their business and bought a horse, a bit of land and a second piece of property. The master “said I had served him well, and he would let me go in East Place... and went to work farming... I owned stock, the hogs and cows before we got free.” Marshall Jones already had the liberty to trade for himself and had a three-acre garden. During the War the Jones traded milk and butter with the soldiers; Nancy washed, baked bread, knitted and sewed for the men. “I tell you we were a long time making that little money.” Her claim for loyalist damages arose, she said, when:

the soldiers took her beeves, and they taken my cow, my hogs, my wheat, the corn and I seen them take my horse. He gave me a paper I done lost it... The corn was both stored and, in the field, and the

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² SCC, Senia McClelland, #18,684.

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cow was a mighty good milch cow... [they] killed and gutted the animals on the spot... I was begging them not to.

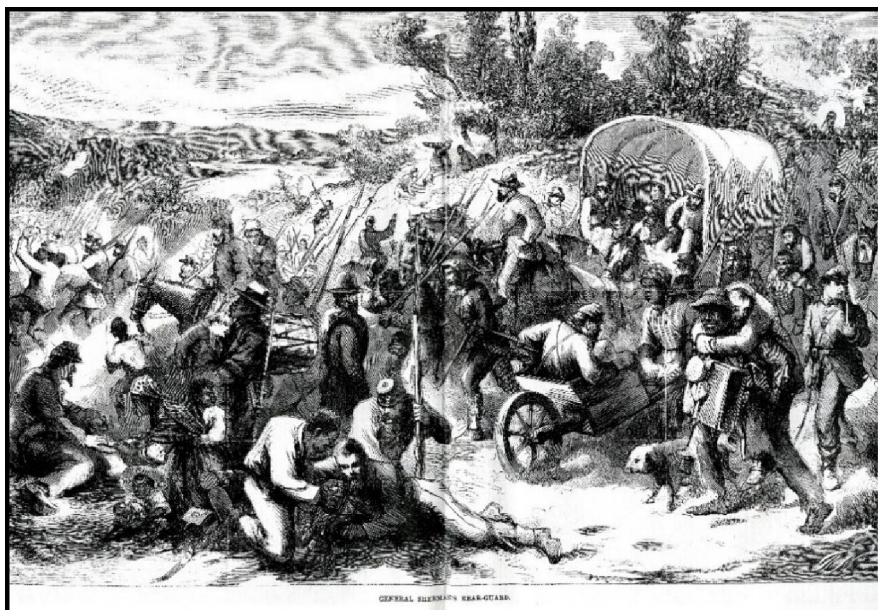
The mare "...fat and nice, she was good to plow, work in wagon or anything." The government reviewer acknowledged the Joneses owned cattle and swine before the War, but refused to believe that a master would have allowed them 80 acres for corn in the year claimed, when Confederates seemed so strong in the area. The corn was disallowed, the mare, and the value of the animals was lessened, and Nancy Jones was given \$102; \$480 of her claim was rejected.⁴³

Most Black woman were not so fortunate to have even the appearance of Nancy Jones' outward stability. Some women decided to flee, leaving their past and connections behind, opting to follow the northern arm, wherever it went. Reverend Doctor Thomas Madden in Maysville wrote Dr. F.E.H. Steger in December 1864 that most Black men had been conscripted to work for both sides. The Federal army moved out of northern Alabama in fear of the apparent overwhelming number of invading Rebels arriving:

About 8000 soldiers and baggage wagons – almost beyond number left the valley, refugees and slaves alike moved in a cavalcade pass his house from 8 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon.... Negroes are in great confusion since the retreat of the army. Refugees and contrabands astonishing in number moved in the slow cavalcade. Cotton and feather bedding were discarded and tracks of the caravan could be followed by the litter left behind. Women gave birth to children in the flight and unnaturally left them to perish, one case occurred near this place. A Yankee soldier picked up the infant, wrapped it up and tried to give it away as he passed along. Several cases of this kind were reported on the banks of Paint Rock. Other children were left behind, running about hunting their mothers who had left them to their fate.

As Black refugees fled north, many survived on handouts from soldiers. They were often given some of the government rations of bread and meat. However, General Sherman soon forbade women to accompany the troops, coldly stating, "a woman eats as much as a soldier." There would be no more rations. At the railroad crossroads in Stevenson, Alabama, Dr. Madden made the following observation: "'tis said that they are dying by multitudes since the cold set in."

⁴³ SCC, Nancy Jones, #2753.



Sherman's Rear Guard (Harper's April 2, 1864)

As the Yankees flocked into north Alabama for a second time, contraband camps became refuges for impressed men, enslaved Black women, and children. These may have been the “fortunate” former slaves; thousands of Southern Black people now found themselves truly homeless. In August of 1861, the U.S. Congress had passed a Confiscation Act, which declared that any property used by the Confederate military, including enslaved people, could be confiscated by Union forces. Those who escaped to Union lines would not be returned but classified as contraband. By September of 1861, Navy Secretary Gideon Wells issued a directive to pay workers, “persons of color, commonly known as contrabands,” hired on as “boys” with the lowest rank at the rate of \$10 per month and one full day's ration. Three weeks later, the Union Army followed suit, paying male contrabands at Fort Monroe \$8 per month, and women as laundresses and cooks at \$4 a month.⁴⁴

After the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, Black men both enslaved and free enlisted in the United States Colored Troops, this left their families with nowhere to go. These family members were allowed to

⁴⁴ Herbert Aptheker. “Negroes in the Union Navy,” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 32, # 2 (April 1947), 169-200. More contraband Black people joined the navy rather than the army because of the higher pay rate.

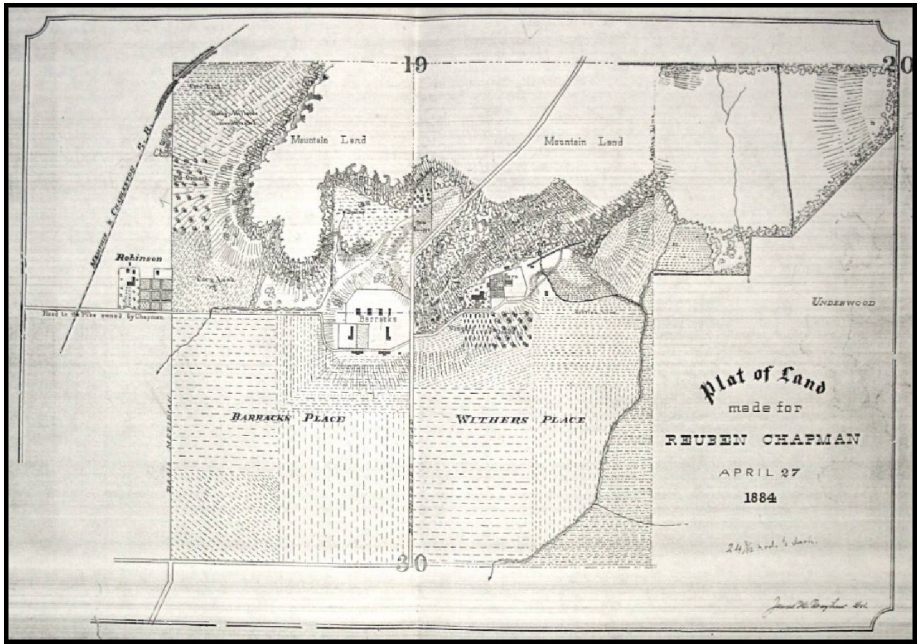
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take refuge near Union-held encampments at nearby contraband camps, or camps for displaced Black people. Many previously enslaved people who were close to starvation hid with their meager possessions. Raids by armed men of both sides and skirmishes in their neighborhoods now gave good reason for people of color to relocate somewhere safer. They had nothing to lose by leaving; possible gain was on the horizon. Many chose to become, like scores of White people, displaced persons.



Contraband Camps

In Madison County, one camp for displaced Blacks was established on land at the edge of town on Chapman Mountain. Living conditions were bad, but possibly no worse than life on many plantations at that time. Women might find jobs as cooks and laundresses. If they were paid, their wages were very low, unlikely to cover costs of living. At least there was the hope of less physical punishment. Punishment takes many forms, however, and theirs was a grueling test of endurance.



***Site of Contraband Camp at Huntsville Barracks,
1864 Reuben Chapman Plat (MCRC)***

Although born nearly 10 years after the War, historian Walter Fleming described what most Whites would have considered to be an accurate account of “their” South in the second half of the 1860s. During the turmoil, when enslaved Black men had been impressed, some joined the Union army, others fled when they had the chance, and untold numbers died. Many were unable to reunite with their wives and “upon the Negro woman fell the burden of supporting the children.” Fleming suggested in his writings that, in times of such chaos and trauma, child murder and feticide became more common; this was confirmed, he said, by the small number of children during the decade of Reconstruction. Fleming wrote that Black women took freedom more seriously than men, and flocked to town, but he harshly added “immorality was general among them ... where standards of living were low; sanitary arrangements were bad; disease, especially consumption and venereal disease, killed large numbers.”⁴⁵

At the surrender, freedom became more complicated for traffickers and those they enslaved. Siney Bonner, an Alabama slave, recalled:

⁴⁵ Walter Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*. Electronic Reprint, First Rate Publ., 763.

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Massa John call all de niggers on de plantation 'round him at de big house and he say to 'em 'Now, you all jes' as free as I is. I ain't your marster no mo'. I'se tried to be good to you and take keer of all of you. You is all welcome to stay and we'll all wuk togedder and make a livin' somehow. Ef you don' want to stay, dem dat go will jes' have to root, pig, or die.' Some stayed and some lef'.⁴⁶

But where would they go? What would they do once they got there? Some left their masters simply because they could. Life outside a plantation setting was an obvious choise for many newly freed people. The new wages might be meager, but they were *theirs*.

Mary Ann Cruse considered enslaved people to be, “misguided and misled by Northerners,” lured away by “cunning, craftiness and duplicity.” The promise of freedom enticed them away from “the loving protection of their rightful owners.”⁴⁷ Susanna Clay wrote, “The Negroes here are disappointed and unhappy to find that they must work and that the white people hold the land.”⁴⁸ Robert Bentley, another Huntsville writer, described Madison County in his novel *Forrestfield*. The central character, John Granville, had his manse built on Meridianville Pike from his own trees and bricks from his own clay by Black men, with their “brawny frame and muscles” and the White man with “his brawny brain,” of course, “standing on the shoulders of the black man.” He never mentioned the work of any women, White or Black.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ WPA, Siney Bonner.

⁴⁷ Mary Ann Cruse. *Cameron Hall: A Story of the Civil War*. (New York: Lippincott, 1867), Google eBook, 503.

⁴⁸ Susanna Clay to Clement Clay Jr. HMCPL, 2008-30, Box 4, F 5.

⁴⁹ Bentley, 1, 2.

Susanna Withers Clay (1798-1866)

Mush and Milk – and Were Glad of It

Susanna (Withers) Clay enjoyed a fortunate position. The custom of the time dictated that she be addressed with her full title: Mrs. Governor Clay. Her vast abilities in property management assistance of the family plantations, over 70 slaves, a town house, and three children allowed her husband, Clement Comer Clay, to participate extensively in the government of the newly formed state of Alabama. She raised three sons imbuing them with a spirit of self-determination in their frontier life.

Susanna's parents, Mary Herbert (Jones) and Judge John Withers, arrived in Madison County in approximately 1808 to find a settlement:

upwards of 2000 Souls who came from the East, West, North and South and have brought with them their passions and there [sic] virtues – When civilization and refinement shall be well established, this will be a desirable part of the United States... Its growth with that of the whole surrounding country in population and in wealth exceeds anything I have ever heard of.⁵⁰

These Withers from Virginia settled comfortably in the area. They became part of that aristocracy of civilized and refined families in the new territory. Susanna, born in Virginia on July 23, 1798, was about 10 years old when her family arrived in Madison County, then a part of the Mississippi Territory. Growing up on the Withers plantation, she did not continue formal education past her mother's instruction. She fully absorbed those lessons, however, and wrote her family often with "full heart" in lovely, flowing scrip, with acceptable grammar and the divergent spelling of the day. She bemoaned this lack of formal education in later years, "I have felt my usefulness thwarted all my life in consequence of my deficiency."⁵¹ By all accounts, however, the plantations ran well under her supervision, although she most likely did not participate in the actual work. She attempted (and succeeded) to create a civilized family, plantation and home, with all that entailed. This undertaking must have seemed never-ending.

⁵⁰ Return Jonathan Meigs to Timothy Meigs, May 8, 1809 q.td in Ruth Ketring Nuernberger *Clays of Alabama*. (Lexington: Univ. Kentucky Press, 1958) 4, 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

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In 1811, Clement Comer Clay of Tennessee had visited his sister Margaret who, with her husband John Bunch, owned an inn and tavern (then called a public house) in Huntsville. Clay quickly saw the possibilities for a young lawyer from a good family and good education, but little else, to begin a career. Northern political power centered in towns, but authority was scattered in the plantation south, manifesting itself in and around a county seat. Huntsville showed great potential as a place to establish a political base.

The Withers family maneuvered within the inner social circle of the select few. Susanna Withers and Clay married in 1815; she was 17 years old. Their first son, Clement Claiborne Clay Jr. arrived in late 1816. He was often sickly, and, with the high rates of infant mortality, was not expected to survive to adulthood. As a result, his portrait (now missing) was painted when he was about five years old in front of Huntsville's Big Spring.

The second Clay son, John was born in January of 1820. He was called "Withers" by everyone who knew him. Always of dutiful and religious leanings, Withers wrote in one letter home that he would "endeavor to improve my mind, purify my heart, and curb my passions" (even at that time, these words may have been considered zealous for the average 14-year-old boy, but Withers was sincere and remained a devout Christian throughout his lifetime). Hugh Lawson Clay was born three years later, and Susanna noted of her youngest son, "He is not improving... as he ought to be... He is no doubt indolent... and will never do what he thinks is not expected of him."⁵² Coming from a mother, these words may have sounded harsh, but Hugh fulfilled their prophecy.

Susanna's siblings also married into well-connected families who maintained homes in Huntsville and Mobile: Ann Withers married Ward Levert; Priscilla married William McDowell; Augustine married Mary Jane Woodson, daughter of Phillip Woodson who owned the Huntsville *Democrat*; Mary married her first cousin, Dr. Robert Withers; and, Jones M. Withers, a West Point graduate, became a very successful politician, mayor, editor of the *Mobile Tribune*, and a Civil War major general. The youngest Withers sister, Maria, most likely bewildered family and friends when she wed Anastasias Menaeos, M.D., an 1838 graduate of the College of New Jersey, which later became Princeton. (His brother, Constantine, was one of the first two foreign students to receive a scholarship there.) Maria's curious marriage choice reflected the class blend that an elite education allowed, but it remains unclear where and how she and

⁵² Ibid., 71.

Anastasias met. Each of these relatives connected Susanna to the Huntsville Clay family.⁵³

In 1818, Clement Clay purchased his first plantation (Oakley) located 640 acres west of Huntsville alongside his Withers neighbors, now in-laws. This was considered “just next door” in plantation country. Susanna had been a quick and sharp study of her domestic lessons, paying detailed attention to her home and surroundings. In one letter, she made astute, observant comments regarding the cause and decline of the expected cotton crop at Oakley, connecting it to soil overuse.

Clay bought 4,000 acres in nearby Jackson County and trafficked more enslaved people to a total of 74 by 1860. As a lawyer and up-and-coming politician, he left Susanna much of the supervision of their estates, the town house (known as “Clay Castle”), and their three sons. Susanna took these responsibilities seriously, showing as much ambition and energy in her endeavors as her husband in his. Their many letters show her firm grasp of the intricacies of plantation infrastructure and its requirements, even from afar (she sometimes resided in Washington D.C. with her husband). She was aware of the constant demand for successful cotton crops to pay off past debts or, better yet, to purchase more land and enslave more Black people. She was also aware of the unfortunate reality of increased obligations inherent to land expansion and the additional enslaved people. At the 1826 death of Susanna’s father, John Withers, she inherited (and her husband controlled) 19 additional enslaved people, “horses, mules, cattle, hogs, furniture and the crops standing in the fields” less, of course, any outstanding debts against the estate. One hundred years of estate records reveal that the Clays were never entirely free from debt. “Cotton was King, white men ruled and both white and slaves served the same master.”⁵⁴

Susanna raised her family according to the times and expectations of their class. All three sons attended Greene Academy after being schooled at home as boys, then progressed (with starts and stops due to illness and indecision) to degrees from the University of Alabama and the University of Virginia, although Lawson did not graduate at Charlottesville. For the Clay sons, grammar school brought challenges beyond those of Greek and Latin. Clement Jr. engaged in schoolboy fights

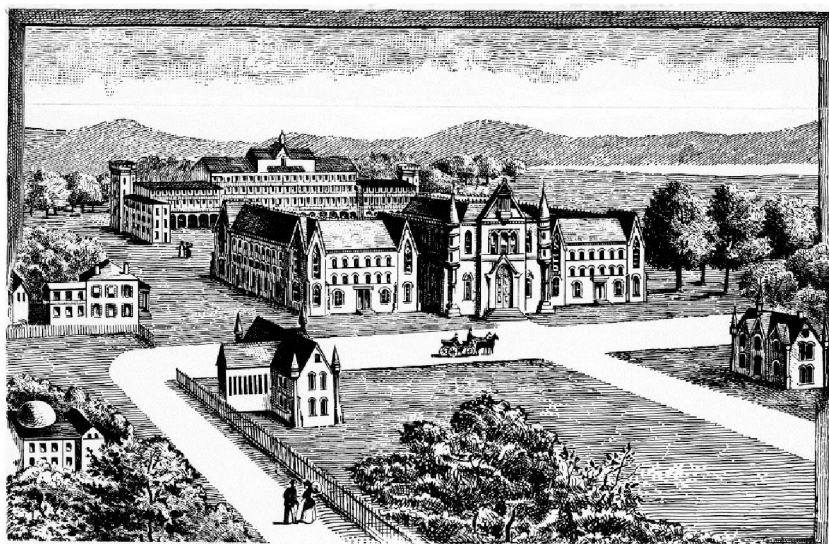
⁵³ www.princeton.edu/Hellenic/overview/seegercenter/Seegercenter.pdf accessed 3/13/15; Alabama Record 108:71; 185:99.

⁵⁴ Ruth Ketring Nuernberger, *Clays of Alabama*. (Lexington, KY: Univ. Kent. Press, 1958), 8, 9; Clinton 17, 35.

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and wrote his father with justification of one in particular. Willis Pope teased and “jumped on him & threw me down & bruised my face a little.” The taunting continued and “I went up to him & struck him & after bruising his face & being pulled off of him I went home.” After a brief suspension and “licks” from the school master, “I think candidly that I have acted right & my breast is free from remorse of conscience.”⁵⁵ This was hardly exceptional on the frontier where nose-pulling, fisticuffs, eye gouging, and biting were acceptable. Clement later proudly wrote to his father that he had refrained from taking part in the rowdy student riot at the University of Alabama.

All three sons participated in common activities at the University of Virginia. Clay Jr. graduated and the two younger sons boarded there in 1840.



*University of Alabama, ca. 1890 (W. S. Hoole
Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama)*

The brothers soon found students with whom they closely related by kinship. Cousin Edmund Withers and Charles Cabaniss of Huntsville were close friends. Withers Clay was one of only six present candidates for the Master of Arts degree. Young Tom H. Watts, of Alabama, had worked

⁵⁵ Nuernberger, *Clays*, 70.

toward his M.A., but was “thrown” in Greek class and lost his diploma.⁵⁶ Watts appeared to suffer few ill effects from being “thrown.” He returned home to become a lawyer and planter, succeeding well enough to have enslaved 179 people by 1860. He served as Attorney General in President Jefferson Davis’s cabinet and, in 1863, was elected Governor of Alabama. Unfortunately for him, this occurred in tumultuous times when many Alabamians preferred the “Old Union” to the “new despotism.”

Had she known, Susanna might have been particularly proud of the behavior of her son Withers. His journal entry of Jan. 5, 1840 commented on fellow students who proceeded to beguile the “*monotony*” of college life. There was word, he wrote of:

a fight not infrequently of a frolick [sic], which latter I fear are but the prelude in many instances to confirmed dissipation and consequent degradation, physically and morally of unfortunate devotees of Bacchus... in the shape of handy stews, mint juleps and egg-nog, the last a favorite winter idol.

Given his disapproving manner, the other students were likely just as glad he didn’t attend their “frolicks.” Withers reported that one speaker at the debating club, the Jefferson Society, received great applause as he “described in a very graphical manner the last Indian of N. America standing upon a cliff on the western verge of our continent & looking back with feelings of sadness upon his native and lawful domains, before taking a leap into the Pacific.”⁵⁷ Withers did not offer his opinion, but, in 1836, his father – Governor Clay – had called for military action to protect Alabamians from insurrections during the Creek War. He ordered and led troops into the field himself. As a result, 300 Native Americans were captured in skirmishes, and almost all Native Americans in the state were forced to leave for the Oklahoma Territory. Withers likewise refrained from comment on another debate topic: “Are Women Entitled (by nature, I suppose, or by the principle of equality of rights) to Political Privileges?”⁵⁸

The winters were long studious sessions – too long for some. Young Armistead of Virginia and Henry C. Chambers of Alabama planned a

⁵⁶ John Withers Clay Journal, Dec. 3, 1840. Huntsville Public Library Special Collections and Archives.

⁵⁷ Ibid., March 21, 1840.

⁵⁸ Ibid., March 28, 1840.

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duel.⁵⁹ Armistead had already been sent off once to rusticate for three months because of a drinking frolick in his room. Each had apparently called upon the same young lady and neither showed the courtesy to leave first. In one of the boys' rooms they had a cane duel but stopped when another student informed them that gentlemen did not settle differences this way. The challenge expanded to a possible fight with sticks outdoors, then, finally, rifles at 80 yards. The two young men chose a site and arranged seconds. By the time school authorities investigated, their seconds had already been suspended for drinking frolics of their own, and, more importantly, because duels were illegal. All four young men fled Charlottesville for Washington City, and all were expelled. "The duel is crushed in embryo,"⁶⁰ wrote Withers.

Susanna Clay wrote in one letter to Withers, now a mature 21-year-old, that he should guard his possessions. While she had great confidence in her sons, she saw much in human nature which might unwittingly be led astray. He wrote, "Yes, often, very often, when inclined to indulge in sin, the remembrance of my mother's advice and asking myself the question... what would my mother say and feel if she knew that I committed this act? has served as a check to my evil propensities. She taught my young tongue to pray." Withers Clay understood how fortunate he was to have enjoyed the attention and affection of his parents. On his birthday, he asked his journal how it could be that just "the other day a prattling infant, gamboling at my mother's sides, or, at the fancied approach of danger, leaping into her arms and nestling my head in her bosom." Of his father, he fondly remembered when, as a youngster, he "the mimic soldier, strutting at my father's side in vain endeavoring to make my strides equal to his ordinary steps and to keep time to the tune of a song intended to tickle my boyish fancy."⁶¹

In contrast, Brother Lawson, also at the University, often slept late on Sundays, declining reminders from his elder brother of Sunday School and church services. Withers repeatedly insisted that his younger brother refrain from attending a friend's party, but Lawson ignored his pleas. This

⁵⁹ Young Chambers was the son of Dr. Henry H. Chambers who served on the Alabama Constitutional Convention and was later elected to the U.S. Senate; he died on the journey there and never served. Chambers County is named for him. One of his daughters married Thomas Bibb, the second governor of Alabama. The would-be-scholar, Henry represented Mississippi in the Confederate congress.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, January 9, 15, 1840.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, January 11, 1840.

was particularly improper when the meeting of the Episcopal Convention loomed on the horizon.

In the political arena, Susanna's son Clement C. Clay Jr. achieved great notice within the state of Alabama. Although constantly ill, he graduated from the University of Alabama, then the University of Virginia, with a law degree. He served as a U.S. Senator for eight years and served for two years in the Confederate Senate.⁶² Susanna Clay was keenly aware of the failings of her adult sons. She wrote in 1860, "My sons were my 'Idols.' I worked for them perhaps with more zeal than judgment."⁶³

Along with the Withers relations, the extended kinship among the Clay marriages allowed a constant stream of nephews, nieces, and cousins to enjoy visits at the Clay house. They attended events at schools, churches, and in society. Two dining room tables were often not enough to seat the overflowing relatives at mealtimes. These visitors enjoyed reading best-selling books and fashionable ladies' magazines and playing popular sheet music. The men shared out-of-town newspapers and popular sporting journals as horse breeding, racing, and betting held an enormous following among the well-to-do. The tracks at Green Bottom Inn and Boardman's Mill were on the circuit with prominent northern racers.⁶⁴

Susanna's life had become one of constant responsibility and supervision. Her basket of keys unlocked a world within her control, though a "servant" deferentially carried that basket for her. In fear that petty pilfering or larger thefts by servants might occur, Susanna saw to it that all valuables were secured under lock and key. This included, but was not limited to, expensive coffee, tea, sugars, rooms used for guests, and the wine cellar and smokehouse.

Susanna made frequent trips to the Jackson County plantation, where the family kept a large number of enslaved people, to check on their clothes and supplies, and of course, whether or not work was being completed. During one period, Clay was away for almost 24 months, either traveling the roadways to and from or serving in Washington.⁶⁵ The weight of responsibly hung heavily on Susanna; she was often fretful

⁶² For more information about Clay Junior, consult the chapter in this book about his wife, Virginia Clay-Clopton.

⁶³ Nuermberger, *Clays*, 178.

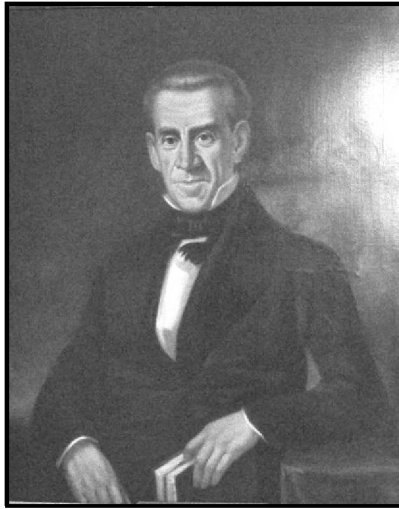
⁶⁴ Nancy M. Rohr, "Off To the Races," *Huntsville Historical Review*. Vol. 35 #1 (W-S 2010), 35-57.

⁶⁵ Nuermberger, *Clays*, 11, 12, 60.

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about her duties. During one of the two times she joined her husband in Washington, Susanna asked her mother and brothers to oversee their properties. In letters home she wrote anxiously if “the negroes have their clothes...I am in dread of consequences, with regard to our plantation.” In Washington, Mrs. Clay went out to see “all the sights to be found,” accompanied by her sister.⁶⁶ Seemingly agitated by possible actions in national politics in the late 1830s, however, Susanna wrote home, “I fear that our country is on the eve of revolution. God, protect it from ruin, should be the prayer of all.” Glad to be returning home, the last leg of the trip took three days and nights, “perilous & fateaguing [sic]” just from the Clay family home in Grainger County, Tennessee to Huntsville.⁶⁷

With the household settled and running smoothly, the elder Clay won and lost friends as he won and lost elections, leaving behind a emarkable record of accomplishments.



Clement C. Clay, Sr.

Within a period of 30 years, Clement Clay Sr. served in the Territorial Legislature, the Alabama House of Representatives, the U. S. House of Representatives, as the 8th governor of Alabama, U.S. Senate, the Alabama State Supreme Court in 1846, and wrote *Clay's Digest* of state laws. Nevertheless, speculation and the resulting Panic of 1837 were

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

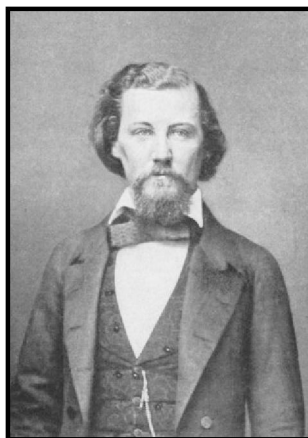
⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

Madison County

irreversible; he resigned the Senate in November 1841 to return home to reestablish his position and credit. He left public service to practice law with his sons, “officially” retired but continuing to be involved in politics and successfully tutor his son, Clement Junior.

In the next decades, the family was firmly rooted in Huntsville. The Clay men practiced law together, but none of the younger men had their father’s fervor for the legal profession. The youngest son, Lawson, longed for other activities; he considered settling in Texas or Arkansas, and, during the Mexican War, led 85 volunteers to Mexico with a captain’s commission. Withers became editor of the *Huntsville Democrat* which offered a platform for the family’s political positions. As expected, the Clays vigorously supported Secession. Clement Jr. found his way through the mire of local and state politics to become a U.S. Senator. On January 21, 1861, Senator Clay, as did other Southern leaders, spoke to the U.S. Senate:

It is now nearly forty-two years since Alabama was admitted into the Union. She entered it, as she goes out of it, while the Confederacy was in convulsions, caused by the hostility of the North to the domestic slavery of the South... The people of Alabama] are resolved not to trust to the hands of their enemies the measure of their rights... I shall return, like a true and loyal son, to her bosom, to defend her honor, maintain her rights, and share her fate.⁶⁸



Clement Clay Jr. (Wikipedia)

⁶⁸ Qtd. in Nuernberger, *Clays*, 182.

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Clement Clay Jr. was elected to the Confederate Senate and travelled to Richmond to serve for a term as soon as his health permitted. Withers, after the first invasion by the Yankees in Huntsville, fled with his printing presses in an attempt to maintain the newspaper, and Lawson served as an Adjunct General on the staff of General Kirby Smith. This left the elder Clays in a precarious position in the newly unfolding conflicts. Both Clay parents were now feeble; the War years would not treat them well. With the incursion of the Yankees in Huntsville in April 1862, Susanna decided to stay in town in an attempt to save the house and salvage their belongings. If they fled, she said, rude soldiers might molest them because Clement was too deaf and weak to repel them.⁶⁹

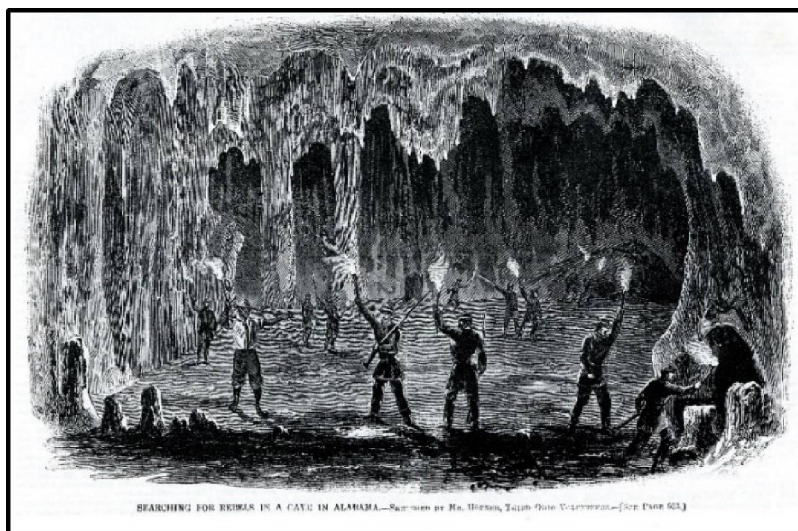
Understanding the enormity of decisions made regarding the plantations, Susanna Clay cannily foresaw the importance of food supplies for events to come. In a letter to her son Clement, she described planting less cotton and more food crops. She believed this should be mandatory for all Southern planters if they were to survive.⁷⁰

As violence increased in north Alabama, Federal troops sought bushwhackers who fired on their trains near Paint Rock. Four or five were captured and more were sought. They may have been concealed in one of the many caves in Jackson County. An enslaved man led Federal soldiers inside by torchlight; human figures seemed to be hidden in the shadows and recesses, but these were actually natural limestone formations. The soldiers went about two miles into the cave but found no guerillas.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Nuernberger, *Clays*, 211.

⁷⁰ H. E. Sterkx, *Partners in Rebellion*. (Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson, 1970, 131.

⁷¹ *Harper's Magazine*, August 16, 1862, 523.



(Harper's August 16, 1862)

On one trip to Huntsville, Clement Clay Jr. managed to hide the remaining people the family kept enslaved, or as many of them as he could round up, in the Sauta caves of Jackson County. (These were most likely the same caves explored earlier by the Yankees.) In town, he found a merchant who sold him a small bit of coffee, sugar and salt for his parents. That Spring, the Clays suffered an even worse hardship, receiving news from Macon, Georgia that the only son of Hugh Lawson, four-year-old Felix, had died of scarlet fever while he and his mother, Celeste, were there with her family.⁷²

In the autumn, Susanna wrote to her sons that the plantations would not make any cotton, and only a bit of corn. Clement Clay Senior, was arrested twice. The old gentleman could not have posed any real threat to the Yankees or their campaign, but he had a very strong standing in the state of Alabama. His wife dealt with these added anxieties, and agonized over the hopelessness of their situation. Susanna recognized that her husband did not understand the severity of their position. She made a two-week trip to the Jackson plantation to deal with the loss of stock, escapes of enslaved people, and the quickly depleting food supply for the few who had not fled. Returning to town, she discovered that all the people they enslaved at the Huntsville house had now taken flight. Some went to the mountain and wrecked the family cottages on Monte Sano, sleeping in the

⁷² Nuernberger, *Clays*, 217-218.

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family's beds. Yet she wrote one son, "The negro...is more to be pitied than blamed. They are ignorant and grasping as we are, for a happier future." She prayed for strength.⁷³

At the second northern invasion, outlying parts of the county were ransacked and burned. Susanna described their remaining stock of supplies as "20 pieces of meat, 6 bushs. of meal, 250 pounds of flour, two cows...we can hold out for three months if our provisions are not taken & our servants are faithful."⁷⁴ Yankee officers demanded space in the Clay house for living quarters, as they had all over town. Susanna also rented one room to a pair of traveling actors who fled in the night without paying. Clement and Susanna were eating the same food as their few remaining servants – mush and milk – and were glad of it, she said. Frail Clement, was arrested again, and, on one occasion, taken to Nashville by train. Their house was searched often for arms and spies. In a pointless demonstration, their 3000-volume library was taken from the house and burned. Susanna was eligible for food relief, but would have to acknowledge that the family was indigent, which she refused to do.⁷⁵ Susanna wrote to her sons in August 1863, admitting that they soon might be hard pressed for bread. Federal cavalry 150-200 camped on the town square where "Negroes flocked to them. Some men they took but women and children came in such numbers" they were driven off, those either too old or too young. Most of their slaves were taken, "every able bodied man they could catch was taken – even from the Churches!" Although two elderly and two young enslaved people remained, "in truth, we are in fear of the negroes all leaving or being taken." The remaining food supplies Susanna listed would be enough if they were left alone; she planned to share what remained with Withers' large household.⁷⁶ Rumor was heard up north that Mrs. Clay had drawn rations from the Yankees, indicating that she had signed the dreaded oath of allegiance to the Federal government.⁷⁷ Younger male family members denied any possible truth to the story, but these Clay men were far from home, and they were not starving.

⁷³ Ibid., 212, 215.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 214.

⁷⁵ Sterkx, *Partners*, 170, 171.

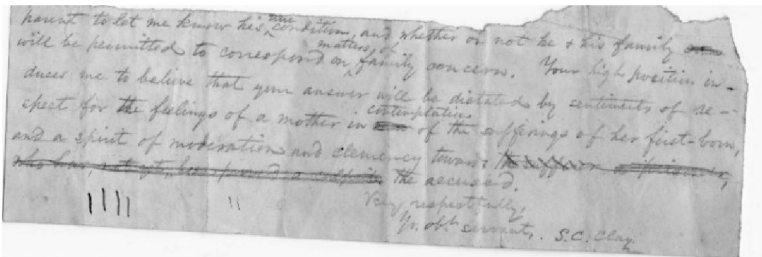
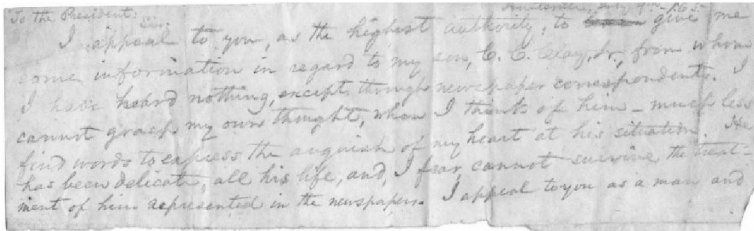
⁷⁶ C. C. Clay Collection, Huntsville Madison County Public Library, Special Collections and Archives, Clay 16-1, Box 4, F 3.

⁷⁷ Nuernberger, *Clays*, 211-233, *passim*.

Madison County

After the conclusion of the War and the assassination of President Lincoln, the shock of the arrest of her son Clement and his unknown future caused Susanna anxiety. He was imprisoned with President Jeff Davis at Fortress Monroe. Susanna composed a practice letter filled with her heart's anguish to President Andrew Johnson written on July 9, 1865:

I appeal to you as the highest authority to give me some information in regard to my son, C.C. Clay, Jr. from whom I have heard nothing, except through newspaper correspondents. I cannot grasp my own thoughts when I think of him – much less find words to express the anguish of my heart at his situation. He has been delicate all his life, and, I fear cannot survive the treatment of him represented in the newspapers. I appeal to you as a man and parent to let me know his true condition and whether or not will be permitted to correspond on matters of family concern. Your high position induces me to believe that your answer will be dictated by sentiments of respect for the feelings of a mother in contemplation of the sufferings of her first-born and a spirit of moderation and clemency toward the suffering who has, not yet, been found a culprit the accused. Very respectfully, yr. obt. Servant, Susanna C. Clay⁷⁸



Letter from Susanna Clay to President Johnson (HMCPL)

⁷⁸ Susanna C. Clay to President Andrew Johnson, Clay Collection HMCPL 2008-30, Box 4, F 5.

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Her husband was bedfast; all decisions and responsibilities were now entirely upon Susanna. On Dec. 29, 1864 she wrote her still imprisoned son Clement. She prayed to be calm and patient as his father “suffered from anxiety and vertigo.” Brother Withers and his wife, Mary, also fared poorly. “Xmas was sad indeed.” She was fearful of the Black soldiers who occupied town, “but Providence brought us safely to this day.”

Susanna’s own health quickly weakened under these pressures and anxieties. On January 1, 1866, Susanna Clay was stricken with apoplexy and lived for only one day after. At her return to Huntsville at the end of the War, daughter-in-law Virginia wrote later in her memoirs:

Mother Clay, whose beautiful patrician hands had never known the soil of labour, who, throughout her long life of piety and gentle surroundings, had been shielded as tenderly as some rare blossom, now, an aged woman within but few months of the tomb... was compelled to perform all necessary household labour.⁷⁹

Virginia, herself a rare blossom, travelled extensively with her husband and had little time to help Susanna with any of those tasks. Susanna’s second daughter-in-law, Mary Lewis Clay who remained in Huntsville throughout those difficult years, wrote knowingly, “Her life had become a weary burden to her; mortified pride, disappointed ambition, loss of fortune & and the crowning sorrow that broke her heart Bro. C’s imprisonment were too much for her feeble frame.”⁸⁰ Susanna’s husband, Governor Clay, outlived her by just a little over eight months, Susanna Withers Clay died January 2, 1866 at an exhausted 68 years old.

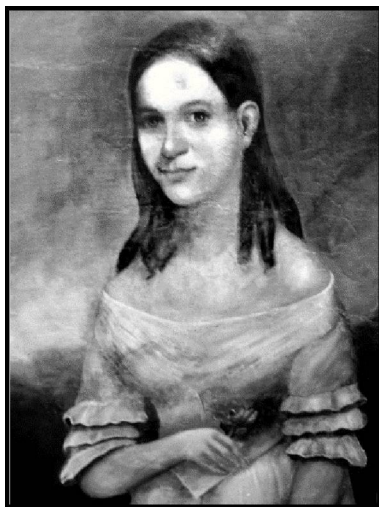
⁷⁹ Virginia T. Clay-Clopton, Ed. Ada Sterling, *Belle of the Fifties*. (NY: Doubleday, 1905), 282.

⁸⁰ Nuernberger, *Clays*, 272.

Virginia Tunstall Clay (1825-1915)

Fearing robbery, I slept with all the money in one sock.

*Virginia Tunstall was a woman who knew what she wanted when she married Alabama's most eligible bachelor, Clement C. Clay Jr. of Huntsville. Their wedding ceremony, which took place in Tuscaloosa, included everyone who was anyone at the University of Alabama and within the state legislature. Two weeks later, as they arrived in Huntsville by stagecoach, the driver blew a bugle blast loudly as he passed the town square in route to their home, "Clay Castle."⁸¹ Her husband's political career took the family to Washington, D.C. It was here, among the leaders of the nation, that Virginia Clay's glory truly shone. She later titled her memoirs *A Belle of the Fifties*.*



Young Virginia Tunstall

Virginia's childhood of constant change may explain her adulthood ease of adjustment to new surroundings. At her mother's death, three-year-old Virginia's father, Dr. Peyton Randolph Tunstall, felt unable to administer child-rearing duties, so he left her in the care of her mother's

⁸¹ There was at least one dissenting opinion. Ma Lewis wrote to her daughter in Paris "...a most frivolous, giddy young woman whose horse ran with her at starting returned home, got another... heaven help me from such in laws or daughters." Nancy M. Rohr, Ed. *An Alabama School Girl in Paris*. (Boaz, AL: SilverThreads 2001), 133. (Hereafter cited as *Letters*.)

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family. He never worried that his daughter might suffer from of a lack of attention. As Virginia herself wrote, “my grandfather, General William Arrington...having been left a widower with twelve children, wearying of his solitude [?], mounted his horse and rode over to visit the comely widow Battle, whose children also numbered twelve.”⁸² Their marriage produced one child, Anne Arrington, who had 24 half-brothers and sisters, all Virginia’s aunts and uncles. Young Virginia was surrounded by family, but, at approximately age six, she moved to Tuscaloosa with her uncle Henry W. Collier, a prominent politician. Collier would eventually match many of the political offices of her father-in-law, Clement Clay Senior.

Virginia completed schooling at a Nashville academy and returned to Tuscaloosa to become engaged to a famous duelist, “The Black Knight of the South,” Alexander Keith McClung.



Alexander McClung

She said he was the gallantest [sic] lover of two states. “She loved him madly while with him, but feared him when away from him; for he was a man of fitful, uncertain moods... and given to melancholy.” Fortunately for Virginia, they never married. McClung ended his life in 1855. She flirted with William Lowndes Yancey, who was later called the fiery “Orator of Secession,” but once again, her choice not to marry him proved fortunate. He died at the age of 48, in 1863. Her final selection for marriage was the stable, malleable Clement Clay Junior. They became

⁸² Virginia Tunstall Clay-Clopton. Ed. Ada Sterling. *Belle of the Fifties: Memoirs of Mrs. Clay of Alabama*. (NY: Doubleday, 1905), 30. (Hereafter cited as *Belle*.)

acquainted among mutual friends before Virginia departed for Nashville. They met again at her uncle's home in Tuscaloosa. In a letter home to his brother, Clay said, "There is a most lovely & beautiful young lady here who has quite *mesmerized* me."⁸³

They were engaged within a few days' time and married a month later, on February 1, 1843.⁸⁴ Virginia Tunstall was most likely not Clement's first romance. His father Clement Senior had warned the two boys at the University of Virginia, "...to beware of early matrimonial, or rather, love entanglements, lest [it] should bring trouble. My poor brother's [Clement] experience is but too striking and mournful an exemplification of the little confidence to be reposed in mankind – might I not add womankind."⁸⁵ There is some ambiguity in a letter to Joseph Acklen dated February 13, 1843 when Clay Junior wrote about "she" who had his miniatures for which he was "sincerely troubled" about "that devil" who lied. Could Joe get them back, "For God's sake," and he would not pay one cent over \$300 (over \$7,000 today) for their return." This is a frantic tone for a letter written only 13 days after his marriage to Virginia.⁸⁶

Virginia was only eighteen. The groom was a mature, well-educated 27-year-old who had already won his first election in the lower house of the state legislature in 1842. She was not known to be a great beauty but had useful family connections and a great amount of charm.

Clement served as his father's secretary, traveling to Washington City, where he became smitten with the game of politics. Virginia soon became smitten with the national stage and her own role on it. The couple did not officially move to the capitol city until 1854, however, when Clement became a U.S. Senator. Virginia expressed relief at an escape from the prying eyes of disapproving relatives. In preparation for a season in a new, exciting place, Virginia went shopping in New York City. After spending some \$4,000, she felt ready for fetes among prominent political figures of the day and, more importantly, their wives.⁸⁷ According to Ada Sterling who years later spent several months in Huntsville, Virginia

⁸³ Bell Irwin Wiley. *Confederate Women*. (NY: Barnes and Noble, 1975), 41.

⁸⁴ *Belle*. 15, 17.

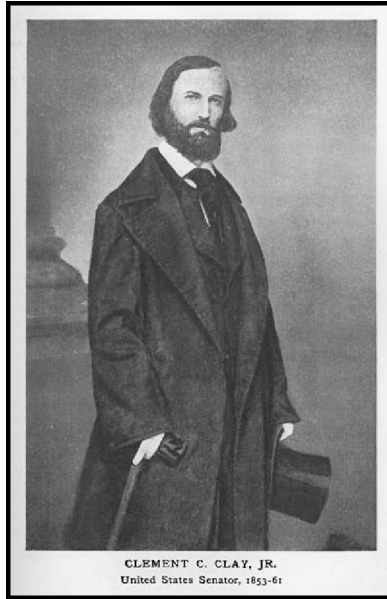
⁸⁵ John Withers Clay Journal, January 23, 1840. Huntsville Madison County Public Library, Heritage Room.

⁸⁶ Acklin Files, Tulane University, #86-2-22.

⁸⁷ Nuermberger, *Clays*, 129, 130.

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purchased an elaborate landeau in Philadelphia for \$1,600 and had it sent home, “where, among the foliated avenues of beautiful Huntsville, it attracted universal attention. It was a capacious and splendid equipage, lined with amber satin, and was drawn by the high-bred horses...” This carriage, which had driven “bosky driveways” after the War, had subsequent owners, and was last noted in the possession of the hack man at the train station, who was a man of color.⁸⁸



Clement C. Clay Jr.

Two observations from politicians who knew her reveal Virginia’s charms. “While her husband was in Washington, Mrs. Clay was one of the brightest ornaments of society” and “Mrs. Clay gave early promise of her success in society, for she had beauty, a quick perception, tact, great kindness of disposition, was entirely unaffected, and I observed that she was not only a fine conversationalist, but an *eloquent listener*.”⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Octavia Zollicofer Bond. “South of the Line: A Belle of the Fifties” *Southern Woman’s Magazine*. Sept. 1915, Vol. 5:16, 17, 33; Nuernberger, *Clays*, 116.

⁸⁹ Qtd. in James E. Saunders. *Early Settlers of Alabama*. (New Orleans: Graham, 1899), 288.

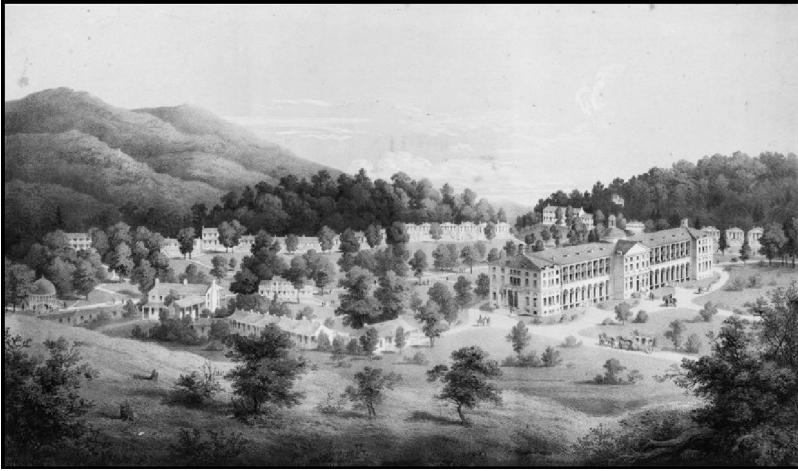


Virginia Tunstall Clay

Due to Clay's chronic asthma and cough (he sometimes appeared to have "a death-like pallor"), they often visited nearby White Sulfur Springs with friends.⁹⁰ During the heat of summer and fear of malaria, many Huntsville families spent time in cottages on Monte Sano Mountain enjoying the pure air, ice water, and freedom from mosquitoes. His cough would follow Clay for the rest of his life, worsening in times of stress and decision-making. The couple moved often; Virginia was the belle wherever she went. The couple had no children; Virginia's one pregnancy ended in stillbirth, and there would be no more. Caring for the sickly Clement took much of her time and energy.

⁹⁰ Nuernberger, *Clays*, 132.

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White Sulphur Springs

The national scene worsened with the election of President Lincoln, and the Southern states prepared for Secession. On January 19, 1861, Jefferson Davis wrote to Clay, “We have piped and they would not dance and now the devil may care.”⁹¹ President Davis’s wife, Varina, invited Clay and Virginia to stay with them in Montgomery, capitol of the Southern Confederacy, but Clay was too ill, and they remained at “Cosy Cot” on Monte Sano. When he became healthy enough to travel, he went to Richmond to take his seat in the Confederate Senate. His speeches were fiery and fervent, and he was well thought of by his fellow politicians. His image was reproduced on the first Confederate one-dollar bill.



Confederate One Dollar Bill featuring C. C. Clay Junior

⁹¹ Qtd. in Nuernberger, *Clays*, 182.

Virginia and her sister-in-law, Celeste, initially stayed with relatives in Macon, Georgia out of danger, later joining their husbands in Richmond. Not entirely free from menace on the way, Virginia wrote, "Fearing robbery by chloroform [sic] I slept with all the money in one sock..." all the "watches, chatelaines and pins in the other... and we slept three in a bed."⁹²

While danger surrounded them, Virginia described Richmond as a fine locale, a "pleasant and an active one, for already it was peopled with throngs of our former friends." She wrote of the great beauties and their dresses, along with the distinguished gentlemen. She recalled the name of one of the prettiest daughters of the city who had been, "the first girl of her day to wear a curl upon her forehead... soon to be imitated by others."⁹³

Apparently, Virginia's *bon mots* excited universal admiration and "An evening spent in her presence resembled a spiritualistic séance." Her proudest evening in the Southern capitol, "historic" she called it, was her role as Mrs. Malaprop in an amateur performance of Sheridan's play "The Rivals." Mrs. Ives, the hostess, recalled the "brilliant performance... in rich costumes," long-remembered by the audience of 300 guests.⁹⁴ For many, however, it was a tasteless, frivolous exhibition in February of 1864 when the War had been going badly for the South for some time.

Clay's salary was less than their living expenses as a Senator in Richmond, but in the end, it did not matter. He was not re-elected in 1863 (most likely due to his refusal to support a pay increase for Confederate soldiers) and was essentially unemployed. In May of 1864, however, President Davis assigned Clay as a special agent for a mission in the north. He made his way through the blockaded Southern coast first to Bermuda and then Halifax, Canada. Davis' Confederate government appropriated \$1,000,000 in gold to aid clandestine activities by Southerners and sympathizers against the northern United States. The true mission of Clay's work, however, may have been to feel out terms for peace for a possible end to the War.

Virginia's only means of communication with her husband was the use of "personals" printed in the *Richmond Enquirer* kindly forwarded and printed in the *New York Daily News*.⁹⁵ Virginia slowly made her way

⁹² Nuernberger, *Clays*, 200.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 167, 169.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 174, 175.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 237.

south back to relatives in Georgia, where her days dragged. She considered joining her husband in Canada or travelling to England to visit friends, but in late 1864, she accepted an invitation to stay with the wealthy Hammonds of Redcliffe along the Savannah River in South Carolina. There was an abundance of good food: vegetables were plentiful, fish, duck and other game birds were at hand. It was a lovely autumn with the scent of millions of violets in the air. She noted that tea, coffee, and some delicacies were becoming difficult to find in nearby towns.

Virginia later recalled, “calico of the commonest in those days was sold at \$25 a yard; and we women of the Confederacy cultivated such an outward indifference to Paris fashions as would have astonished our former competitors in the Federal capitol... the glories of an unbleached Macon Mills muslin gown, trimmed with gourd-seed buttons, dyed crimson...” had been the talk of the spring of 1864 Richmond society.⁹⁶ This was not the real Virginia Clay, however – she never once admitted to wearing such clothes herself. When she got word of her husband’s planned departure from Canada, she wrote to him requesting at least two silk dresses of black and purple. “I prefer the purple to be *moiré antique*, if it is fashionable.” Her list of 25 items included books on fashion, gifts for little Jeff Davis and others, and ended with “lace collars, large and pointed now worn.” Ever dutiful, Clement appears to have purchased the items, but they were lost in the confusion of later events.⁹⁷

Aside from occasionally spreading her own brand of cheer, Virginia did little for the War effort.⁹⁸ She and her sister-in-law Celeste Clay once took strawberries and butter to the wounded soldiers in Richmond (a slave most likely picked the berries). She certainly did not churn the butter, and a servant, either free or enslaved, probably accompanied them to the hospital to carry the delicacies. Celeste acknowledged, “We deserve *no* credit for *any thing*. We have done as little for our country as any two

⁹⁶ Ibid., 225.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Virginia did offer up a design for a Confederate flag, red (silk, of course) with a gold olive wreath in the upper left-hand corner, pierced by a gold spear. Her vision apparently did not display well from a distance, and another memorable version was selected. Showing no doubt of their cause in 1863, Huntsville ladies raised \$1,400 for an ensign for the gunboat *Huntsville*. It was 18 feet by 20 feet and used the words “In God We Have Put Our Trust.” (Sterkx, *Partners*, 38, 41).

worthless women I know... life was as little changed as possible by war conditions.”⁹⁹

By this time, the War was clearly a losing affair for the Confederacy. Clay was able to join Virginia at Macon, but their legal status was now officially that of refugees. The Clays fled first to Petersburg, then Danville, on to Greensboro, Macon, meeting with other refugees as they went, eventually ending up in Forsyth, Georgia. They gathered with fellow refugees along the way when news arrived of Lincoln’s assassination. The evacuees were stunned to see reward notices for President Jefferson Davis and Clement Clay Jr. with a price on their heads of \$100,000.¹⁰⁰ (The actual reward was for \$25,000 but the newspapers consistently printed the larger amount, which would be over \$1.5 million today.) Senator Clay, Virginia, and others were captured and taken north by ship as Federal prisoners to Fortress Monroe. There, Virginia tearfully parted from her ailing husband as did the other wives, and she made her way back to Huntsville. On the return trip she later recalled, she “refused to shed tears before the Yankees” even though their baggage, papers, and even her person was searched. Virginia proudly made a game of this body search, she said, and held her breath so the examining woman could not remove her corset. She insisted the woman redress her, and Virginia left the room to find Varina Davis “weeping, humiliated, and unclad.”¹⁰¹

Virginia immediately began a letter writing campaign while onboard the southern bound ship *Clyde*. Anticipating a federal trial against her husband and Davis, she wrote first to Joseph Holt, the Judge Advocate of the Union Army who would be the chief prosecutor for their trial. In other letters she solicited legal support from prominent northern lawyers. At one port of call, a kind sailor slipped her letters ashore at Hilton Head and returned the gold coin she offered for postage.¹⁰²

By August 21, 1865 Virginia was back in Huntsville to face the same impoverishment as all the Clays and their neighbors. Her elderly in-laws were in failing health. Federals controlled everything. There was no income, all investments were gone, crops had failed, and debts mounted.

⁹⁹ Qtd. in Mary Elizabeth Massey. *Refugee Life in the Confederacy*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1964), 181.

¹⁰⁰ Clay, *Belle*, 248.

¹⁰¹ Nuernberger, *Clays*, 264, 265.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 278, 279.

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Undaunted, Virginia forged ahead with her campaign to bring Clement home. She wrote to anyone she could think of on behalf of her husband. Jurist Jeremiah Black said she pleaded with “prudence, wisdom, and delicacy which never allowed the charms of the lady to be lost in the great qualities of the heroine.”¹⁰³

If Clement could not be freed, Virginia yearned to simply visit him. What follows is an excerpt from an anguished letter to the President in September of 1865:

Months ago, I wd have presented myself to you, to beg to be allowed to visit my husband, & to sue for his release. But wiser heads & riper judgments than mine, assured me that no appeal in behalf of Mr. Clay, wd be considered by you, until after some disposition of Mr. Davis’s case. I have waited, for nearly four long months...in vain!... I wd hurry to Washington instantly to prefer this request in person, but for lack of means to expend in what might prove a fruitless journey....Say that I can see my husband....or give me one hope of his release & I will fly to you, with words & tears of grateful thanks for yr justice magnanimity & clemency.¹⁰⁴

There was no reply. Virginia decided to plead her case in person, if she could only acquire enough money to fund the trip. A Huntsville merchant, Robert Herstein, lent her one hundred dollars in gold and enough silk for a dress to be made. She made her way north in November, escorted by Maj. William Echols.¹⁰⁵

Once in Washington, Virginia she received an interview with President Johnson on November 22, 1865. Also present at the meeting was Adele Douglas, widow of Stephen A. Douglas. Virginia later reported that Mrs. Douglas pled her case, burst into tears and threw herself at the feet of the president, urging Virginia to do likewise. Virginia said she could not bring herself to kneel before Andrew Johnson, whom she condemned for his lowly background. Of course, the interview failed. A letter from General Grant on Clay’s behalf achieved no recognition. She went to New York City to visit friends who donated money to the cause, and Horace Greeley provided sympathetic publicity in the *New York Tribune*.

¹⁰³ Bond, *South*, 16.

¹⁰⁴ Qtd. in Nuernberger, *Clays*, 279.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 302.

At Christmas, Virginia was finally granted permission to visit her husband at Fortress Monroe. Once there, she was made to wait indefinitely; she cried and became hysterical at the delay. Finally, in the late afternoon, the Clays were allowed to see one another under supervision, followed by a second visit later. Virginia was most likely shocked at Clement's appearance, but she shared news from home and of their present situation. She described her efforts and those of others to obtain his release before returning to her lodgings, then to Washington City, where the power was.

Virginia continued to write letters to the President, all of which went unacknowledged. When Senator Clay's mother died, Virginia's new plea begged for his release:

Oh, Mr. Johnson what a fearful blow to my noble husband, your unhappy prisoner! He was her idolized son, her first-born." In the same letter, she wept for Clay's failing health, "Mr. Clay, always delicate, is dying daily. His thin pale face daggered my heart to look upon!...my husband is... my all... Give him to me for a little while at least..."¹⁰⁶

She haunted the ante rooms of the capitol and the White House for a chance to meet the President again. She finally saw Johnson at 11 pm on April 17, declaring that she would stay there until he released her husband. Perhaps exhausted by her assault, Johnson gave the order to free the ailing Senator Clay after almost a full year of imprisonment. In 1872 William Garrett, who knew the family well, wrote admiringly about "Angelic" Virginia who played a "noble part [when] she acted in procuring the liberation of her husband, after toils and buffetings which would have crushed a less heroic and devoted woman... The scene was morally grand."¹⁰⁷

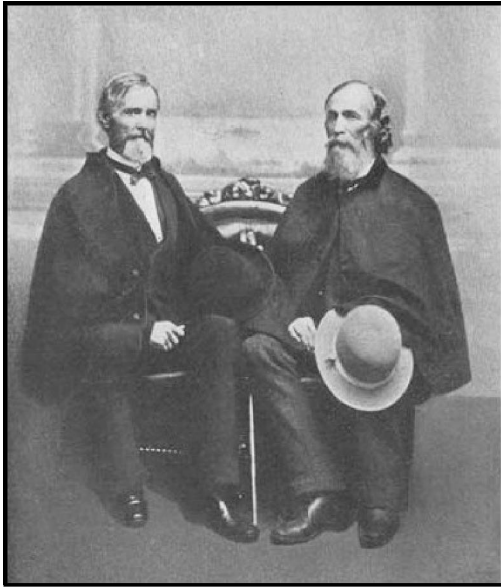
The couple reached Huntsville in late April. Friends met them as they approached home with news that Clement's father would not live much longer, and that the Clays' possessions and lives were in total disarray. Virginia Clay, the newspaper reported, is "an equal sharer in the esteem and admiration that is so justly due her, not only for her unrivalled virtues and graces, but for that exalted womanly devotion which in the true heart is only the more developed and fixed which when the trials of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 290.

¹⁰⁷ William Garrett. *Reminiscences of Public Men in Alabama*. Rpt. Bibliolife, Charleston, S.C., 291.

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adversity encompass us about.”¹⁰⁸ The newspaper wished them a long and joyous life; there was little to offer other than good wishes.



Jefferson Davis and Clement C. Clay Jr.

The Clay men, like almost all Southern men, were estranged from the new social order. Welcoming his brother back to Huntsville, Hugh Lawson wrote from Georgia:

The changes that have occurred in our own family, not to mention the altered condition & circumstances of friends, will bring sorrow... You & I are homeless & and almost penniless... It is no place for a poor man to reside in, especially one who has theretofore lived there as a man of fortune & been so regarded by the community... But, to be conscious that we live among those who were our inferiors, socially, mentally, & pecuniarily [sic], & that they now take the lead in society and in public affairs, is enough to make each day of life less supportable than the preceding one.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Nuermberger, *Clays*, 294; Bell Irwin Wiley. *Confederate Women*. (NY: Barnes and Noble, 1975), 74.

¹⁰⁹ Nuermberger, *Clays*, 296.

Desperate for cash, they painted and tidied up “Clay Castle,” offering it at auction with a \$500 minimum bid. Mr. Alfred Clay, “an aspiring gentleman of color,” fell \$25 short. There was no reliable source of income, nor any expectation of it in the future. Destitution was a terrible situation for anyone, but intolerable for Virginia Clay. Her husband tried to make improvements at the cabin and urged her to join him there. She refused to do more than visit the place at Gurleysville where her husband’s asthma was not helped by his dissipation. She could not revitalize the man or his health, so she sought a life where she could find obliging friends. Clay continued his attempts to pay off debts incurred by himself and his father, attempting to sell life insurance policies, but neither he nor the company, Life Association of America, were dependable. Virginia visited New York City, and Memphis, enjoying the society of her scores of friends. Apparently, the opera was charming, as were the theatres and dinner at the Peabody – “Memphis was never so gay.”¹¹⁰

Clement died in 1882. His indebtedness made the estate insolvent, and Virginia was entitled to personal property only to the value of \$1,000. The Jackson County plantation, the former law office, and one other property were bid on by Clay family members and one man “Thomas Gurley, colored.”¹¹¹ The former lodge was now her main residence; she named it “Wildwood.” Business affairs were a struggle, as Virginia never attempted to grasp or embrace the concept of thrift. Two young female cousins, Tunstall relatives, visited her to relieve the tedium of lonely days. She happily agreed to chaperone two other cousins to Europe in 1884. In the winter of 1885, she managed to return to her former grandeur in Washington society.

Virginia married for a second time in 1887. Her beloved was old family friend and widower, Alabama Supreme Court Judge David Clopton. Celeste and Hugh Lawson hosted the event at their home on Pulaski Pike. Virginia could now reenter the social scene in Montgomery.¹¹² After his death in 1892, in a remarkable statement for the times, she became known as Virginia Clay-Clopton.

Virginia presided at Alabama Daughters of the Confederacy meetings, although most likely only as a figurehead, and graciously lent her presence to the Alabama Woman Suffrage Association. Her nieces wrote admiring articles about her in their local newspaper, sharing her past

¹¹⁰ Nuernberger, *Clays*, 296, 308.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 316.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 317.

experiences as she recalled them. Acquaintances urged her to write her memoirs, and with assistance from her friend Ellelee Humes, Ada Sterling took on the task of editing Virginia Clay-Clopton's memoirs, *A Belle of the Fifties*. In the 1905 preface Mrs. Sterling noted, "I have come upon no record of any other woman of her time who has filled so powerful a place politically, whose belleship [sic] has been so long sustained, or whose magnetism and compelling fascinations have swayed others so universally as have those of Mrs. Clay-Clopton."¹¹³

Virginia still had no permanent home of her own, but it is doubtful that she ever fretted over her next meal. In the dreadful days of war and recovery, she never seemed to go hungry as so many others did. Her life appeared charmed, or that is how she chose to remember it. *Belle* presents a phenomenal list of Who's Who personalities. Virginia recalled the fashions of those days in vivid detail as ruffled dresses gave way to paneled skirts, of plain or embossed or brocade fabric. She remembered who wore their hair low-coiled and who wore low necks, open sleeves, even evening gloves of half-length of kid or thick with embroidery. Mrs. Sterling, her editor, admitted to making valiant efforts to reduce redundancy and possible over-embellishment in the manuscript.



May 1864 Fashions

A modern reading of *A Belle of the Fifties* implies that Virginia enjoyed only the most sumptuous, luxurious life, however she most likely

¹¹³ Ibid., vii.

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exaggerated. The Huntsville-Madison County Public Library's archival copy includes a hand-written preface by Ada Sterling, which stated:

It is only fair to say that their powers, at the age of 83 led to the most extravagant departures from the truth; so much so that her nephew Mr. William Clay warned me that 'Auntie couldn't speak the truth if she tried.' I have therefore retained her spirit only in writing this book, drawing my facts from several thousand letters, written during the war, and relying upon no human memory for them.



Virginia Clay-Clopton (HMCPL)

Virginia Tunstall Clay-Clopton may have been no more than a good listener and storyteller, but it cannot be denied that she was a favorite wherever she went. Not only did she easily make friends, but she kept them for the span of her lifetime. How else could she have managed a life lived at others' homes, at others' whims? Lord Napier, the British Prime Minister to the United States, supposedly said, "She was the most charming woman in America." Father Ryan, "The Poet Laureate of the South," spoke of Virginia, "I have heard Webster, Clay, Calhoun, Everett, Choate, Gladstone, Douglass, Prentiss, Yancey, Jefferson Davis, and all the great orators of my day; but I tell you the greatest of them all is Mrs. Clement C. Clay." Celebrating her 90th birthday at a splendid reception in Huntsville, Virginia Clay-Clopton was "gowned in black velvet and duchess lace, with a great pink corsage rose gleaming in the soft light of

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90 candles on her birthday cake.”¹¹⁴ Just a few short weeks later, she suffered a short illness and died on June 23, 1915.

While her sense of self occasionally overrode her sense of duty, Virginia Clay made her own way and always seemed to find the attention she craved. Does it matter now that she recalled her past only at its shimmering best? She would not be the first person to do so, nor will she be the last. Virginia’s position, stretching into the 20th century, was one of influence and leadership. This was a new look for Alabama women.

¹¹⁴ Clay Family Scrapbook, HMCPL; Samuel Wesley Fordyce. Misc. notes for autobiography, Special Collections Division, Univ. of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville, Arkansas, MC 1311, Box 7, folder 6; Qtd. in Nuernberger, Clays, 318.

Mary Ann Cruse (1824-1910)

Woman born to endure can long drag the weary burden of a wounded heart.¹¹⁵

Mary Ann Cruse, a successful writer of fiction, had an intimate experience of the War. Single, in her early thirties, and residing at home, she devoted herself to the Huntsville Episcopal Church of the Nativity with good works among like-minded, privileged neighbors. This combination sometimes led to a biased upper-class viewpoint, but Mary Ann Cruse's writings are respected, nonetheless.

Mary Ann's father, Samuel Cruse, was enumerated in the 1860 Federal census as a Railroad Treasurer; his combined real estate and personal property at that time totaled \$52,000, including the value of 11 people he kept in enslavement. In 1854, Mary Ann published the very successful *Little Episcopalian; Or, the Child Taught by the Prayer-Book*, which consisted of moral tales for children and, in 1858, a novel called *Bessie Melville*. She apparently completed *Cameron Hall: A Story of the Civil War* some months before the outcome of the Civil War was known, but the book was not published until 1867. Mary Ann's viewpoint was that of an affluent city-dweller who was immensely involved in social life, particularly church life. Considering the conversations in parlors or around dining tables in that day, however, she was clearly aware of the importance of the industrial potential of the Huntsville and the Memphis & Charleston Railroad.

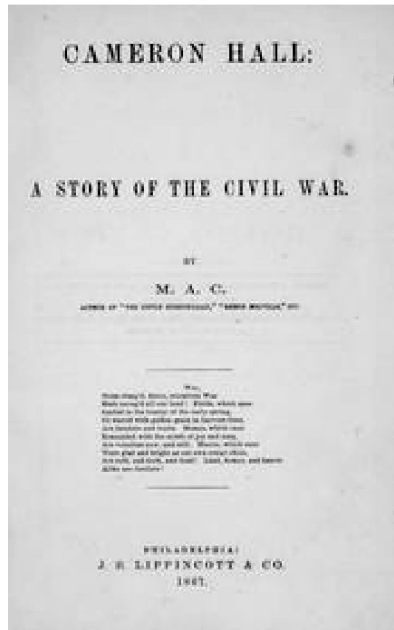


Huntsville Episcopal Church of the Nativity

¹¹⁵ Mary Ann Cruse. *Cameron Hall: A Story of the Civil War*, 537.

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In *Cameron Hall*, Cruse acknowledged that the Southern agrarian economy was out of step with both the current times and the future. The serenity at her imaginary plantation was broken by the invasion of Federal troops who brought misery and suffering as the new realities of wartime. Cruse offered no middle ground: the Old South had been lost and the future held little hope. This dramatic tale, typical of its times, became a best-seller.



Cameron Hall, by Mary Ann Cruse

Historian Sarah Gardner has suggested that Cruse did not consider slavery to be the cause of the War, but attributed it to God’s punishment of the South for its wayward actions. In her book, northern raids were typical of the perceived fanatic nature of those who lived above the Mason-Dixon Line. Miss Cruse was nonetheless aware of the strength of women to recover, writing “when the strong, self-reliant man is broke in spirit, he sinks at once beneath the load.”¹¹⁶

Eva, the young heroine of Miss Cruse’s novel, first sees the newly arrived soldiers as a “gay pageant” with countless romances, bands of music, and a “bright side for young people with splendid officers and gay

¹¹⁶ Cruse, *Cameron Hall*, 537.

uniforms, glittering swords, waving plumes, prancing horses, bands of music, brothers finding brother, father finding son among prisoners, girls dying of broken hearts because their lover went over to the enemy.” Her father, Mr. Cameron wisely advises her, however, “concealed are desolation, ruin, bloodshed, outrage, oppression, murder, insult, and brutality... Ah! My daughter, all the gay bands of music upon earth, blending into one loud and magnificent orchestra, could not drown out the wail of a whole nation’s widowed and orphaned hearts.”¹¹⁷ According to this work, the implication that African slave trade caused the War was to imply that tea floating in Boston harbor caused the Revolutionary War. Puritanical northerners, she reminded her readers, attacked women and accused them of witchcraft in Salem.¹¹⁸ Compare the citizens of the two sections, “Their ranks filled with refuse of European cities; ‘ours’ is the flower of Southern youth, the glory of Southern manhood.”¹¹⁹

Mary Ann predicted, “Privations will fall hard on Southern women.” In the face of death and blood, a “true Southern women who would serve her country must bear up bravely and cheerfully... Her complaints must not weaken the energies and clog the hands of those who need the whole of their unfettered manhood to do their duty. The nation will have need of all her sons.”¹²⁰ Those wiser and older, she reasoned, possessed the endurance required to cope with anxiety, sorrow, death, and privations. Reflecting on the damaged landscape, she wrote:

Grim-visag’d, fierce, relentless War
Hath ravag’d all our Land! Fields which once
Smiled in the beauty of early spring,
Or waved a golden grain in harvest
Are desolate and waste. Homes which once
Resounded with the mirth of joy and song
Are voiceless now and still. Hearts which once
Were glad and bright as our own sunny skies,
Are cold, and dark, and dead: Land, homes and Hearts
Alike are desolate!¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 79.

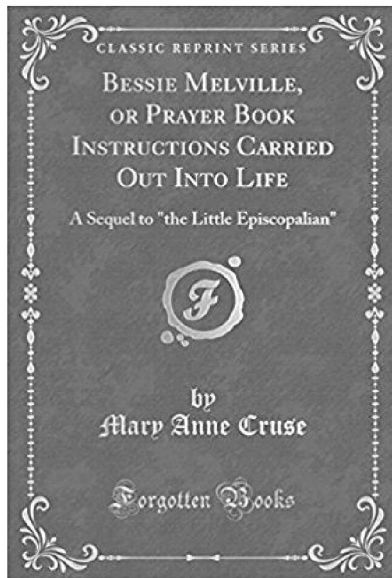
¹¹⁸ Ibid., 81.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 80.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 82.

¹²¹ Ibid., Epigram title page of *Cameron Hall*.

In their book *Living Female: Writers of the South*, Mary and Alexis Tardy understood that Mary Ann Cruse believed “Northern aggression has seized upon this institution [slavery] as a pretext for curtailing Southern rights.” The North “victimized all Southerners, black and white.” She believed slavery was good for both the White man and enslaved people given fatherly care by their traffickers. Enslaved people were “misguided and misled by the North” lured by “persuasion, underhanded, deceitful, alluring promises with Yankee cunning, craftiness and duplicity.”¹²² Mary Ann Cruse offered no apology, “Submission involves disgrace, failure does not. I would rather belong to the South overpowered, defeated, crushed and panting with a hard but fruitless struggle, than to the South abjectly servilely submissive.”¹²³



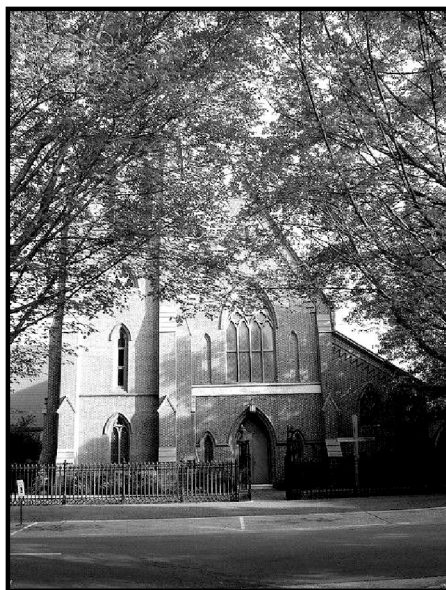
Bessie Melville, by Mary Ann Cruse

One reviewer at the time offered the opinion that her book might “be improved by judicious pruning; there is too much of it – yet it is so pure and fresh.” The outcome of the War may have been different than

¹²² Tardy, Mary J. and Alexis H. *Living Female Writers of the South*. (Philadelphia: Claxton, 1872), 93, 94.

¹²³ Cruse, *Cameron Hall*, 86.

anticipated, but she “offered a truthful picture, as it is believed to be ... of scenes, events, and inner thoughts and feelings ... hopes and expectations in a word, the *animus* of the Southern heart.”¹²⁴ Mary Ann Cruse, along with many other women, endured to rebuild her community, the lives within, and her own life.



Huntsville Episcopal Church of the Nativity

Cruse donated the royalties of her book *Bessie Melville* to purchase the central window of her church in memory of her brother, William Henry Cruse, who had died in 1853 at the age of 19. Her book *The Little Episcopalian* continued to be used nationally by the Episcopal Sunday Schools of the United States. A memorial dedicated to her 60 years' service teaching and writing was issued at her death in 1910. Two years later, the Woman's Guild of the Huntsville Episcopal Church of the Nativity purchased a building west of the church to convert into a parish house they dedicated in memory of faithful steward Mary Ann Cruse. If she were still bitter at the loss of the Cause, the vanquished Old South, she lived to see, after Reconstruction, the new South no longer isolated but part of a brighter, more hopeful future.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Tardy, *Living Female Writers*, 257, 266.

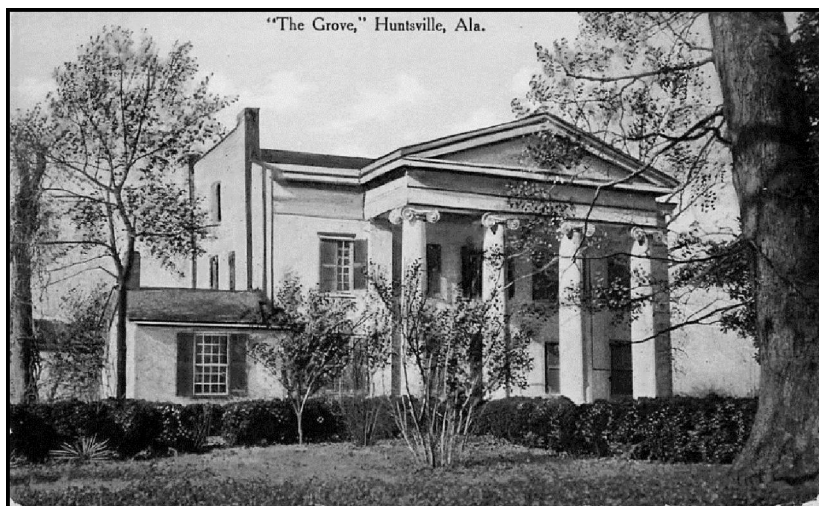
¹²⁵ Diane Robey, Dorothy Scott Johnson, John Rison Jones, Jr., and Frances Cabaniss Roberts. *Maple Hill Cemetery, Phase I*. (Hsv.: HMCHS, 1995), 39;

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Sarah Lowe

We believe that only which we want to believe.

Sarah Lowe was a student at the Huntsville Female College who kept a diary during the War years. As February of 1862 drew to a close, Sarah was 17 years of age. Her vantage point was of the well-to-do and sheltered youngest daughter of Militia General Bartley M. Lowe. She lived on her family's estate at the edge of town known as The Grove.



The Grove

Sarah's mother, Sarah Sophia (Manning) Lowe had died at the age of 38, in 1844, the same year Sarah was born. (The estate had been given by the widow of Dr. James Manning to Sarah Sophia, her only daughter who married General Lowe.) The mansion, sitting at the edge of town in its own 31 acres of parkland, had a Palladian-look, with four Doric columns with bases of 164-inch circumferences.¹²⁶ At the time of the federal census in 1860, residents of the house were as follows: Nicholas Davis, a lawyer who was married to Sarah's older sister Sophia, along with

Frances C. Roberts. *Sesquicentennial History of Church of the Nativity, Episcopal*. (Hsv.: Church of the Nativity, 1992), 31, 33, 34, 41, 52, 67.

¹²⁶ Nancy M. Rohr, Ed. *Echoes of the Past*. (Huntsville; SilverThreads, 2010), 6. (Hereafter cited as *Echoes*.) One of the column bases is located at the entrance to the Huntsville-Madison County Library. The other three are at the house of Gay Fleming Walker on Whitesburg Drive.

their baby; brother Robert, also a lawyer and partner with Davis, married to Mattie (Holding); William, a law student; Lucy; and, Sarah, the writer of the journal. Eldest brother, John Lowe attended the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. Another brother, Bartley, Jr. lived in town with his wife at the home of her father, Benjamin Jolley. Sister Susan Lowe had married DeWitt Davis (brother of Nick) and resided at their plantation in Limestone County. General Lowe chose to board with William Fleming due to his home's proximity to Lowe's his mercantile holdings. The Huntsville Female College closed on Friday the 28th to respect President Davis' call for a day of fasting and prayer. Sarah approved of this idea and thought it might be a fine way to spend *every* Friday; Principal Wilson would most likely have disagreed.

Bad news filled Sarah's diary. The Federal flag flew over the Nashville capitol, and 7,000 Federal soldiers controlled that city. There was a great deal of excitement in Huntsville because a portion of Confederate forces were expected to arrive. Of this, Sarah wrote, "I do not in reality think it bad news, if the men are restricted from indulging in bad habits." Sarah offered a detailed assessment "with the energetic and patriotic spirit which I feel confident they all possess and with the help of Him who ruleth all things our Cause must triumph."¹²⁷

In Febrary of 1864, Lt. Colonel Nathan B. Forrest arrived with his troops. As he left for Memphis, his men prepared for a month-long furlough to recruit new volunteers for active service. There was news of a battle at Florence and skirmishing near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. In early March, Gen. Gideon Pillow, who had managed with a few aides, to escape from Fort Donelson before the garrison surrendered; the next day Gen. Bushrod Johnson came with his command following. Sarah assumed a great battle of this revolution was to take place near Huntsville. There were "a number of soldiers and big men in town." She wished with all her might "to be a man I could either have peace and freedom or die as a defender of my rights." At the same time, the town became overrun with lawless Southern soldiers. There was also distressing news that General Johnson had been seen under the influence of spirits! Also, the possibility arose that the entire army might be quartered in Huntsville, which Sarah dreaded.

Cold weather persisted. Sarah and her sister Lucy walked to school to be met on every corner by groups of soldiers. Some looked very strange

¹²⁷ Journal of Miss Sarah Lowe, 1862. HMCPL, *passim*. The Grove was a gift from its owner Dr. James Manning to his daughter, Sarah Sophia, who married General Lowe. It remained in the family until 1909.

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to Sarah, while others gave her the impression of cultivated gentlemen. She was wise enough to acknowledge this distinction internally while outwardly showing respect to all. School, of course, was a constant: Mademoiselle quarreled, and Miss Sneed shamed them all at recitation, “nothing but complaint.” That very day, news was shared about Callie Johnston, a fellow student, who had died; classes were dismissed for the day. Students attended the funeral service as a group on the following Sunday, then joined the entourage to the cemetery for burial. “Poor girl. Her sprightliness and kindheartedness endeared her to us all.”¹²⁸

Driven from his Nashville home, the Honorable John Bell arrived in an uneasy state; he was anxious about the family he’d left behind.¹²⁹ Governor Andrew Moore dined with the family; Sarah saw him as an affable old (55-years-old) gentleman. Nick’s sister, Martha (Mrs. George W.) Lane, visited with Mr. Bell while Reverend Doctor Ross, took tea with them. Sarah shopped on the Square with her sister amidst the excitement throughout town, but also spent time “repairing my last reminiscence of childhood, my doll.” More bewildering events followed that night, heralded by the sounds of the fire alarm, when Gen. Leroy Walker’s house burned. Nothing was saved. General John Breckenridge, an earlier candidate for the Presidency, arrived with his command and camped nearby. Governor Moore and her brother, Willie, called on the General.

Sarah often mentioned her brother, William Lowe, with great anxiety. She did not mention their older brother, Robert; it was most likely still too painful. At the beginning of the hostilities, Robert Lowe had joined with Col. Egbert Jones’s Huntsville Company to fight in Virginia. Younger brother William was at the University of Virginia at that time, and had been given strict orders by his father to remain in school. Predictably, Willie left school to join his brother’s outfit, the 4th Alabama, just in time to take part in the First Battle of Manassas in July of 1861. Willie was shot in the forehead and Robert was carried from the field after suffering an attack of camp fever (a form of typhoid fever). As both incidents seemed fatal, Col. Hugh Lawson Clay personally escorted the young men home to be comforted and cared for by loved ones in their final days. Robert died six weeks later. He left his wife with two young boys,

¹²⁸ Callie Johnston was the daughter of Rev. Milus Johnston and his first wife. He later became known throughout the countryside as “Bushwhacker Johnston.” Read more about Mary Johnston in the chapter dedicated to her.

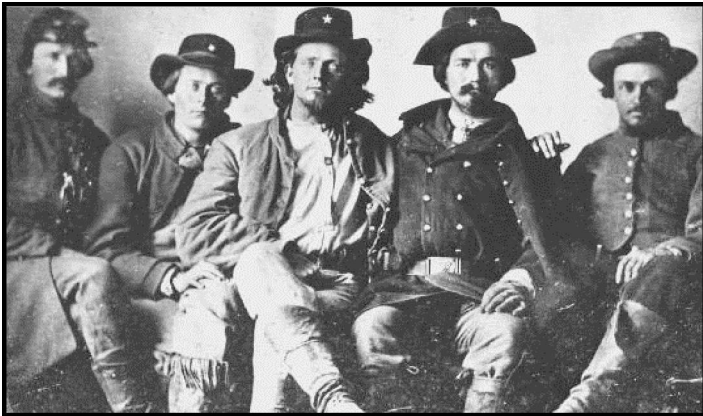
¹²⁹ John Bell kept Black people enslaved, but had voted earlier in Congress against the expansion of slavery into the western states. He had recently run an unsuccessful campaign for President of the United States.

Madison County

Richard and Bob, who Sarah claimed to be the sweetest babies she ever saw, “beautiful and smart, two gifts you scarcely ever find together.” Willie’s fractured skull was trepanned successfully by a surgeon with the removal of a small bone. He made a full recovery and went on to re-join the army and successfully recruit other men.¹³⁰

On March 11, while walking to school in the lovely spring weather, Sarah happened upon a crowd at Mrs. Neal’s gate. They claimed to be on their way “for to see the show.” Several other students joined the crowd, and they were “fully repaid for going” as five or six regiments passed, including artillery and cavalry. For most, it was a pleasurable sight, but Sarah found it painful to behold, given her recent family tragedy. It also awakened an awareness of the current critical conditions her family were living under, and, as a result, the need to prepare for any emergency.

She admired the two companies of Col. Nathan B. Forrest’s regiment who arrived one afternoon, followed by his cavalry. Forrest took tea with them at The Grove and she thought him a fine-looking man. More soldiers, Texas Rangers, “very rusty-looking men” who seemed like good soldiers, arrived at the depot and were warmly greeted.



Civil War Texas Rangers (Wikimedia Commons)

Seldom confirmed rumors circulated around the War, including those that New Madrid had been evacuated, “our reverses are frequent.” Accurate news regarding the Confederate losses at Forts Henry and Donelson filtered in. Five-thousand Federal cavalry-men were reported to be as near as Fayetteville, but Sarah chose not to believe the report

¹³⁰ Rohr, *Echoes*, 16.

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because, as Reverend Ross told his congregation, “we believe that only which we want to believe.” The majority of townspeople heeded his advice.

Sarah recorded her daily life under the shadow of war. She had a personal encounter with a Texas Ranger who raced toward her up the street. Attempting to avoid the Ranger, she retreated into Mr. Spotswood’s store, but the Ranger followed her inside. He conversed as an educated man who said he was a Coleman, related to the Colemans of Athens and, moreover, he claimed to be a half-brother to General Breckenridge. Sarah doubted that he was sober. At school, Miss Sneed punished everyone for their tardiness to arithmetic class, keeping them in after school. The last remaining boarder, Mary Marshall, planned to leave school on Saturday, and there was a distinct possibility that the school would be closed. Reports reached them of 30,000 of the enemy at Columbia, Tennessee; prospects for peace diminished. Sarah fretted about friend Mr. Bell, who seemed weighed down by these apparent reverses. How could one of his advanced age (66) bear it except for his strong will? More accounts arrived suggesting Yankees were 30 miles north at Fayetteville, and fighting had begun at Corinth. Neither rumor had any basis. Eight noble Confederate soldiers from Huntsville joined their comrades in the burying ground. To everyone, including Sarah, this the worst feature of the War. “In many instances it has been from negligence or incompetence on the part of the medical department. A great censure to those who rule.”

Sarah’s father, General Lowe, returned home with beautiful gifts for his youngest daughter: a pin, a dress, a parasol, and a fan. Morgan’s battalion arrived in Huntsville and camped on the family’s grounds. Three of those officers, sick or wounded, stayed at The Grove. On March 23, Rev. Fountain E. Pitts, an elegant-looking old man, preached (or, rather, lectured, thought Sarah). He gave a speech explaining what he saw as the clear precedent for the African slave trade in Bible and the descendants of the tribe of Ham.¹³¹

Sarah’s sister Sue Davis arrived from the country surprised to find that the town was not already in the hands of Federal pickets, those “horrid monsters,” as she had heard in Limestone County. Visiting was not entirely out of the question at this time; Cousin Mary Watkins, accompanied by one of her Foster uncles from Florence, arrived by freight train. Aunt Phinizy, Cousin Alice Lee, and Mr. George W. Lane came to

¹³¹ This “Fighting Parson,” and there were many, Col. Fountain E. Pitts earlier established missions in Brazil and Argentina.

chat with Sue. Cousin Mary stayed at the Grove and visited Sarah's mother.

No news emerged regarding troop movement, but everyone heard Lincoln's message to Congress to terminate the War. "I fear that he will not agree to such terms as we would propose, which could be only our independence." Her brother Willie prepared to leave with his unit, and Governor Moore ordered ferry boats to be kept on the south side of the river away from any possible invaders. New regiments were to rendezvous at Warrenton in Marshall County and LaGrange Military School in Colbert County.¹³² On March 27, Sarah wrote, "It makes me sick to think that soon the invaders will corrupt our beautiful land by their presence." A vast number of Confederate soldiers and officers had departed west toward Shiloh Church near the small town of Corinth, Mississippi. In the meantime, Sarah prepared a remedy for her father's cough with roots of the heartsease. On those spring walks to school with her friends, the balmy air was exhilarating, and their hearts were buoyant with momentary happiness. Their Botany class now held only six girls, however, and there would soon be one less.

That Saturday, Sarah packed her belongings. She went to school to gather her books and say a sad farewell to friends. This sudden departure was her father's decision, and Sarah did not (nor would she ever) dream of defying him. All the girls promised to write. Sarah departed via train at 3:30 am and, by 6:00 am that morning, the family arrived at Courtland to be driven to "Flower Hill." This Watkins plantation (north of Hillsboro and across the river from Brown's ferry landing in Lawrence County) contained over 1,000 acres. Sarah would enjoy the company of Cousin Mary and Miss Millie, envisioning days filled with laughing, reading, practicing, and walking the lovely gardens.¹³³

Her father stopped through for a day before leaving for Tusculumbia and Florence, and perhaps Memphis. Their Sunday evening tranquility was interrupted by cannon fire, "the sound stirred our souls and made us think that then, while quietness reigned in our hearts and the luxuries of life were around us, our Country's fate hung on a thread." News arrived of

¹³² Charles Rice. *Hard Times*. (Hsv.: Old Huntsville, 1994), 63.

¹³³ Paul J. Watkins, arriving from Petersburg, Georgia in 1820, also purchased a second estate nearby called Oak Grove, for his mother Eleanor (Thompson) Watkins. His daughter married the neighbor who built Rocky Hill nearby, James Saunders. Connections by marriage that already included Thompson, Harris, and Pope soon expanded to include the Foster, Fennell, Phinizy, Patton, and Bankhead families.

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their assumed victory near Corinth, with 6,000 prisoners captured. This news included the death of Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston, Colonel Bate, and her childhood friend Willie Patton. While these were only reports, Sarah believed “we must be prepared for the worst.” It was. 24,000 men, Confederates and Federals, lost their lives, were wounded, or went missing at the battle.

Excitement of a different kind occurred when the overseers caught a man they believed to be a spy and brought him to Courtland. The man was a horse thief, however, which in those times, was fortunate for him. On April 13, 10-12 Yankees galloped up the road chasing Rebel pickets, capturing two and killing three. The sense of dread which seemed to hang in the clouds grew heavier when they learned Federals had marched into Huntsville at daylight. Sarah feared her father, brother-in-law (Nick Davis), and brother Willie might be captured. Jonnie Spotswood reported there were two thousand cavalry and three thousand infantrymen in Huntsville, arresting nearly all citizens. Federals then arrived in Decatur, and even closer at Hillsborough, which was perhaps ten miles away. News from Corinth verified reports of the deaths of Gen. Albert S. Johnston and Watkins Bass; local men (Colonel Bate, Col. Coltart, Jimmie Bronders, Willie Richardson, John McClelland, and Cliff Walker) were wounded.

Sarah spent April 14, her last day at Flower Hill, with new arrivals Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Swoope. Dr. David Malone sent a message for them to meet him at the river on the following day. To their surprise, she and Sue crossed to be met on the other side by Malone’s carriage and were escorted to his house at Athens. Two days later, Mrs. Fletcher, Miss Jonnie Harris, her sister Sue Davis, and Sarah traveled out to Rip Davis’s country place in his brother-in-law’s, William Richardson’s wagon. Miss Sally and Mr. Davis were kind, making it feel like home.¹³⁴ Home, by this time, was officially under Federal invasion as of April 11. It had been met by no resistance from the local citizens, now mostly comprised of women, children, the elderly, and sick or wounded soldiers. Nicholas Davis remained in Huntsville and sent word for the family to return home after an absence of nearly a month. “On every street I see ‘Yankees’ with bayonets keeping guard [and] my heart stops beating at the thought that ‘my home’ is a captured city. The despot’s heel is on our shores. Naught but gloom seems to hover over our future.” Fortunately, brother Willie and friend Mr. Bell had escaped, as did an uncle of John Hunt Morgan, one of Morgan’s brothers, and newspaper editor John Withers Clay among others.

¹³⁴ Sarah McCellan married Lawrence Ripley (Rip) Davis. His brothers were nicknamed also, Clint, Nick, and Zeb.

Sarah's father had remained at home with them and saw to it that a guard was posted at their lot; they had not been troubled.¹³⁵

Local events filled Sarah's journal once again as she visited with Kate Lane, Carrie Neal, Katie Dill, and other friends. After a month's sickness, Mr. Bob Lowe died, leaving another family to mourn "for one who was worthy of their truest love. He is relieved of many sorrows that await us all." The month of May offered beauties of nature, but citizens were still surrounded by enemies. Sara wrote that she "never expected that it would come to such a pass that we have to submit to a reign of terror. We are not allowed even to walk in the streets."

In happier news, Sarah wrote on May 1 that the villainous Yanks were frightened upon hearing "Price's division was on the north side of the river while an Ohio regiment had been cut all to pieces near Athens." The peaceful Federal occupation of Athens was suddenly interrupted by the 1st Louisiana, likely with the aid of several locals routing the 18th Ohio as they ran toward Huntsville. Mary Fielding, another local diarist, commented on the events of that day and the next as General Ivan Turchin's 8th Brigade returned with a vengeance, leading to "The Sack of Athens."

General Ormsby Mitchel, who led the invading troops into Huntsville, now made his headquarters in the Lowe's Grove – on the front, on the sides, and in the back groves – where the venerated old oak trees gave shelter to the enemy. School had opened again. Sarah wanted to attend but was not allowed to cross picket lines.

By September, Federal troops had evacuated and moved north toward Chattanooga. Sarah did not write again until September 7, 1862 when her family left dusty Huntsville for a retreat with families from Athens at Wooley Springs, about 15 miles northeast. She gave thanks that the Yankee sojourn had not been permanent. They returned to find old Huntsville free and the Stars and Bars flying gaily. Noble Confederates were now in charge, and local citizens who were judged to have been corrupted by Yankee influence departed for a more receptive environment. Judge Lane, who had accepted a Federal judgeship in Louisville, left with his family. Sarah hoped they would thrive and be happy. Interactions between the two families had become awkward; Mrs. Lane, Martha (Davis) Lane, was Nick Davis's sister and a frequent visitor at their home. National affairs were brightening every day, but the noblest boys, Jessie Jordan, Willie Acklen, Tommy Patton, and Bill Eason were among those

¹³⁵ It may not have been her father's influence, but that of her brother-in-law Nick Davis, now openly aligned with Federals in control.; Incidents, 40.

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“who had gone to their last resting place.” They were said to have fallen nobly while fighting at Gaines’ Mill on June 27.

Many refugees returned to Huntsville at this time, as well as a number of Confederate soldiers. Lowe supplied his listeners with wonderful accounts of victories, and Sarah, who always thought the South might be victorious, was sure of it now. New companies were organizing every day. Mastin left with a company of cavalry. Harry F. Christian and W. McCravy were lieutenants and Willie Bassett, John C. Harry Donegan, Messrs. Robinson, Reedy, Hine, Mason, Norvell, Patton, and Spotswood were some of the privates. A new Confederate company of cavalry arrived to take possession of town and Southern picket lines were established. The Lowe family, including Sarah’s father, General Lowe, continued to live at the homeplace. Brother-in-law Nick Davis, however, was concerned. He’d heard a report that an order had been put out to arrest him for his conduct when the Federals had been in control. Some believed he should be hanged for his involvement with the Federals. Mary Jane Chadick’s journal offers a favorable view of Davis at that time. He’d purchased her husband’s horse for \$150 gold and had given a Black man \$50 in gold to help Chadick escape across the river on a most perilous night. Davis even came to her home on Randolph Street to share sought-after news of her husband’s whereabouts.¹³⁶ He most likely assisted others, as well.

Sarah Lowe’s next entry was dated January 12, 1863. She’d been to church the previous day to hear everyone’s favorite minister, Colonel Dr. David Kelly, preach, but he’d been replaced by Mr. Plummer, “altho’ a very good man is not very interesting; but he is liked by the old people.” [Here the typist, or translator became tangled with the dates because a year had gone by.] The next Sunday found the congregation conducting their services at the old Episcopal church, which they found to be too small. Reverend Plummer and Rev. Zachery Parker had warned Gen. D.H. Stanley of the danger of his men using open fires inside the First Methodist church building for heating and cooking. These cautions went unheeded, and the church was destroyed by fire on January 6, 1864.¹³⁷

If Sarah Lowe continued writing, those pages have been lost. A few more entries were made in the book either by Lowe or her sisters. They seem to be practice-letters, some in French, and a few entries may have

¹³⁶ Davis was even charged by the Federals for helping Chadick. *Incidents*, 237, 239, 244.

¹³⁷ Ruth Sykes Ford. *History of First United Methodist Church*. (Hsv.: First United Church, 1984), 50.

been recorded out of order by the original typist.¹³⁸ One letter, signed “Sophie,” mentioned the death of Dr. Fearn who had suffered so much; that entry is dated January 19, 1863. She wrote “grief comes very often among us now.” In February of 1863, Sarah was very disagreeably “out of humor.” Her sister Lucy was sick, and Sarah had to remain at home. At one point her brother Willie (now a Confederate officer) and Nick Davis made their way safely to The Grove as her sister, Sue, and Capt. DeWitt Davis also arrived. This most likely made for an awkward gathering. Nick Davis was a Union man, brothers Witt and Zeb served in the Confederate army, and Rip Davis tried to remain neutral. Friends visited Lucy later, and the time passed agreeably for Sarah.

One of the last recorded entries, occurring on the evening of January 14, 1864, offered commentary on Sarah’s friends and relations. The day was agreeable, and the family spent it celebrating the 39th birthday of her brother-in-law, Nick Davis who by now openly supported the Federal occupation. In a time when many writers described the difficulty of getting food supplies to feed their families, her sister Sophia was quite fortunate to obtain such “good things.” The third floor of The Grove was one large room and often used as a banquet hall where “many friends came to dine... Lena, Carrie and my Aunt Phenie also came for something good. They were satisfied and went home this afternoon.”

After the War concluded, most of the Lowe family remained at The Grove. Considering Nick Davis’ reputation and political stance, it must have been difficult for everyone at gatherings to put aside their differences and avoid heated words. Sara’s brother, John Lowe, who had served as chief surgeon under Gen. William Loring’s Division, moved to Aberdeen, Mississippi, where he practiced medicine and never married. The family members remaining in Huntsville continued to serve the community. Colonel William, who was captured at the Battle of Franklin and taken as a prisoner to Camp Chase and Delaware, was not released until three months after the surrender. He was a delegate to the Alabama Constitutional Convention of 1875. His nephew (son of his brother Robert), Robert Joseph Lowe, was a delegate to the Convention of 1901. Sarah became a charter member of the Virginia Clay-Clopton chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

Neither Sarah nor her sister Lucy married. Few men remaining in Huntsville could match their financial and social status. The sisters resided at The Grove at the time of Lucy’s death in 1905; Sarah lived for many

¹³⁸ Reading the contents, this editor decided to date them as the events were mentioned.

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years after. Unable to recover from pneumonia, she died in her nineties in 1937 at the home of her niece Sophie Lowe Davis on Franklin Street.¹³⁹

Sarah Lowe's post-war activities in the Daughters of the Confederacy show a clear, concerted effort on her part to teach future generations about the American Civil War. In that time of mass turmoil and collective bewilderment, however, it is these diary entries which may be her true contribution to posterity. Sarah's insights on home life, school, family, friends, neighbors, and the dreaded enemy give present-day readers a much-needed picture of daily life during wartime in north Alabama.

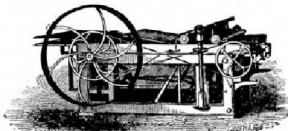
¹³⁹ *Huntsville Times*, Feb. 11, 1937.

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Hattie Figures

The fiend in him leaped to the surface.

The prominent Figures family lived on Randolph Street. Mr. William B. Figures had a convenient, daily one-block walk to the Square to his newspaper office, *The Southern Advocate*.

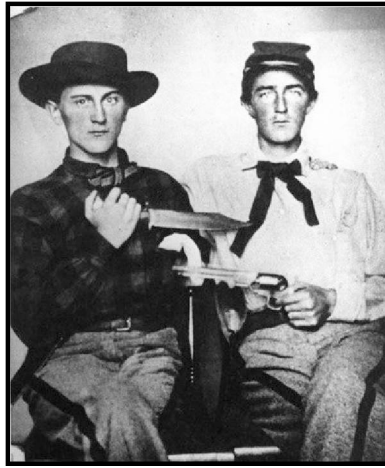


The Southern Advocate,
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA,
W. B. FIGURES, Editor and Proprietor.
It is the largest and most extensively circulated Journal published in North Alabama. Its circulation is very general in
MADISON,
LIMESTONE,
MORGAN,
LAWRENCE,
FRANKLIN,
LAUDERDALE,
MARSHALL,
JACKSON,
BLOUNT,
DEKALB, &c.
It is the Official Journal in which the Letter List of dead letters are published by the Post Office Department. This renders it a most excellent
Advertising Medium.
Advertisements currently and conspicuously inserted at reasonable rates.
TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION, \$3 in advance or \$4 at the end of the year.
Address,
W. B. FIGURES,
Huntsville, Alabama.

Williams City Directory

His oldest son, Henry Stokes Figures, wrote from Montgomery that his mother resided there temporarily while attempting to secure a lieutenancy for his neighbor's son, Fielding Bradford. She then departed for Pensacola, Florida to visit Fielding at his army camp. A third Figures son, John (already in the 4th Ala. Cavalry), survived, but Fielding Bradford was killed at the 1st Battle of Manassas.

As the War commenced, Henry pleaded with his parents to allow him to join the Confederate Army. "I can and will be just as good a boy in the army or out," he wrote. He reported reading his Bible daily. Sincerely patriotic, he and his friends feared the fighting might end before they got their chance to shoot at a Yankee. He enlisted in June of 1861 as a private in the Huntsville Guards, but his parents were relieved to find a safer appointment for him as a clerk with the aid of Secretary of War, Gen. Leroy Pope Walker in Montgomery.



Henry Figures and Friend (HMCPL)

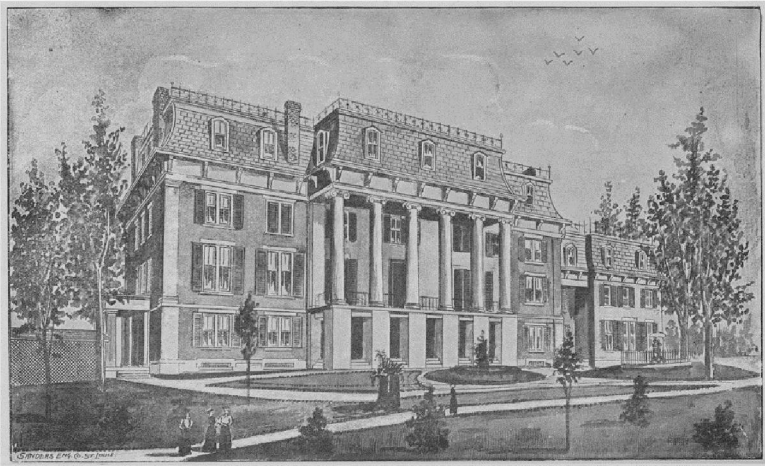
Henry's sister, Hattie, then about 17 years old, initially viewed the military scene from a different perspective than her parents. Among lesson assignments for the Female College, Hattie wrote frequently in her diary at that time (Fall of 1861) of pony rides after school to Camp Jones, the encampment and training ground named for local hero Col. Egbert Jones, recently killed in action. She mentioned that her companions appeared to be "very smitten with a certain lieutenant." On her way to school one morning, the cavalry marched past; she paused to admire their fine military formation. She wrote in a letter to brother Henry that two of the college girls, Annie Brown and Sallie McGee, would present a flag to the Huntsville Guards. He replied he would have liked to give a speech to Annie himself, but he sent his love and a kiss, as well as his love to the girls and boys. He wanted Annie to know he was waiting for her ambrotype.¹⁴⁰ Obviously, they were still in their teen years.

Hattie Figures quickly learned the crushing lesson that not every man returned from his enlistment. She attended the funeral of a soldier whose mother, she thought, would be further distressed to know he had died so far away from home and among strangers, "without a friend or relations near to hear his dying hour." Deaths grew in frequency. Nursing care and supplies from local women could not stop repeated measles outbreaks from running rampant in the camp. As his mother departed on a trip to visit him at camp, news arrived that 23-year-old Leslie Moore had

¹⁴⁰ Henry S. Figures file, Special Collections, Huntsville Madison County Public Library; Hattie Figures Diary, HMCPL, *passim*.

Madison County

died at Manassas. School girls were given a holyday [sic] on September 6 to attend the funeral of local hero Col. Egbert Jones. Jones, 40 years old, also died from wounds received at Manassas. Reverend W.D. Chadick accompanied Jones' body back to Huntsville, and the Home Guard, including all men currently training, formed an escort to the burying ground. "The hearse with white plumes was covered with crepe, drawn by four white horses draped in black and bearing the coffin of Jones, covered with black cloth on which was placed a silk Confederate flag, his sword and wreaths of flowers and evergreens." Two other local soldiers died, and Hattie attended a service for a third at the Episcopal Church that same week. In mid-October, the Presbyterian Church pastor Dr. Ross preached, "Hospitals were a disgrace to the South, to Christianity and to humanity." Furthermore, he suggested that Southerners wake up to the need for manufacturing, something so far unrecognized, perhaps from pure laziness. To show support for the War effort, Hattie's friend Sallie planned to visit the camp dressed in homespun; Hattie mentioned no such sacrifice on her part. Nevertheless, all the young women were desolate to hear local soldiers had been ordered to Mobile. On November 10, the men departed from the Huntsville depot.



Huntsville Female College

Church attendance played a constant role of religious guidance and social gathering for women left at home during the War years. Hattie visited the West Huntsville Methodist Church one evening, where three young soldiers joined the church. She worriedly wrote, "I hope they are in earnest for they of all others need to prepare themselves for another world." Hattie attended the Catholic church one evening to hear a fine sermon by the priest. On October 12, Presbyterian minister Dr. Ross spoke

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from the 77th Psalm, and, that afternoon, she watched the installation of the new Catholic Church cornerstone. She noted some “nice foot soldiers” were in attendance there. Later, Bishop Lay gave what Hattie deemed to be a beautiful sermon as he confirmed 11 at the Episcopal Church of the Nativity.

Hattie took piano lessons from Dr. Herman Saroni each day before she left for school. The strict Dr. Saroni expected her to play her piece perfectly, even if it required three hours’ practice each day (Hattie’s busy schedule only allowed her to practice daily for three-quarters of an hour). At the College, she studied composition, geometry, chemistry, and history, including a continuing synopsis of Roman history. She dutifully entered this into her journal possibly as an essay. School rules were very strict, and in November, Hattie was sorry to report that she had been sent to the office for the first time. Her offense: talking on the stairwell. Easing the discomfort of her studies, Mr. Figures surprised Hattie with the gift of a pony for early morning and after school rides with her friends.

On many evenings, Hattie and her friends watched the drill parade or leisurely rode about to be near the young men. The girls knew to enjoy these activities while they could; camp would soon move four miles away to escape such distractions. The soldiers left in mid-November, and Hattie continued her morning rides, though perhaps not as enthusiastically.

After tea one afternoon, Hattie and her friend Edmonia Toney enjoyed a pleasant time at Amanda Coleman’s house for the wedding of a servant of the Toney’s. On another afternoon, she missed the chance to dance at the Toney’s when Edmonia’s brother brought home a young gentleman for her to meet. All the young ladies were knitting caps for the soldiers, “How comfortable they will be.” Classes, friends, and the young military boys continued to fill Hattie’s life. Regrettably, because she’d declined a visit Edmonia’s house to write a composition, she also missed the arrival of several soldiers, one being a Lieutenant (her underline). The only time Hattie spoke poorly about any friends occurred after an overnight stay with Marie Watkins and Lizzie. She noted that the girls were very lazy, calling enslaved woman Nancy nearly nonstop all all night long to run errands they could easily have done themselves. In her spare time Hattie, finished reading Marie Edgeworth’s popular novel *Belinda*, which she reported to be interesting.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ One wonders which edition of Maria Edgeworth’s novel Hattie read. The first release in 1801 involved an interracial marriage, eliminated in later editions.

In early December of 1861, Hattie heard that 29-year-old Dr. Samuel VanWych had been killed in a skirmish and would be buried that evening. Her brother had written home just six months earlier that he had been glad to see VanWych, a familiar face in Montgomery, as the doctor sought a post as an army surgeon. VanWych had been riding reconnaissance in Tennessee with then Colonel Nathan B. Forrest when he was killed by northern partisans. VanWych's wife, Margaret, was left with four children under the age of five.¹⁴²

Classes continued. Hattie watched as a few of her fellow students left for the holidays. She seemed absorbed with some of her lessons, particularly chemistry. Another neighborhood funeral followed – Mrs. Turner's – and a second occurred shortly after at the death of Mary (Woodson) Withers, daughter of the founder of the Huntsville *Democrat* and wife of Augustine Withers. With such connections, Mrs. Withers' procession was a lengthy one.

Christmas arrived with little fanfare. There must have been some excitement for the children and neighbors as seasonal foods were still readily available at that time. Brother Henry, now in Virginia, wrote of building winter huts called *shebangs*, which were surely warmer and dryer than tents. Harriet Figures, Mrs. Bradford, and Mrs. Robinson rode on horseback sidesaddle to visit Mrs. Bradford's daughter, Mary Jane Robinson. Hattie was amused by their old-fashioned ways.

In the new year of 1862, Hattie's literature studies included Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, which she enjoyed, but Geometry was difficult to unravel. Logic replaced natural history, and she added a Grecian mythology class. Her mother, Harriett, sent a small box and a large cake to Brother who wrote back to thank her and the cook. Jennie and Susan Chadick, Edmonia Toney, and Nannie Ellis visited, and the girls enjoyed a new parlor game called Celebrities. General Leroy and Eliza (Picket) Walker visited the Figures' home. They had only recently returned from Richmond, where the General had served as Secretary of War for the Confederacy.

New class sessions began with new scholars, and Hattie was disappointed to learn Astronomy had been added to the young ladies' studies.¹⁴³ Hattie's journal now became filled with the recounting of many

¹⁴² 1860 Census; Henry S. Figures letter, May 9, 1861; www.americanstampdealer.com

¹⁴³ After the sheep are sheared and the oil removed by washing, wool is picked or teased to loosen and turn the locks into a consistent web. Priscilla Larkin

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Greek myths. She was clearly fascinated, and she took enough care to spell gods' and goddesses' names correctly. In February, the students had the pleasure of hearing the seniors read aloud from their journals, "I must say that they far surpass us both in composition and reading."

On February 8, Hattie's entry began by describing the cold, disagreeable weather. A little before tea, Jim Rogers who lived at the Toney household stopped by the house to announce that three Federal gunboats had been seen in Florence. "Of course, we were very much frightened and still more so when about 9 o'clock Mr. Rogers and Mr. Harris told us that they had joined a company and would leave at 2 o'clock for Florence."

Hattie Figures wrote in this journal only once more, of Dr. Ross's sermon the next day. "Consider the life of a military man. He seeks for honor and fame on the battle field and becomes a great general; his praise is spoken by every one, perhaps he has passed through many campaigns but during his life he falls fighting for his country. He finds, alas, too late that the path of glory he had chosen led him but to the grave."¹⁴⁴

It is interesting to note that Hattie only mentioned her mother's activities once in her writing, and never made a reference to her many siblings who also resided at home. Mr. Figures kept 11 people enslaved to assist in the home and at the printing office, so Hattie had no duties other than to attend school. Hattie's mother Harriet had lost two young children prior to the war. She had seven children at the start of the War, then three more later. Hers was a busy life running the household, supervising the children and household servants. Aside from their physical duties, women at the time were expected to maintain almost impossible standards of extreme modesty and diplomacy in all social interactions. The name of the game was survival in a world inhabited by two opposing forces, North and South, and to keep on good terms with neighbors.

During the War and into Reconstruction, Mr. Figures played a pivotal role, which could not have pleased the family's die-hard Confederate neighbors. Early in the conflict, others observed his actions disapprovingly. For instance, next-door neighbor Mrs. Chadick wrote in her own journal that Mr. Figures was counted among those with George

considered this painstaking endeavor useful, but clearly a better task for younger people.

¹⁴⁴ From Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Grave Yard," "And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave Awaits alike th' inevitable hour. The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

W. Lane who approved Federal passports and granted Federals permission to do business. An early correspondent with John Withers Clay suggested, "Figures would make money out of Federal visit to the city." Mrs. Figures' "choice" servant, Ella, left with the Federals, "aided and abetted-by clearly people with no principles." Nine months later, Harriet Figures' smoke-house was robbed of all its meat. Harriet and Mrs. Chadick continued to share sewing days and neighborhood news with one another, however. In January, Hattie and Sue Bradley, accompanied by Reverend Banister, started across the river "to go South" when they received a message to turn back. There was more battle action in the area, and danger was imminent. (Sue Bradley, who soon married a Federal officer, may have had insider news of her own.) One week later, Sue and Hattie were able to cross, with Mrs. Pruitt escorting them. They remained until May, when Hattie returned with Mrs. Bradford. Harriett Figures may again have had inside news when she called on Sue Chadick to report that General Lee had surrendered at Appomattox. The dynamic of neighborhood loyalty prevailed, however, when Mr. Figures provided protection for Clara, George, David Chadick, and other neighbor children on a fishing trip that May.¹⁴⁵

Still, Harriet's main concern appeared to be her son Henry. He grew impatient with his assignments as a clerk in Montgomery and Richmond and issued a request to be sent into action. General Walker appealed on behalf of him to his parents for their permission. With heavy hearts, the Figures consented; Henry officially joined the Confederate Army. By the time he transferred to the 48th Alabama at Winchester, Virginia, he had risen to adjunct Lieutenant. His letters to his sister (letters which would be read aloud among the family and to friends who called) included comments about the attractive girls who waved as the men passed by or offered them water and food. To his father he wrote his thanks for his fine overcoat of which all the boys were envious. Now in 12-inch snowfall, he needed it. To Hattie, he wrote of a girl who looked like Miss Bettie Hammond, "one so pretty and good at home," and instructed her to give his love to Mary Alexander. He asked his Ma for a pencil with good lead and paper. The purpose of these writing tools was to request a furlough. His mustache was growing rapidly, he told the family at home, and he intended to dye it and have an ambrotype made while he was in Richmond. He badly wanted to come home, and in reply to a letter from Hattie he wrote, "If the girls all fell in love with Wat Harris, they will all marry me

¹⁴⁵ Nancy M. Rohr, *Incidents of the War: Civil War Journal of Mary Jane Chadick*. (Hsv.: SilverThreads Publ., 2005), 76, 175, 276, 282, 221, 249, 252, 298, 291.

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if I was to come home.” To his mother he wrote, “I say prayers regularly and go to preaching every Sunday.” He would “bring some tobacco and snuff for Grandma” when the furlough came through.

After applying to the staff of General Lee, Henry received his much-longed for leave to visit his family. This was during the Federal occupation of Huntsville, however, and he only got as far as the south side of the Tennessee River. His parents applied to Gen. John Logan for authorization to allow him to cross, but permission was denied. Henry’s sister Mattie later wrote, “I have often tried to realize what must have been his feelings, so close to all that were dearest and nearest to him and yet, he might not seem them, what an irony of fate.”

Sister Mattie also recalled events of those War years. “An incident of this tiny little child that I was, is stamped indelibly upon my brain.” (Mattie Figures was 11 or 12 during the Federal occupation.) Gen. John Logan was stationed in Huntsville at the time, occupying Mr. Sam Moore's handsome residence on Adam's Avenue:

My Mother in her despair, at my Brothers not being allowed to come within the Federal lines, resolved to make a personal appeal, herself, to General Logan, my Father, with influence to attempt to aid him, having failed, gave his consent, it was a last resort. After much thought it was decided, that my Mother should go alone, taking with her, one of the smaller children. I was the one selected, a little girl being deemed best. I was carefully cautioned as to my behavior, for the spirit against the Yankees, was strong in my little breast, to my childish eyes. As we walked up the broad graveled walk, I remember that my Mother held my hand very tightly. We were shown immediately into the large parlor. The General was seated in an easy chair at a table facing the window, from whence he could overlook the street; he saw us come in and doubtless drew his own conclusions. I see it all so plainly, the heavy brutal-looking man, with thick black hair, worn rather long, small dark sinister eyes, a repellant face at best, in my young eyes, the embodiment of cruelty, which proved correct. He received us politely, asked me my name and I shook hands with him with great reluctance. My Mother made known her errand in an agitated voice, he refused pointblank, and as she persisted, the fiend in him, leaped to the surface, and he threatened her if she attempted to go, he would send his soldiers and arrest her and my brother, and jail them both. At this I lost my fear and blazed out what big Brother Henry would do, my Mother

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quickly put her hand over my mouth or there is no telling what I would have said.¹⁴⁶

Henry returned to Virginia, and Mrs. Figures, along with Mrs. Harris and Mrs. Patton, went north to visit their sons. This may seem excessive given the great hardship and transportation issues at the time, but many women traveled north during the War, particularly when troops were in winter quarters. They took clothing, money, food, and letters from others as comfort to their loved ones; seeing these loved ones was the comfort they sought for themselves. In times of such upheaval, letters and word-of-mouth news from others were simply not enough. Hattie wrote to her “dear husband” Mr. Figures that the ladies had arrived by boat at Rome, Georgia and waited for the train. Their boat had hung on the shoals in the night frightening all of them and delaying the next stage of the journey. Writing home after this incident, she said:

I am well in body but sick as I know not poor Henry’s fate and am anxious about you all at home. Oh, my little baby I do want to see him so bad. Do darling take good care of them all. Keep Willy (about 17) with you all the time; you do not know how uneasy I am about him. Give my love to every one of the dear ones and kiss them for me.

She gave her love to Mrs. Eliza Godwin who was helping at the house, and sent the message of mothers everywhere, “Tell her to take good care of my little ones and make them stay out of the street.” Harriet Figures did not see her Henry; his company had already moved out. She would never see him again.

Lieutenant Henry Figures participated at the battles of First Manassas, Yorktown, Winchester, Second Manassas, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, and Chickamauga, only to fall on May 5, 1864, rallying the men at the Battle of the Wilderness. According to sister Mattie, a friend shared with the family that Henry’s body was wrapped in his blanket roll in lieu of a coffin and a makeshift wooden cross marked the spot. Mattie wrote, “Kind hands carried him from the battlefield and laid him to rest in an orchard under an apple tree in full bloom which cast the rosy petals near his head.” Two years after the War’s conclusion, Henry’s father traveled north to retrieve his body for burial in Huntsville. Mattie later recalled her brother as, “the idol of her parents” especially to “his mother and a demi-

¹⁴⁶ John Pannick. Ed. “Tragedy of the Civil War, Lt. Henry S. Figures” in *Huntsville Historical Review*, Vol. 11 #1 &2, (Jan.-Ap. 1981), 15-19.

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god to the younger children... My father's grief and my mother's anguish are fresh on my mind as yesterday."¹⁴⁷

In his newspaper, Mr. Figures noted that 361 men from Madison County (His own son, Henry, among them) had died in action or from sickness.¹⁴⁸ Life went on for their wives, sisters, and mothers, but how could they ever forget? The verses of a popular song of that day expressed it well:

We shall meet, but we shall miss him
There will be one vacant chair
We shall linger to caress him
While we breathe our evening prayer,
When a year ago we gathered
Joy was in his mild blue eye,
But a golden chord is severed
And our hopes in ruin lie.
We shall meet, but we shall miss him
There will be one vacant chair

Recovery seemed an impossible task. Harriet Stokes Figures, widowed since the death of her husband in 1872 at the age of 52, was the head of her household in 1870 with five adult children and two youngsters, Daisy and Norman, still at school. Harriet passed away in June of 1900, an "aged and esteemed lady at the home of her daughter, Mrs. (Daisy) Ewing Echols on Randolph Street." Her surviving children also included Claude and Otey, both conductors for railroads; Mrs. Nell Shelton a teacher at a college in North Carolina; and, Mrs. (Mattie) James A. Allison. Neither her son William, listed in the 1880 census as "gambler," nor Hattie was mentioned. Hattie Figures had married Dr. Robert L. Hallonquist, of Lawrence County, in May 1869. The couple was listed in the 1870 census, he as a physician and farmer, age 31 of modest means, Harriet, 24, and two-month-old Lewis F. The last news of Hattie came from the local newspaper in early March of 1873, "Died in Barnwell, SC, Harriet Figures Hallonquist. A few months ago, left here with her husband to try their fortunes in SC. Was a good wife, an affectionate daughter. Her devotion to

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Mary Jane Chadick alluded to the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Figures seemed less disturbed by surrounding events than she was. Mr. Figures' office, whether by choice or force, was printing for the Federal occupation. In 1871, he was appointed by the U.S. Congress to serve as one of the Special Commissioners for the Southern Claims Commission. (See the earlier chapter about Black women.)

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her little boy was beautiful and none will miss her more.”¹⁴⁹ The Figures home on Randolph Street still stands.

¹⁴⁹ Pauline Jones Gandrud. *Marriage, Death, and Legal Notices from Early Alabama Newspapers, 1819-1893*. (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, 1982), 263.

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Mary Jane Chadick (1820-1905)

I am the strongest Southern woman you ever saw!

On the morning of April 11, 1862, General Mitchel's division took possession of Huntsville, Alabama. They faced no opposition, as only a small number of wounded and sick Confederate soldiers remained in town. Mitchel's division entered at daybreak, first taking possession of the railroad and some 15 engines. The southern train approached with 159 Confederate soldiers on board. Some were wounded and travelling home; others were rejoining their regiments post-furlough. The train attempted an escape but received fire from two cannons. One fireman was seriously wounded. One other, a Black fireman whose name was not recorded, died. All on board were taken prisoner. Fit soldiers were confined to the depot house and wounded men remained in the train cars.¹⁵⁰ Mary Jane Chadick reported these events in her diary on that day in 1862. The War had come to Huntsville.



Mary Jane Chadick (ADAH)

Mary Jane Chadick was not a southerner by birth. Originally from Massachusetts, she moved to Steubenville, Ohio and formed fast friendships before relocating to Lebanon, Tennessee with her parents. She met and married a widower there named Rev. William Davidson Chadick, adding four more children to his existing four by the time she and W.D., as she called him, moved to Huntsville, Alabama. They lived on Randolph

¹⁵⁰ *Incidents, passim.*

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Street, across the alley from the Figures family, and close to her husband's Cumberland Presbyterian Church. W.D.'s duties included tending to his flock and teaching *Evidences of Christianity* and *Moral Science* at the Huntsville Female Seminary while Mary Jane's responsibilities centered around their large home. That home was now filled with Susan, about 18; Jennie, 17; Willie, 15; Eddie, 13; George, 12; Clara, 10; Davey, 5; and, 2-year-old Mary. The Chadicks kept five people enslaved, included old Tom, Corinna with her two sons, and Vienna.

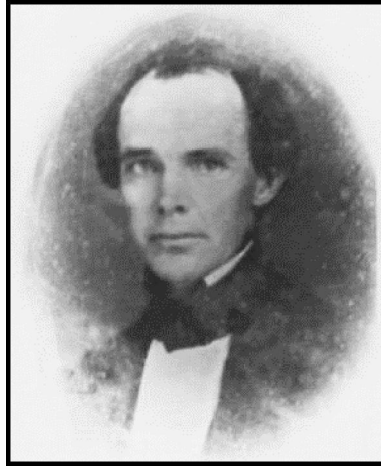


First Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Huntsville

Reverend Chadick entered the American Civil War as a chaplain of the 4th Alabama Infantry Regiment. At Manassas, he pocketed his Bible to become a musket-wielding Rebel soldier. He returned to Huntsville in the fall of 1860, where he helped raise an infantry battalion and rose to the rank of major under Lt. Colonel Nick Davis. When Davis resigned, Chadick took command, leading the regiment at Shiloh as a colonel.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Rice, *Hard Times*, 116, 117.

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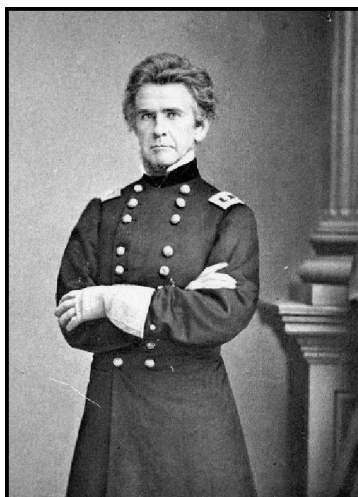
Rev. W.D. Chadick (ADAH)

During this time, only seven of their eight children resided with Mary Jane in Huntsville; 8-year-old Davey became stranded in Lebanon, Tennessee during the War while visiting relatives. The constant uncertainty of her youngest son's well-being was one of Mary Jane's many increasing war-related worries.

Huntsville was a small village of less than 4,000 (its population was divided almost evenly between White and Black). The town was taken by surprise by a sudden occupation of Federal officers and soldiers; few citizens had heard even a dog bark a warning. This lack of preparation can be attributed to the fact that those in charge of the telegraph officers were considered Lincolnites, and no message of warning had been sent or received. According to a later biography "the citizens were unarmed and many of them *undressed*." "You can image their amazement, alarm and rage."¹⁵² "Those fiends," their enemy, were now in their own front yards, represented by Gen. Ormsby M. Mitchel, USA.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Rev. P.C. Headley. *Old Stars: Life and Military Career of Major General Ormsby M. Mitchel*. (Boston: Lee & Shepherd, 1883), 230, 233.

¹⁵³ Other writers were far more strident in their choice of words about the enemy than Mary Jane Chadick, but those who knew her could attest that her use of the word "fiend" was aggressive. According to historian Jill Lepore, "War is a contest of words as much as it is a contest of wounds." Drained of energy and funds, endurance and words were all Mary Jane could offer during these years. Jill Lepore, *Name of the Game*. (NY: Knopf, 1998), 47.



Gen. Ormsby M. Mitchel (HMCPL)

Wasting no time, several ladies of town, including Mary Jane, presented themselves before General Mitchel for permission to visit the wounded soldiers detained at the railroad depot. The general was always glad to see the ladies, he said, “as long as they did not rail at him as they had done at Fayetteville.” Mitchel granted their request, and the ladies found the men suffering terribly, having had no food for two days. The women returned with milk, wine, soups, and a great quantity of provisions. Union officers announced their wagon trains were running two days behind, and that they would “tax the citizens” for food. The mayor was called upon to provide \$500 from the city treasury for food and provisions for the hungry enemy soldiers. Should he refuse, the officers threatened, the town might be burned to the ground. The very next day, Mary Jane reported, “truly our town is full of the enemy” with a sentinel on every corner. Mary Jane kept the front door locked; only she was permitted to answer the doorbell. Who knew what they might find on the other side? (One local young lad later admitted, “I went out to examine the Yankees. I found that they did not have long tails or claws like a lion, as was reported.”)¹⁵⁴

General Mitchel wrote an April 22 letter to his family regarding the lack of support from citizens, telling them:

¹⁵⁴ Typescript of part of a diary kept by an unidentified Alabamian in Huntsville, 1862, 97.332, Box 27, 7N/F/1/C, p. 1. ADAH, Montgomery, AL. Hereafter cited as Life Guards.

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I have numerous affecting interviews with ladies whose lords are in the rebellious army, or profess their devotion to the Southern Confederacy. They all claim the property of the concern to be their own, and not their husbands. Indeed, I begin to think the husbands a poor miserable set of beggars, for the wives own everything, horses, plantations, negroes and all.

He wrote again one month later from his tent where a splendid bouquet sat upon the table, “a magnolia half as big as your head,” the weather was delicious, and it was a charming countryside.¹⁵⁵

He may have approved of his surroundings, but, as Mary Jane wrote, “General Mitchel has been in a rage all the week on account of the cutting of the telegraph wires, the tearing up of the railroad track, firing into trains.” Everyone soon learned that these actions had been carried out by non-military men from their own community. Mitchel viewed this defiance as an act of treason and held town citizens responsible. To stamp out guerilla activity, he arrested 12 prominent citizens “at bayonet point,” detaining them in the basement of the courthouse.¹⁵⁶ The Federals, wrote Mary Jane, had committed great depredations and “we are all prisoners of hope.” The 12 citizen hostages would remain as such unless they signed “a paper condemning guerilla warfare and pronouncing the sentence of death upon such as are engaged in it.” Should they refuse to sign, the men would be sent to Fort Warren as prisoners. Mary Jane hoped these leaders would be “true to themselves” and not sign. “Let the result be what it may.”

If General Mitchel seemed impatient at this time, it is because a great deal was happening, or, rather, *not* happening, in the first days of the Huntsville occupation. His men had marched for 30 miles from Fayetteville, outdistanced their supplies, and now had no additional food or ammunition. The unexpected resistance by semi-military groups quickly lead to the destruction of essential services Mitchel needed to obtain a clear route to Chattanooga, which was his end goal. Furthermore, he would soon learn of the failure of the hurriedly conceived Andrews Raid in north Georgia for the locomotive the *General*. Had the men stolen the engine, torn up tracks behind them, and cut telegraph wires along the way, according to their original plan, Mitchel’s army might then have blocked

¹⁵⁵ F. A. Mitchel. *Ormsby MacKnight Mitchel*. (Boston: Houghton, 1887), 323, 324.

¹⁵⁶ The men, mostly older and well-to-do, were town elders: Bishop Henry Lay, John Wilson, George Beirne, Samuel Cruse, William McDowell, Dr. Thomas Fearn, Stephen Harris, William Moore, Gus Mastin, Tom McCalley, William Acklen, and Rev. Bannister.

reinforcements of Southern troops from Atlanta, taking Chattanooga (possibly changing the outcome of the War).¹⁵⁷ Prisoners continued to flood in (200 men on May 2, and 237 more on May 14, according to one Ohio officer named Captain Canfield). Four days later, 2000 more Rebels were captured.¹⁵⁸

Mary Jane wrote of General Mitchel's complaints about the ladies in town giving "the cold shoulder" to his officers. He expressed genuine surprise that his men, viewed by all as the "enemy" were not received in social circles. Staff member Colonel Lytle wrote his sisters that there was no social interaction and the "women are venomous." Beatty, himself a preacher, reported male citizens having patiently settled under military rule, but the women "are outspoken in their hostility and marvelously bitter."¹⁵⁹ The Federals should not have been surprised by this. In Murphreesboro "the inhabitants ... did not shew a disposition to honor Mitchel's calling. No invitations to dinners or fine suppers were given to him. "Well! This is war! Hatred appears to be the dominate passion now."¹⁶⁰ During this time, Mary Jane Chadick and her neighbors saw themselves as women surrounded by the "habitual lawlessness, most terrible outrages, robberies, rapes, arsons and plundering" (as later described by Gen. Carlos Buell) while the town was under the reign of General Mitchel.¹⁶¹

Mitchel was continually frustrated by Confederate activities along the Tennessee River, south of Huntsville. His troops had repaired railroad and telegraph lines and maintained the roadways to neighboring towns, but there was little he could do to control the riverways without boats. On May 15, he wrote from Camp Taylor in Huntsville, "The gunboat which I have

¹⁵⁷ James A. Andrews, a civilian scout, along with one other civilian, and 22 volunteer U.S. soldiers under General Mitchel slipped into northwest Georgia in civilian clothes, surprised the crew and stole the locomotive engine. They were chased by Rebels on the *Texas* before they were finally captured. Eight men were hanged, eight escaped, and six were put in prison to be exchanged later. Buster Keaton made a film about the chase in 1926, and Walt Disney produced the movie, *The Great Locomotive Chase* in 1956 starring Fess Parker.

¹⁵⁸ Silas S. Canfield. *History of the 21st Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry*. (Toledo: Vrooman, Anderson & Bateman, 1893), 47, 49.

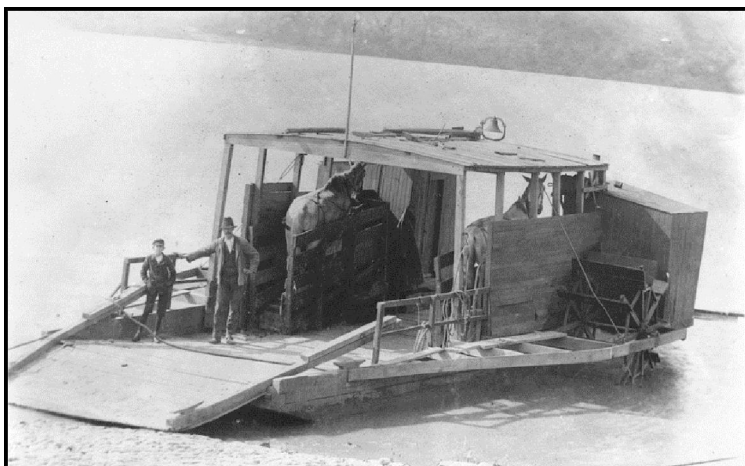
¹⁵⁹ John Beatty. *Citizen Soldier or Memoirs of a Volunteer*. (Cincinnati: Wilstach & Baldwin, 1879), 144.

¹⁶⁰ Diary of John C. H. Spence, www.artcirclelibrary.info. accessed 5/13/19.

¹⁶¹ HMCPL Digital Collection, Roberts Collection Box 1, F 02, 204.

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extemporized will be ready today, and I will soon be able to pay my respects to the enemy in the eastern side of the region.” All agreed that this boat would hold up to naval standards. It was not to be an iron-clad but a “cotton-clad,” one-horse mule-powered engine. The base was the 52-foot ferry boat at Whitesburg, powered by mules, according to Confederate reports, and by horses according to Federal. The boat was patched up, and a ten-pound Parrott gun was mounted on the forward deck. The river had now been secured for the Yankees by means of a two-horsepower hayburner.¹⁶²



Two Horsepower Hayburner

On May 18, Mary Jane wrote, “Who would have believed it! Every one of those 12 men have signed the paper!” They were now free, and “we actually cried tears of shame and resentment.” Reverend Henry Lay had urged the other hostages to agree to a watered-down agreement after 13 days of imprisonment. Mary Jane’s anxiety changed paths with “another horse panic. Almost all of the carriage horses about town were taken.” Fortunately, the Yankees determined her horse, Old Henry, was too clumsy for cavalry service. Near the end of the month everyone was

¹⁶² U.S. Congressional Serial, Issue 2225, Set V, p.893, 2225; Kirk C. Jenkins. *Battle Rages Higher: Unions 15th Kentucky Infantry* (Lexington: Univ. Kentucky, 2003), 42. A stationary sawmill engine “borrowed” from the nearby Bibb plantation soon replaced the animals, for which the soldiers of the 15th Kentucky must have been grateful. It remained “jury-rigged, lunched, clanking, rattling and frequently stopping,” however. By June 7, *The Tennessee* made its way past Law’s Landing near Guntersville.

excited by the arrival of a train from the west. The cars were quickly surrounded by eager citizens asking about friends and relatives. She was “doomed to disappointment” because no one had news of her “better half.” Unbeknownst to Mary Jane, after the retreat from Corinth, her husband spent six weeks bedfast recovering from incapacitating bouts of rheumatism, unable to move his hands or feet.

Reports arrived on June 9 of shootings in Jackson County; a great number of Federals appeared to be wounded, many of whom later died. Small pox broke out among the soldiers and “we are literally visited by pestilence and the sword.” Typhoid was one more of the many dangerous illnesses spreading through town. Dr. Lawrence Sheffey arrived to vaccinate all Mary Jane’s children and servants.¹⁶³ She continued, “The yoke is very galling. One day we are buoyed up with hope and the next, sunk into a state of despair.”

The fear of illness, uncertainty of relatives’ well-being, and awkward and sometimes offensive interactions between the Confederate ladies and Federal officers’ wives made these days incredibly unsettling. Social life in Athens changed drastically on May 21, when the Ohio Infantry arrived. Two citizens complimented their colonel on the behavior of his men and offered him the use of their residences during their stay.¹⁶⁴ The ladies of Athens called on Mrs. Colonel Jesse Norton, wife of the current town provost marshal. Mrs. Norton appeared delighted with Athens, where officers and citizens met and enjoyed parties together. She had apparently received little or no attention when her husband was in Huntsville. Colonel Norton was a great favorite in Athens and, even as the enemy, Mary Jane considered him to be a constant gentleman. Norton’s assignment to Athens had not been a raise in status, however. Mary Jane may have thought highly of him, but while in Huntsville, he and General Mitchel ignited a bitter, long-running feud. Colonel Norton had arranged a fish-bake for some select officers located a few miles south of Huntsville at Byrd Springs. General Mitchel was not invited, but, to the dismay of the attendees, arrived with a formal mounted escort nevertheless. Mitchel severely reprimanded Colonel Norton in the presence of his guests for “being absent from his command, outside army lines without permission,

¹⁶³ In July Capt. Tom McClure of the Kentucky 14th asked Mr. Norvell at the Huntsville Hotel for a room because he didn’t feel well. Mrs. Norvell cared for him, but he had a relapse and sank rapidly. He was one of six men who died from typhoid fever that month. As expected, the disease spread quickly among troops and civilians. (Jenkins, *Battle Rages Higher*, 44.)

¹⁶⁴ Canfield, *History*, 49.

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and ordered him to return to his quarters under arrest.”¹⁶⁵ Colonel Norton was soon reassigned to Athens

Mary Jane noted that, while in Athens with her husband, Mrs. Colonel Turchin received social calls from the ladies of that town, but wisely declined to return their visits “on the grounds she was among them with her husband as an enemy! Certainly, smacks of good taste on her part.” General Mitchel’s adult children arrived in Huntsville: he had two sons with military duties and three daughters, Harriet, Louise, and Virginia, who enjoyed entertainments given by Unionist families. The Mitchels commandeered Hugh Lawson Clay’s house while furniture and linens were brought from the hotel. They “borrowed” works of art from the Meredith Calhoun house to complement the setting.

“Fifty to sixty negro men were discovered drilling with Enfield rifles,” the very newest models, at the depot. Southerners were terrified by the mere idea of armed Negroes; those men were quickly dispersed, and some were taken to jail. The current provost seemed “inclined to keep the negroes in their place” according to Mrs. Chadick. The sense of drama about town was strengthened by her account of a Union military funeral:

A flag is thrown over the coffin. Must belong to the artillery, as there is a cannon in the procession. The band of music from headquarters is playing a dirge. The funeral processions pass two or three times a day of late and sometimes there are two coffins in the hearse at the same time. When a member of the cavalry dies, his horse is led in the procession, as a chief mourner, with the blankets and accoutrements of the deceased thrown over him, which looks inexpressibly sad.

Enslaved people who escaped presented a significant problem for both north and south. The official Federal policy required Union army men to return all enslaved people caught fleeing to their owners, regardless of their personal feelings. Mary Jane suggested that many newly arrived Abolitionists were now reconsidering their opinions:

They say the negro women live like ladies, compared to the poor women of the North, and they outdress the better class; the negro men dress better than the poor men of the South, and are a lazy, impudent, no-account set, and they didn’t know how Southern people put up with them.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 52, 53.

Soldiers had apparently abused some Black people, and they'd had quite enough of "their Abolitionist friends." Informal chats with Abolitionists often led to enslaved people refusing to work, leaving the masters to work for the officers and men for pay.

Good news arrived from Lebanon, Tennessee. A kind Yankee officer delivered the first letter Mary Jane had seen in three months; it was a treasure. Her friends and family were well, including her son, little Davie. Mary Jane also found and read a Confederate account of the Battle of Seven Pines. "The slaughter was terrible. How many brave hearts have fallen ... And how many weary days, weeks, and perhaps months will lapse before we can know who of our friends are among the slain!" Dependable news was few and far between; military information was carefully guarded. "We know nothing that is passing without, and very little within. All we hear is rumor, rumor, rumor with her thousand tongues."

Nearby violence continued. Trains in adjacent Jackson County on the essential rail line to Chattanooga received repeated gunfire. On June 21, ten men were killed and three or four were wounded. General Mitchel now clearly stated his official position regarding bushwhackers: unorganized bodies of citizens had no right to make war. "They are outlaws, robbers, plunderers, and murderers and will be treated as such." In response to the acts of vigilantes, he sent soldiers to burn every Jackson County house near the railroad between Athens and Stevenson. According to Mary Jane, "they were met by the other party under a flag of truce, saying they had about 50 Yankee prisoners in their hands, and for every house burned, they would hang a man. Whereupon the General countermanded the order." Within Federal lines, General Mitchel tightened restrictions; no citizen could be issued a pass to enter or leave town unless they signed the oath of allegiance to the United States. In exchange, Mitchel offered military protection for citizens and property, regardless of political loyalty. Citizens who remained loyal to the Cause, however, were at the mercy of soldiers from the 9th Ohio:

Fires sometimes broke out in local Rebels' houses ... of course, we, in our innocence, never knew how they started. In our honest way we helped with rescue and salvage; and the 35th Ohio was our staunch ally in this work of mercy. We carried beds out-of-doors, for example, and threw glasses and porcelain out of windows.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Qtd. in Mark Grimsley. *Hard Hand of War*. (Cambridge, OH: University Press, 1995), 81.

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The oath requirement made finding even the most basic daily necessities exasperating. A basic pass was required to visit wounded Rebel prisoners held in town. Mary Jane sent her “servant” Uncle Tom to get a permit to take corn to the mill to be ground, and he was told to return with an order from “his master.” Charles William (Willie), now finding himself the man of the house, wrote Tom’s note. The officer demanded Willie come himself, but Willie refused. Eddie was sent next to politely ask Colonel Burke for a pass. The boy was told to return after dinner, but Willie, recognizing his seniority, decided to go after all. The clerk presented the oath for signing, but Willie declined the honor. Eddie returned later; he was chastised for his brother’s rude conduct and was ordered to tell Willie to report back. Willie declined that “honor.” No corn was ground for meal that day at the Chadick household.

Huntsville became a hub of activity near the end of June with the arrival of Generals Don Carlos Buell, Alexander McCook, and Richard W. Johnson, all accompanied by still more troops. A rumor spread that that Buell would replace General Mitchel, who soon left for a court-martial in Washington. The morning of July 4 began quietly with no cannon-fire to celebrate Independence Day. At noon, 34 guns were fired in honor of the occasion. Colonel Beatty had mused in his journal the day before:

Tomorrow is the 4th, hitherto glorious, but now, like today's meridian sun, clouded and with a somewhat uncertain light. Has the great experiment failed? Shall we hail the Fourth as the birthday of a great nation, or weep over it as the beginning of a political enterprise that resulted in dissolution, anarchy, and ruin? Let us lift up our eyes and be hopeful. The dawn may be even now breaking.¹⁶⁷

The next morning was the first of many instances in which Mary Jane Chadick acknowledged feeling ill; this would increase in the following months. She did what many well-bred ladies did on such occasions: she took to her bed. Young Eddie reported that 15,000 of Buell’s troops were camped out in the neighborhood, most likely on their way to Chattanooga, and the Seminary building was taken to serve as a hospital. To Mary Jane’s great annoyance, the young misses Mitchel were being entertained deep within the enemy’s country with a trip to Monte Sano. “They dashed by here in two carriages with Kate Lane and Mrs. Clemens, right in front of the funeral procession of a poor soldier who was shot while on picket duty.” Kate Lane’s father, George Washington Lane, was an avowed Union man and had been rewarded with positions of

¹⁶⁷ Beatty, *Citizen Soldier*, 149.

importance. Mary Clemens' husband, Sen. Jeremiah Clemens, who had first played the role of a Cooperationist, then served briefly as a Confederate officer, was now a Union man, as well. Both men's lives had been threatened – often. The July 10 journal entry was a simply, joyous, “This day has been made memorable by the departure of the family of Gen. Mitchel. Joy go with them!”

Regulations relaxed. The next day, Mary Jane went with the youngsters to pick blackberries and passed three sets of pickets along the way on Whitesburg Pike to Mrs. White's. On their return, they were loaded down with gifts of berries, apples, eggs, and honey. It was a fortunate day for Mary Jane because, just a few miles farther down the pike at Whitesburg, countrywomen regularly came into the Federal camp “asking for food to stave off starvation.”¹⁶⁸ For the Chadicks, it was a delightful day, except that there had been more reports of deaths of local boys at Richmond. More important to Mary Jane, Colonel Chadick (who was not fully recovered from his illness, of which she knew nothing) submitted his letter of resignation from the Confederate army.¹⁶⁹

One week later, Mary Jane Chadick accompanied Mrs. Bradford and Mrs. Gooch to headquarters to visit Gen. Lovell Rousseau. A handsome man, he cordially received and entertained the women, although he spoke harshly of their “rattlesnake government.” When Judge Lane and Jere Clemens entered, the ladies quickly took their leave. On their way out, they observed General Buell, a small, gray-haired man, entering. Such were the current casual days of Buell's occupation. Many considered him to be overly solicitous in his attitude toward Confederates, but it was an agreeable change for the citizens. Soldiers appreciated the change, as well. Corporal Ben Foster of the 15th Kentucky considered:

I am almost all in love with one of the Alabama beauties. ...She is as sweet as a Ripe Fig and as pretty as a spotted pup ... She is so lovable that I can hardly resist the temptation and Check the inclination of falling in love with her, for she talks so nice the music of her Voice would have a tenancy [sic] to charm and captivate Allmost [sic] Any young man.¹⁷⁰

Mary Jane received a wide-ranging pass to go when and where she pleased. At home, she wrote, Corinna's baby John became “very strangely

¹⁶⁸ Jenkins, *Battle Rages*, 41.

¹⁶⁹ CSR #M311, Roll 440, William D. Chadick.

¹⁷⁰ Jenkins, *Battle Rages*, 41.

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affected” and the doctor thought it a chill. The 20th was a tragic day. Clara Chadick was taken sick, and “poor little John was in a state of collapse for hours and died about dark.”

On July 24, 50 carriages accompanied the procession for the funeral of Jesse Jordan. His mother, having just returned from retrieving his body near Richmond, procured an ambulance and casket to escort her son’s remains home to Huntsville. Federal soldiers looked on quietly because they were now escorting more of their brethren to the burying ground. Mary Jane took two of the younger children outside of town to see Mrs. Vincent who was very low. Beyond the depot there was a Federal camp with 75 pieces of formidable artillery. “Some of the vulgar horde were in the creek, bathing right at the ford” while other groups were roasting corn “plundered from the neighboring fields.” Reported actions became more vicious on the 28th; “the Federals burned Whitesburg leaving the women and children houseless and homeless. The light of the conflagration was distinctly seen from here.”

Old Mrs. Vincent passed away and was buried on the plantation. That evening, thought-provoking local news arrived: Federal generals gathered for a “council of War.” They quickly began impressing Black men to erect fortifications because a Confederate army was rumored to approach, “fearful if it is not true.” By August 4, great numbers of enslaved people had been impressed to build earthworks and Patton’s Hill. The entire town was under construction for fortification. A train carried 500 Black people, many volunteered by those who enslaved them, toward Nashville to work on fortifications there. “There is a great panic among the negroes. But few are willing to go, and they are running and hiding generally.” Military men were talking about burning Huntsville, “and if the low-down privates were left to do as they please, they would soon sack and burn it.” Mary Jane was also suspicious of officers. It was reported, one said, that “these people were too pampered in their pride, and he would like to see some of their fine houses destroyed.” Now to add to the tension she saw a “negro colonel walking around today as large as life. ...So, they are arming blacks!” The stockade continued to be built by impressed slaves who were apparently drilled every morning before commencing their labors. “Can it be true that they are going to arm them!”

On August 8, Mary Jane wrote of additional violence in Jackson County and New Market, where several houses had been burned. Among them were “Mrs. Vincent’s, Mr. Crutcher’s, Spraggins’s, Sledge’s and Word’s. They kicked Mrs. Word out of doors and slapped Miss Anna’s jaws.” Mary Jane was not yet aware of it, but these actions were in response to what northerners considered to be a vile murderous deed. (Several of the other journalists wrote about the events as they heard about

them.) Federal Brig. Gen. Robert McCook, recovering from illness, was riding in an ambulance near Maysville, Alabama without his uniform jacket, accompanied only by a small guard. Captain Frank Gurley's partisan rangers attacked the group and, as a result, McCook was wounded and taken to the home of the widow Jane Word, who tended to him as best as she could. His wounds, however, were fatal. McCook was an extremely popular officer, and his death triggered an immediate response by Ohio soldiers. One member of the 9th Ohio, Constantine Grebner, wrote that the men showed no mercy. "The outrage was keenly felt by the men of the brigade... No better disciplined body of men was found anywhere; but this act of perfidy so aroused them, that they broke over all restraints, and could not be controlled. They were bound on revenge and proceeded to work." The Federal soldiers also heard the guerrillas had been cheered, which aroused further rage.

The Words' house was burned and "the work of destruction did not stop here. The houses of those reported by 'intelligent contrabands' as members of the guerrilla band were sought out and given the flames. All that day and the next, the black curling smoke could be seen rising heavenward."¹⁷¹

In mid-August "Corinna got into one of her rages this morning..." Mary Jane tried to assume her absent husband's authority and called Constable Britain Franks to the house. Corinna suddenly disappeared. "Supposition is that she has gone to the Federals. They are playing the mischief with the negroes, and the poor ignorant creatures don't know which way to turn or who their real friends are. The Yankees can be seen at the corners, in the alleys, in confidential chats with them." Corinna returned two days later, ashamed of her behavior, promising to do better. Her friend Granville had been seen lately as "very intimate with the Yankees," which Mary Jane reported to his master. It was too late, however. One day later, Granville and another of the Chadick slaves, Vienna, were missing "with all their plunder." Vienna helped herself to a carpetbag and Eddie's money while Granville "borrowed" money in his master's name, pocketing it for himself. The pair departed on the train for parts unknown. News from James J. Donegan added to Mary Jane's already dreadful uncertainty: he had heard from her husband W.D., who had resigned his commission and gone to health springs to recover his strength. Mary Jane could not know that her husband's official records showed that he suffered from a "mental condition."

¹⁷¹ Constantine Grebner. Ed. Frederic Trautmann. *We Were the Ninth*. (Kent, OH: Kent State Press, 1987), 107-109.

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There was a great stir among the soldiers in the final week of August of 1862. Federal forces appeared to be moving their sick, supplies, and troops with the continual headache-inducing rattling of wagon wheels. Citizens knew something was afoot. The soldiers were no better informed and “rumors ran up and down the streets of the town.”¹⁷² Mayor Robert Coltart called to announce that Federals were evacuating. There was to be “no demonstration” from citizens no matter how much their joy, Colonel Lytle warned, or he would not be able to answer for his men. On the 25th, much to citizens’ dismay, the soldiers remained in town. Just the day before, however, the George W. Lane family, General Rousseau’s sick son, and the Larcombe family rode to the depot in a wagon, “Such was their panic” to catch the train out of town.¹⁷³ As a result, many remaining local Union sympathizers (well known as such to their neighbors) felt abandoned by the departing Federal troops. They were now inside enemy territory and could conceivably be expelled or even killed by Rebels.

The next journal entry on the 25th was written at 4 o’clock, “Good heavens – what a sinking!” The previous order of evacuation had been remanded, and troops yet again pitched their tents throughout town. “We were fondly dreaming that W.D. could now come home and spend the remainder of his furlough with us. ...O dear! The excitement and disappointment together make us very sick we must lay down the pen and actually go to bed.”

The next day: “And go to bed we did, where we have been ever since, a most terrible nervous headache.” The Ohio 3rd and the Bloody 10th camped in the neighborhood. Crowds of Federal troops appeared everywhere around Huntsville “and we are in danger of death by suffocation.” At the Chadick house, Corinna was sick the next day, and Mary Jane had to cook for everyone, declaring herself to be “the only well person on the place who knows how to make a biscuit.” The older girls, Sue and Jennie, ironed and tidied up the house – “a foretaste of what we will have to go through when the rebellion is squashed, and the wonderful ‘Yankee nation’ gets possession of ‘niggerdom.’” There still was hope of

¹⁷² Jenkins, *Battle Rages*, 48.

¹⁷³ By this time, the family of J. Howard Larcombe was probably despised more than any other local Unionists. Both Howard and his wife, Elisabeth, were the telegraph operators (the only operators) on duty the night before the dawn-invasion by General Mitchel. They had not forwarded the message from John Webb to General Beauregard alerting him to the proximity of Federal troops. In hindsight, citizens recalled that the Larcombes were from Pennsylvania and considered to be Lincolmites.

evacuation; the 15th Kentucky, camped on the grounds of Greene Academy, were now cooking rations. At last, on the 31st they awakened to the sounds of tramping feet, voices uttering the most dreadful curses, and wagons rattling in the street. Everyone peeped through shutters to witness the Lincoln army leaving Huntsville. Mary Jane joined her children on the back porch “to look at lurid glares of fires burning in different directions, fearing they had set fire to some parts of the town.” The fires, as it turned out, had been set to destroy “tons of meat, a great deal of which was stolen from the country around, barrels of sugar and molasses, from 50 to 100 barrels of corn, boxes of soap and candles.” They would leave nothing for the Rebel citizens or Rebel soldiers.¹⁷⁴ That very Sunday afternoon, Capt. Frank Gurley, CSA and his men rushed into town to be greeted on the Square with wreaths of ivy and greenery by grateful ladies and gentlemen. Gurley immediately arrested and jailed citizens who had freely done business with the Federals.

In September, Mary Jane and Mrs. Mayhew visited the hospital at the Calhoun house and were impressed by its neatness and attention paid to the comfort of the sick. “Our visits seem to cheer all the poor fellows who are now left at the mercy of strangers and foes.” Over 100 ill and wounded soldiers were left behind as the Federals evacuated into Tennessee. These soldiers were terrified and sick. Some expected to be imprisoned or executed in this foreign country. As glad as she was to see the enemy retreat, Mary Jane’s thoughts and feelings were centered on the return of her husband, “Oh, if he could just learn that the coast is clear.”

The next few months served as an opportunity to gather strength and resolve for the Cause. Men returned to Huntsville during this time of quiet, some on furlough, some desperately ill, and some to be buried. At no time did Mary Jane ever write of any fear that her husband might be wounded or killed in battle, nor did she offer sentiments like those of Celeste, wife of Hugh Lawson Clay, son of the ex-governor. Early in the War, Celeste hoped to keep “a stout heart” but was fearful about the possible loss of her husband. “I wish I could die for my country and intend to if my darling falls.”¹⁷⁵ Stoic Mary Jane Chadick faced the return of her husband, who was now impaired by vaguely described symptoms of disabilities. Mary Jane stopped writing in her journal during this time. Her beloved W.D. returned and stayed for a longer time than anticipated. According to his

¹⁷⁴ Qtd. in Normal M. Shapiro “Invasion and Occupancy of Huntsville, Alabama” in *Huntsville Historic Review*. Vol. 27, #1, (W-S 2000), 14.

¹⁷⁵ George C. Rable. *Civil Wars*. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 58.

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medical records, Chadick was incapable of continuing his military service because of persistent chronic rheumatism. More importantly, the doctor wrote, “nervous prostration being of a peculiar excitable nervous temperament over-exertion and prolonged excitement have produced a species of rather dangerous nervous debility – amounting sometimes to seeming paralysis.” In October of 1862 the local newspaper shared what may have been common knowledge: “our gallant” friend was at home improving from “severe neuralgic attacks.”¹⁷⁶

Adjustments in daily routine became necessary for all citizens as the War continued elsewhere, yet still lurked nearby. Mary Jane Chadick picked up her journal again in July of 1863. She was aware Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg had fallen back from his position, rendering the countryside “again exposed to the incursions of a ruthless foe.” Rules and regulations under Federal military law had quickly changed. During the pause from the enemy, Federals now acknowledged there was no chance of reconciliation with the Rebels; peace could only be obtained by the sword. New military guidelines stated that citizens of an occupied Southern town would have to swear loyalty oaths to the Union and renounce the Confederate cause. If not, they would be required to leave. A permit to buy or sell goods became necessary, verbal insults would not be tolerated, homes could be searched at will and possessions could be seized. Any of these infractions could lead to possible arrest. Troops – thousands of men – could legally subsist on food and supplies taken wherever and from whomever they wanted.

Many north Alabama families decided to take refuge across the river. With W.D. now ill at home, the Chadicks planned to pack up and seek a conveyance south. A transportation panic ensued; every available vehicle in town was already hired. The family departed, but unfortunately, Mary Jane was sick in bed. She remained behind with two of the younger children (still without her son Davey) and two servants. Yankees, they heard, were as close as Bell Factory. This time, however, it was a false alarm. Neighbors hid their silver and valuables, “dreading we know not what. Anxiety and dread are upon every countenance.” Raids were now common. One Monday, the town became full of Blue Coats again.

¹⁷⁶ *Incidents*, 106.

Madison County

In Athens, which had earlier been treated so brutally, Rebecca Vasser commented that the Federals produced “an unChristianlike sensation which creeps over one at the sight of a blue coat.”¹⁷⁷

About 5,000 men arrived in Huntsville under Gen. David Stanley, who promptly confiscated the Fearn house for himself and his staff as headquarters. They commanded the servants, used the provisions in the house, “drinking the wine in the cellar, using the bedding, table linen, et cetera. Such presumption!” In a day or two they began “stealing the negro men and confining them, 70 passed by her house on the way to the Seminary building.” On Sunday:

Such a scene! Whilst the negros were all assembled at church, the Yankees surrounded the building, and as the men came out, seized them. Some got away and succeeded in hiding from their pursuers. Others were run down by those on horseback. The black women were running in every direction, hunting their husbands and children. It is really heart-rendering to a looker-on. These are their friends, the Abolitionists!

But on the very next day, “Can it be! The Blue Coats are actually leaving.” As joyful as their leaving was, citizens unhappily watched as the soldiers took several hundred valuable servants and horses.

At some point during this time, W.D. Chadick rejoined the War effort. He was stationed south of the Tennessee River with the Alabama state militia. One night, as Federal raiders rode away, “the Colonel” came into town after dark, staying for an hour. He borrowed a neighbor’s pony for part of the return trip to the river and, from there, walked two or three miles carrying his baggage. Two weeks later, on August 14, 1863 cavalrymen under Major Stewart dashed in to raid horses and capture any Confederate soldiers who might be home on furlough. One week after this, while the man the Chadick kept enslaved known as Uncle Tom watered the horse at the Big Spring, soldiers took the animal. Tom protested because the horse was so old, but “then a loyal citizen told the Federals that the horse was one of the best pulling horses in town, good for service with artillery or a wagon.” Mary Jane seemed pleased to hear that the Federals took three of that unnamed Loyalist’s horses, as well.

That same afternoon, Federals searched the house for soldiers who might be hiding out; they were almost certainly seeking Colonel Chadick. While his men searched, the officer in charge sat and took little Mary on

¹⁷⁷ Stephen Chicoine. *John Basil Turchin and the Fight to Free the Slaves*. (eBook. Greenwood Publ. Group, 2003), 71.

his lap. "He asked if she was afraid of Yankees, and her reply was 'No, sir' not when they talk right."

The officer asked Mary Jane if any of Colonel's command were there, and she answered he had no command. (He was currently serving as staff officer to General Shorter with the rank of colonel.) In the afternoon, Mary Jane went to retrieve her horse from the impoundment, but soon understood the issue to be more serious than she first believed; her husband was an officer in the Confederate army. While the officer there appeared to respect her husband's loyalty to his cause, W.D. was still a Rebel. He refused to release the animal to Mary Jane. She might have understood if the horse had been her husband's fine saddle horse, but "you do not make war upon women." This was her buggy horse, old and gentle. The officer sent her to Colonel McCook, headquartered in the home of Dr. and Martha Patton, the former LeRoy Pope home.¹⁷⁸ There, in conversation with Edward McCook, she learned of their history in Steubenville, Ohio. He recalled her family fondly and expressed regret that her home had been searched. Furthermore, to her delight, the horse would be returned. The raids continued, however, and the entire family planned to move. None of them could bear to remain and swear the oath of loyalty to the Union. "The die is cast." The Yankees continued to make raids into town; in between these raids, Mary Jane hoped to use two wagons for bedding to get to the river unnoticed. The family crossed safely before dark to be met by the colonel. The whole family was together except for young Davie, who was still in Lebanon. They continued, staying with the Parkers at Warrenton (near Guntersville), and encountered friends from Huntsville almost daily.

Having departed from Huntsville, Mary Jane wrote no more until October 11 as the family prepared to return home. They separated, traveling in a few clusters of children and possessions. She arranged for the return of furniture they kept in storage at the Seminary. Colonel Chadick came in to tell Mary Jane goodbye when Yankees suddenly appeared. "He gave a bound and was across the street though Mrs. Bradford's yard" to the Mayhew's house where Fanny Mayhew hid him. His horse was saddled in the stable ready to depart. The fine saddle now had to be removed and hidden, "but alas, the horse had to take his chance." An officer quickly appeared, demanding to search her house. "Sure enough" the misdirect did not fool him. Col. Edward McCook declined to search the house but left a picket on duty in the front yard. Mary Jane was

¹⁷⁸ Edward McCook was a cousin to the famous fighting McCooks from Ohio. His cousin Brig. Gen. Robert McCook was killed in August of 1862 along Winchester Pike.

in a constant state of alarm on that dreary, sad day. They were alone, totally unprotected, and when her step-daughter Sue retrieved her pistol, she accidentally shot herself through the hand.

Help arrived in the form of "A young miss, Betty W____ who was in on the secret, came and got him a citizen's dress, which I pinned under her hoops and thus conveyed to him. He was in the cellar, the entrance to which was hidden by a trap door in Mrs. Mayhew's pantry, a barrel sitting over the place." After sundown, soldiers continued to search Mrs. Mayhew's house. They loudly yelled that one of the Misses Chadick had shot herself, in hopes that W.D. would surrender in alarm. He successfully made it over the mountain that night, then to the river, as rain poured in torrents. "The next morning, I sent him his saddle and accoutrements, and met him on the outskirts of town, and bidding him farewell, saw him to my great joy depart in safety."

By October 12, Yankees dashed in and out of Huntsville and, four weeks later, settled at Brownsboro. "Every day they came in driving off milk cows, yearlings, hogs, sheep and everything that they think will reduce us to starvation." The tactics were succeeding. Worse, to Mary Jane, their conduct was shameful. "They are constantly firing in the streets, endangering the lives of passerby. ...In some instances, they have entered private houses, robbing them of clothing, blankets, food, et cetera." If they did not leave soon, "we shall also be put on the border of starvation." Attempting to limit some small facets of the soldiers' bad behavior, suttlers, taverns and merchants stopped the sale of liquor on November 19.¹⁷⁹

Federals returned to the dejected town on November 26 accompanied by bands playing and pennants waving. Brigadier General George Crook made his headquarters at the Calhoun house.

News arrived that General Bragg was in full retreat at Chattanooga, but Mary Jane did not trust it. "We cannot believe that a just God will suffer such an enemy to triumph over us." Worse still, Jennie, her teen-aged step-daughter, came in from the country, shaken, and described her night of terror. Five Yankees had entered widow Ewing's house on Whitesburg Pike at midnight, searching, they said, for Jennie's bushwhacker brother and asking of the whereabouts of Jennie's sister "who carries a revolver in her pocket." These men had clearly heard of Sue Chadick's pistol misadventure; they also suspected her brother Willie of bushwhacking. The soldiers left to search Mrs. Ewing's father's house, but

¹⁷⁹ HMCPL Digital Collection, Roberts Collection, Box 1, F 02, 123.

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his “bravery completely nonplussed the cowardly ruffians and they slunk away.” The damage had been done: 21 of Mrs. Ewing’s “servants” left during the night.

One week later, Mary Jane wrote that the Federals were behaving themselves in town. Winter was now in earnest; soldiers mined coal on Monte Sano and delivered it to poor families. Rumor had it that former Governor Clay and his wife were among those drawing rations. In future accounts, Susanna Clay’s three sons denied the rumors, but they were not present to know for certain and, unlike local citizens, they were not hungry. Mrs. Clay applied for a food allotment at one time, but, as she continually refused to admit her status as an “indigent person,” she did not receive supplies.¹⁸⁰

On December 19, Mary Jane went to the river with provisions in hopes of seeing her husband. Colonel Chadick now served as an aide-de-camp in the state militia, having been appointed to the position by Gov. Thomas Watts. The town was secure with Federal pickets, but it was common knowledge that the river was not constantly guarded. She brought a fine pair of boots, gloves, fatigue shirts, and some oysters. She did not see W.D. that day, however, and turned back for home, disappointed. She arrived to bad news about her servant, Vienna, who had gone to the Yankees – again. Three days later, Mary Jane made another trip to the river, crossing in a canoe and staying with the Bush family. She found other refugees: Mrs. Richardson, Mr. Bradley, and Mr. Cabaniss, but not her husband. Well-needed good news arrived within the week from an officer from Lebanon: young Davie was alive and well. A Christmas dinner was prepared, but without the colonel, step-son Billy, and Davie, it was a solemn occasion.

In early January of 1864, Mary Jane made two trips across the river with additional food and clothing. General Sherman’s men occupied town and Crook’s brigade had returned. They tore down old buildings and fences for fuel and for material to build shanties for the remainder of the winter. Prominent Secessionists were arrested and told to swear allegiance to the Union; all declined and were made to leave the lines.

Later in January, Mary Jane crossed into Dixie again and spent a few delightful hours with the colonel; they had not seen one another in four months. Visiting him was risky: “In making these trips, great caution is to be pursued. In some cases, the pickets examine the vehicle for goods and contraband articles, but with all their vigilance, they are frequently

¹⁸⁰ *Incidents*, 126.

outwitted by the ladies. The river has to be crossed in a small canoe, which requires some little courage.” One day later, she accompanied Mrs. Kate Steele to the river. As they departed, the pickets discovered Mary Jane’s pass had expired, but kindly let her go. The men “were very polite and assiduous in fixing the blankets around our feet and taking a sharp look into the buggy to see if we were smuggling out goods. They discovered nothing, owing to the efficiency of our hoops.”

The Chadicks were considered a “disloyal family,” so they were sent a Federal officer with a wife and child to board. There were two spare rooms – a parlor and a study – Mary Jane would give them the study. She prepared for her unwanted guests as any proper lady would, “determined to treat them kindly.” Colonel McFall had the air of a gentleman and kindly provided fuel and provisions for her family. By the end of the month, the colonel had aided her in getting a barrel of flour, and she bought beef and sugar with Confederate money. Neighbors also shared supplies. A new dilemma presented itself when a gentleman offered to purchase the Chadick house and lot for \$45,000 in Confederate money, \$15,000 in state money, or \$6000 in Greenbacks. “Oh, for the wisdom in this matter!” If the offer had been made in gold, she would have known exactly what to do. A Federal officer dared to visit the house collecting water tax. As there had been no water at her hydrant for months, Mary Jane refused to pay.

In February Corinna, the last enslaved woman remaining, “was fixing” to leave to attend Major Griffin, quartered at the Harris home. The major had a room already prepared for her, but after Mary Jane spoke to him, he relinquished her services for the time being. A school for Black children opened in the Black church in West Huntsville where “Corinna sent her son, Jim, against my positive commands.” On Washington’s birthday, according to Federal clerk William Shepherd, many soldiers used the occasion to “celebrate with a grand spree and drunk, while others fire salutes and line the streets with processions and bands of music.” There was to be a ball that night at the Huntsville Hotel for officers.¹⁸¹

New boarders arrived at Mrs. Chadick’s home in the form of a paymaster named Major Brotherline and his clerk; they requisitioned her parlor and the study, giving her “no say-so” in the matter. The clerk repurposed the dining room for providing commissary supplies and fuel, paying \$10 per week, which, according to Mary Jane’s neighbors, was a generous offer. (Soldiers were always happy to see a paymaster arrive so that they could spend real currency instead of the “shin-plasters” used as

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 299, 300.

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personal notes issued by shopkeepers.) The War had now fully encroached upon Mary Jane's life – her house, her back yard, her garden, the hen house, the smokehouse, the front yard and now the very front porch. Payday arrived, and with it a large battery of men with guns who were stationed in front of her house. Major Brotherline sat at a table on the front porch where he most likely kept a loaded pistol in plain sight. This was no small affair; there were records of payouts for \$45,000 and \$60,000 to soldiers in Huntsville during these years.¹⁸² The boarders left after three weeks and seemed to regret parting. Mary Jane admitted, "We shall miss them very much" even though the Major "took a little contraband." William Shepherd wrote letters to his parents on the 28th, revealing what Mary Jane never did in her journal: the 13th U.S. band serenaded the commanding officers. The music reminded him of home with such familiar tunes as "Last Rose of Summer," and "Mocking Bird." William enjoyed walking every evening about town, offering his bows to the young women. He knew they were Rebels, but they at least acknowledged his courtesy. Some of the men formed a glee club and serenaded General Logan's headquarters, the paymasters, and not surprisingly, the Female College.¹⁸³

Unexpected tragic events occurred in the Huntsville community on March 5. Mrs. Jordan, who had earlier gone north to retrieve the body of her son Jesse, planned to go to Nashville to help a second son, Thomas, obtain his parole. She joined a small group of ladies with similar agendas on a train trip. Mary Jane sent \$23 with Mrs. Jordan to pick up supplies, and wealthy widow Margaret McClung had apparently sent a larger sum, \$1150, in care of Mrs. Jordan. The next day, they heard the news of a terrible train accident just north of Stevenson. Mrs. Jordan, Catherine Keys, and Isabella Vogel's bodies were burned up, and Lillie Picket died the next morning. Sarah Hoffa was still alive, but badly burned. Mrs. Keyes and Mrs. Jordan's remains were interred in one coffin because they were reduced to a few bones. The dreadful, unexpected losses – not from the bullet-wounds of warfare, but simple transport – shocked everyone. These ladies were well-known members of the community, as well as mothers and sisters; anguish ran deep. On March 8, Captain Jordan was given permission to return to Huntsville for the burial services. The Presbyterian Church overflowed with mourners.

¹⁸² Ibid., 139.

¹⁸³ Kurt H. Hackemer. Ed. *To Rescue My Native Land: Civil War Letters of William T. Shepherd*. (Nashville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 2006), 299, 300.

Illness continued to run rampant among soldiers and John Robinson's house, Oaklawn, was taken for use as a hospital. As smallpox quickly spread through the Huntsville, Corinna's son fell ill with bad chills.¹⁸⁴ The Federal doctor assigned to the boy brought medicines and offered to vaccinate everyone in the household. "In short he has been very kind. Would that he were not a Federal."

Meanwhile, the Chadick step-children found work in the community. Sue took Miss Sue Bradley's place at the College and little Mary went along with her to classes. Eddie clerked at a bakery, "better than to be eating the bread of idleness at his age." Every evening he brought home fresh bread, which was welcome in such scarcity. George attended Mrs. Mayhew's school, but his Latin classes had to cease; Mary Jane did not have enough Greenbacks to pay his tuition.

Pinning down the whereabouts of her oldest step-son Willie proved to be difficult. She heard rumors that he crossed the river often, most likely carrying on war efforts of his own. It is probably just as well that Mary Jane did not know of Willie's activities. In the notebook used by Federal secret agent Emile Bourlier, it was written that Willie was to be granted no special favors from Federal authorities. Bourlier reported that Willie had recently returned from a trip across the river near Lacey's Spring, where he kept a tobacco crop. Young Chadick swore he was seeking a permit to bring the tobacco across the river, but he was heavily suspected of passing critical information to his father, Colonel Chadick. The previous year, during the Federal absence, the senior Chadick had announced from his pulpit he "would join the thousands who would live in the bushes to bushwhack the Yankees if they returned to this part of the country."¹⁸⁵ These men indeed were the enemy.

Mary Jane's opinion of the War and her family's role in it remained firm, but her journal reveals her gradual adaptation to daily life under the control of an enemy. In her journal, she judged each man and his actions individually, however, it should be noted that Mary Jane Chadick interacted solely with officers. Relationships developed while opinions on both sides evolved. When he first came to the house as assistant

¹⁸⁴ Nothing was too evil to blame on the enemy. The dual threats of smallpox and the abolitionist often ran together. In Charleston, South Carolina, rumors spread that a sudden outbreak of smallpox had been caused by Abolitionists who had shipped a box of contaminated rags to maliciously spread the disease. Christopher Dickey. *Our Man in Charleston*. (New York: Broadway Books 2015), 190.

¹⁸⁵ Edward F. Reid Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Collection #1068, f 7.

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paymaster, Mr. Kinne “considered Secesh to be shockingly barbarous people and wondered if he could expect to be poisoned.” Later, he suggested that Major Griffin bring sheet music on his return from Louisville for the Chadick daughters, Sue and Jennie.

Corinna and her son Jim departed to work at the hotel while Mary Jane spent three days ill in bed. As he approached Huntsville with his command in the early months of 1862, Colonel John Beatty wrote:

We saw droves of women working in the fields. When their ears caught the first notes of our music, they would drop the hoe and come running to the road. May we not hope that their darkened minds caught a glimpse of the sun of a better life now ‘rising for them. There are not 50 negroes in the South who would not risk their lives for freedom.¹⁸⁶

Not surprisingly Mary Jane wrote that, except for Uncle Tom, all their “servants” were gone, and doubtless he would “go next – old as he is. There is a powerful charm in the word freedom.”

Mary Jane worried terribly for her husband the colonel, son Davie in Tennessee, and expressed continued anxiety over providing her children with food and her shortage of money for supplies. Their friend Dr. Barnett, a Mason who Mary Jane considered to be a true gentleman, purchased items for them from the commissary (Mary Jane did not have a permit). At government prices, he sent via his aide 10 pounds of candles, coffee, 25 pounds sugar, a peck of sugar, one peck of salt, and one pound of white beans. Later he came by with a bottle of “Ferment.”

Mary Jane tried out new servants during this time. The first to come along was a woman named Nancy who had two children, one of whom was large enough to wait on the house. She did not mention Nancy again, but, two days later, Melinda (with two sons) offered her services: one boy could cut wood and the other could wait on the table for \$8 a month. Two days later she expressed disappointment with Melinda and took a neat, nice-looking servant on trial. “Think I am at last suited.” She offered no report on Nancy or Melinda or the four boys, probably unskilled, unhoused, and hungry once more. Just two weeks later, Mrs. William Robinson at Quietdale suggested Mary Jane engage a former servant of hers, Rosetta, who lived in town with her two children because there was nothing left at the Quietdale plantation for them to live on. Pleased with Rosetta, Mary Jane hired her and her two children for \$3 per month, plus

¹⁸⁶ Beatty, *Citizen*, 154.

room and board. At the same time, Dr. Barrett asked Mary Jane if she could possibly take his wife to board. She felt there was no question; taking Mrs. Barrett to board would keep the family from being assigned other unlikely officers, many of whom were “not gentlemen.”

On April 11, a caisson exploded at the depot. Six cannoneers were killed instantly, and several others were badly wounded. Several citizens were injured, and the depot was badly damaged.

She heard about her husband from a friend who had been across the river. The colonel appeared to be “in perfect health and was the finest looking and the finest dressed officer” there. Meanwhile, the Feds mounted 20 cannons on Patton’s Hill. Two nights before, the men had slept upon their arms and were drawn up in a battle line for some time. Bushwhackers had once again torn up the railroad tracks while the steam mill on the street behind her house was refitted as a powder magazine! Feds must be expecting action at any time.

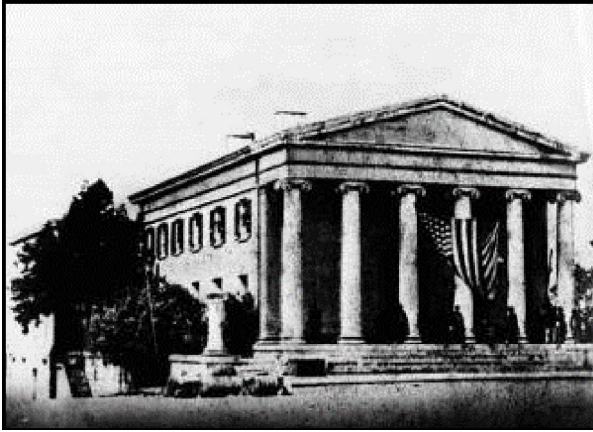
Later in April, Mary Jane took tea with Sophia Davis, wife of the Cooperationist, Nick Davis at her home The Grove. (Sophia Davis’s younger sister, Sarah Lowe, attended Huntsville Female College and maintained a journal of her own.)¹⁸⁷ Post commander Col. Jesse Alexander told Mary Jane he intended to advance on Georgia where “he expects to meet my husband and bring him back to me. I told him on the contrary, I thought I had better give him a letter of introduction, recommending him to the kindness of Col. Chadick when he fell into his hands.” She also noted two Union Southern ladies who had married Federal officers and offered no further disparaging comments about them. George and Martha Lane’s daughter, 23-years-old Mattie, married Col. Charles Norton. Jennie (Davis) Harris married as her second husband Col. Jesse Phillips (later General Phillips) who had earlier pursued, according to other accounts, some of the young ladies of Florence, Alabama.

Mary Jane walked with friends about Patton’s Hill where the Federals were busily tearing down Mrs. Gooch’s beautiful cottage to place their cannons. The pace of fortification quickened. Railroad cars ran to and

¹⁸⁷ George W. Lane may have wavered once in his devotion to the Union, but during the years he was at his home on Adams Avenue, he displayed the Stars and Stripes from his roof. General Mitchel appreciated his devotion even if his neighbors did not. Nick Davis was described by a close friend as a reckless charmer who was either at one extreme or the other, “the poles or the equator.” Faye Acton Axford. *Lure and Lore of Limestone County*. (Tuscaloosa: Portals Press, 1978), 63.

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from Huntsville nonstop carrying supplies, including even more ammunition and cannon. Huntsville's Bank building would now serve as the headquarters for the Army of the Southwest under Gen. James B. McPherson.



Bank of Alabama

Massive amounts of provisions arrived in town at the end of April; Huntsville was to become a supply depot for the push toward Georgia. Negroes were impressed and kept at work until midnight. Mary Jane's friend Fanny Mayhew was ordered to convert the Girls' Seminary to a hospital for some of the 4,000 sick soldiers. Mary Jane also wrote that little Mary Chadick was down with the measles.



Huntsville Female Seminary

Madison County

General Sherman issued an order that no provisions be sold to citizens. "This is rather hard after their army has stripped the country of everything," Mary Jane wrote dejectedly. As May arrived, more soldiers passed through each day. Mary Jane briefly encountered General McPherson, "a fine looking, graceful and obliging officer, unlike most generals and high officers does all his own writing. I asked him what all this commotion portended. 'War, war, war! It portends war!' was his brief reply."

In early May, local Federals went into a great panic when rumor reached them that General Nathan B. Forrest had crossed the Tennessee River at Florence. "They are removing their ammunition from our neighborhood to the courthouse." Even disabled, enslaved Old Tom was taken from the yard and impressed for work at Fort Taylor; the Federals showed no sympathy for his severe rheumatism. Mary Jane got an official release from Colonel Alexander, but Uncle Tom was made to work all day and told to report again the next. "And all artists, suttlers, cotton buyers and camp followers" were ordered to report or be expelled from the lines. Rifle pits were dug in Mrs. Tom White's front yard and, as a result, her house was actually inside the fort. Furthermore, "all loyal citizens are ordered to report at the fortifications for work tomorrow. Uncle Tom is still retained."

In mid-May, news arrived that Mary Jane's step-son Billie was just across the river. Sue, Jennie, and Edwin tried to get to him, but they could not obtain a horse. Sue cried tears of disappointment.

Just west of Huntsville, there was genuine excitement. "Our troops are fighting the Yankees at Indian Creek, having torn up the railroad below and are thought to be advancing upon Huntsville." She wrote a second time on the day of May 17, "Confeds destroyed trains, burned 100 bales of cotton at Madison Station, and tore up the railroad." It was an embarrassing loss for the Federals. There were other rumors, but neither the trains nor mail ran to confirm these events. Rebels advanced on Madison Station (now Madison), and captured the railroad and men stationed there. The stockade quickly was evacuated, the depot burned, and railroad tracks torn up. Federals arrived by noon, but the Confederates had managed to flee with a captured supply wagon, eight 6-mule teams and three 2-horse ambulances.¹⁸⁸ The next day two men – Dr. Fletcher (formerly a captain in the Confederate army), and Elisha Betts from Madison Station – were accused of helping the Rebels. They were arrested and brought to Huntsville. If he was proven guilty of spying, Dr. Fletcher

¹⁸⁸ *Incidents*, 164.

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faced the prospect of hanging. (In memoirs of her own, Lillie Greet later wrote of her part in the trial of her Uncle Betts.) General Frank Blair arrived in Huntsville with the 17th Army Corps. Mary Jane reported that his troops “are committing all kinds of depredations upon private property. They are stopping here every moment for flowers, being greatly attracted by my front yard which at this time looks like a perfect wilderness of wild, fine roses. Twenty of the men came into my back yard.” The men stole not only flowers, but far more valuable goods like her churn and the milk newly taken from the cow.

Later that month, a friend delivered a letter from brother David in Lebanon. A dog had bitten young Davie badly, but the relatives told her the boy was entirely recovered. Like any mother, Mary Jane felt, “anxious and sad and think that it may be worse than they represent it.” There was a good report for the children; during their examinations at Mrs. Mayhew’s “Clara recited a piece of poetry beautifully and Georgie made a speech and acted in a dialogue with great credit to him.”

By mid-month the Federals were under marching orders and would soon leave. Their replacements would be the often poorly trained “100 days” men who had only signed on for a little over three months. Mary Jane was sorry to lose friends among the command who had shown the citizens kindness. “We may make a bad exchange.” On June 23, 6,000 soldiers left for the front, leaving one regiment in Huntsville. Numerous Union citizens, officers and wives also fled for safety. Many Loyalists thought General Forest, whom they considered to be a terrorist, approached this area in order to cut off Sherman’s communications.

The first entry for June 24, 1864: “I made \$3 today selling milk and vegetables to the soldiers.” (Mary Jane’s new servants most likely milked the cow and planted and picked the vegetables.) She was thankful for the cash and soldiers were likely thankful for fresh food. Two days later Gen. Phillip Roddey, CSA threatened the town and no one was allowed to leave Huntsville without taking the oath. Were it to be successfully attacked, orders were to destroy Huntsville.

Federals now openly stole furnishings from private homes for the newly arrived officers. Mary Jane endured a skirmish of her own, which she won. According to an official document, she was required to produce a set of chamber furniture for the headquarters now established at Mr. Beirne’s house. A wagon appeared the next day and she relinquished a sofa, six chairs, a table, a bedstead, a bureau with a looking glass, and a washstand with bowl and pitcher. The wagon then moved on to Dr. Anthony’s for more furnishings. In the meantime, Mary Jane went to Col. Gilbert Johnson to exercise her powers of persuasion:

Madison County

He told me, among other things, I must expect to lose everything I had. In fact, I did not possess anything; my husband had taken an active part in the War, had been very violent, was in favor of bushwhacking, etc. I told him my husband was a high-toned, honorable gentleman, and by no means violent.

who did not believe in bushwhacking but rather proper, open warfare. She saw no reason to give up her possessions. Words and attitude may have worn the colonel down, "Well, Mrs. Chadick, I will not take as much from you as I intended. I will only take two or three pieces." Her triumph was briefly felt; she returned home to find that her only maid Rosetta had made the decision to leave to work in another neighborhood for higher wages.

On July 15, word came that a large body of Confederate cavalry had apparently crossed the river at Claysville and might soon be upon Huntsville. All soldiers and Black men were ordered to the fort by sundown; new soldiers were panic-stricken. Mary Jane was "badly prepared to greet the Rebels, having a miserable headache." The next morning, she awoke clear-headed. The fort was still intact and no one knew where the Rebels were. A new servant named Margaret began working for her. Georgie, who waited on her husband, was allowed across the river, and reported another narrow escape for W.D. "Oh, if I could see him, if but for one short hour! Col. Johnson, in my interview with him, told me in a very unfeeling manner that a letter came to me from my husband a few days since, and he sent it back over the river." One week later she arose with a nervous headache. "This cruel separation from my husband affects me most painfully... It is now eight months since we saw each other."

Near the end of July of 1864, Mary Jane went to Headquarters for a permit for lard, mackerel, herring, and other provisions from Nashville. General Johnson readily granted the favor. Among the officers there was a Gen. Gordon Granger, a dignified, courteous gentleman. "He took great notice of Clara, who accompanied me, took the heart of a watermelon and gave it to her, and spread his handkerchief in her lap to protect her dress." A different side of officer life revealed itself when Capt. Timothy Baker, Quartermaster, was relieved of duty:

A lady sent to Corinna (who waited on him) for his China set, silver baskets and other things which had been taken for his use, and she refused to give them up, saying Captain Baker had given them to her. She had them packed up and was ready to start with them to Nashville when Colonel Johnson sent a guard to take them, and forbid her having a pass to leave the place. She is now hunting a room to stay in.

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The evening of August 6 brought a delightful surprise for the entire family, but especially for Mary Jane. Her sister Julia arrived by train from Lebanon with young Davie. Mary Jane was ecstatic to see her son after a separation of nearly three years. "A beautiful boy. Has grown very much and hardly knew his mother. Such an excitement among the children! If his pa was only here to participate in it, our happiness would be complete." It was dreaded, if expected, that the war might separate mothers from their sons in battle. The idea that a mother could be robbed of three years of her youngest son's childhood, however, was a deeper, more painful emotional wound.

The next Saturday found Mary Jane ill in bed with a severe cold. There was "excitement about dinner time, occasioned by the finding of a _____ in my front yard by Billy." (One can only guess what was so depraved that Mary Jane could not write the word in her journal.) The children were excited when Aunt Julia planned a tableau of skits with parts for all of them the next evening. Mary Jane awoke that morning with a dreadful headache and the children gathered around her bedside with long faces, afraid the entertainment would be postponed. With great effort, she gathered herself and sent for a tub of hot water, in which she bathed her feet almost to a blister. Afterward, she bound up her head with vinegar and took a restorative nap. She felt slightly better when Georgie with Davie invited the guests inside. "All hands went to work organizing the house and arranging costumes. Some were dispatched for flowers, whilst Julia and Jennie arranged the stage. One end of the back porch was fitted up... counterpanes were tacked to the sides, and carpet spread and a curtain hung in front." To complete the arrangements, Eddie brought a load of fine large watermelons. All the Randolph Street ladies were invited. At nightfall everything was assembled; the actors were ready. Mary Jane recorded the children's name and their skits that included a school ma'am, (while teacher slept, the schoolchildren engaged in mischief), evening prayers, a fortune teller, domestic bliss and more. Mary Jane commented on the beauty of the costumes and the rousing applause the performers received. To conclude the evening, everyone adjourned to the dining room to imbibe of the melons. The children, she wrote, had not enjoyed such fun since the commencement of the miserable War.

New wartime realities encroached upon the Chadick household. Margaret, her "slow maid of all work was still washing – the 10th day." All work was behind, and Mary Jane resolved to "put the shoulder to the wheel and get things straight. I went to the washtub, Sue and Julia to the ironing table. Jennie got dinner and before night it was all brought up. After washing the skin off my fingers, not being used to it, I sat down to my embroidery frame." For the first time, the Chadick women played a large role in completing daily grinding tasks such as washing and cleaning.

Madison County

Mary Jane Chadick's opinion of the treatment of the South was as follows:

Between robbing, thieving and murdering they will give the North a glorious name in history. Officers and their reputed wives have occupied houses and plundered the contents. Mr. Robert Watkins, newly deceased, had dishes, bedding, and even pillow cases taken; the gentleman's clothes were carried off whilst his old mother lay in her bed of sickness upstairs.

Captain Allen, Quartermaster occupied the Weeden house and "carried off among other things, two china chamber[pot]s. His name has been thereby immortalized by the ladies. When looking under the bed for that article, they ask, 'Where's Capt. Allen?'"

Sister Julia made plans to return to Tennessee on the evening of August 22, which would once again leave Mary Jane without the comfort of close adult companionship. Even worse, Davie cried to return with his aunt to the family he had grown to know in Lebanon. Mary Jane's worries were plentiful during this time. She was terrified at the notion of passengers riding in trains, which were under almost constant gunfire. The news that General Joe Wheeler and his cavalry were rumored to have destroyed the railroad in Tullahoma and, even closer, at Decatur was extremely upsetting. Federals were apparently watching for him there at every hour, barricading the streets in town with cotton bales. On September 2, all was confusion.

This begins a period in which Mary Jane briefly wrote in the present tense. Supplies had just arrived, and wagon trains rolled into town recently riddled by gunfire near Athens. The bridge over the Elk River burned even as the supplies passed over it. The situation appeared dire for the Federals who thought "Generals Forrest and Roddey are below and General Wheeler above." Wagons loaded with cotton bales galloped through the streets to the fort. She wrote again at five o'clock that evening in dismay. A dispatch arrived with the news of the fall of Atlanta: General Hood had indeed evacuated Atlanta on the previous evening.

Citizens awoke the next morning to learn that there was no communication with Nashville. The railroad had been severed in both directions, cutting off Huntsville from any reliable news source. One Federal officer suggested he would not bet on the news of Atlanta being true. Another day passed with no outside news. A young Federal Lieutenant named Whitton who was unknown to Mary Jane called with the offer to purchase sugar for her at the government rate of 14 cents, far better than the 50 cents she would pay on the market. "Truly, there are some gentlemen among them. He called at the door this evening and left a

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lady's book." After all, there were two young ladies in the household, and the young Federal soldiers were far from their friends at home.

The Chadick children began arranging small jobs to earn money. Sue, the oldest step-daughter, agreed to teach at the Matkin household (located west of town) for five months. This would have unexpected consequences later. "There is quite a 'mania' for teaching among the young ladies, which is certainly praiseworthy." Without their efforts, Mary Jane wondered, how could the present generation be educated, as "we have been too dependent upon the North in this respect, as in others." Billy got a "situation" at the railroad depot, Jennie and Eddie were in Meridianville, and the four younger children remained at home with their mother.

Days passed with no news from Nashville. A smuggled Confederate newspaper reported that General Grant had given up the siege of Petersburg, and General Early whipped the Yanks in the Shenandoah. On the other hand, the Feds reported that Sherman captured 12,000 Rebels – or possibly only 3,000 – south of Atlanta. Rebels were thought to control Athens, Pulaski, and Shelbyville. Huntsville seemed to be "surrounded by Rebels and yet never permitted to behold the light of their faces."

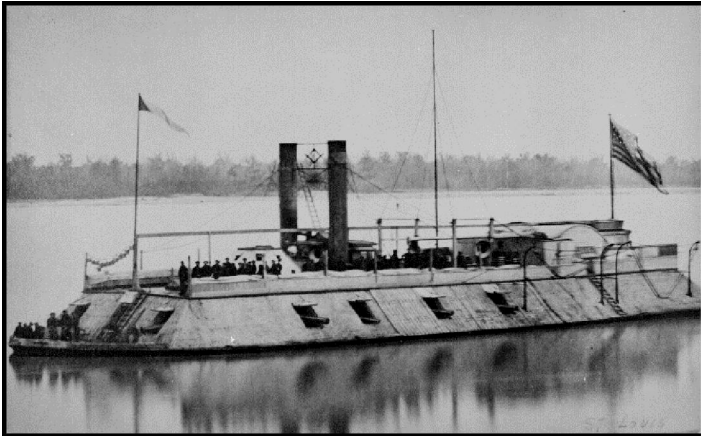
Neighbor Tom White brought news that Colonel Chadick was at the river; Mrs. White and her son offered to accompany Mary Jane and help her get passes to see him. Mary Jane was excited, "unfit to attend to my domestic concerns." At night fall, Mr. White came to tell her the dejecting news that no passes would be issued to ladies for visits to the river. The next day (Tuesday, September 13), Kitty Brickell called to inform Mary Jane that she had a letter at the post office. Miss Kitty tried to bring it to her, but the provost insisted Mary Jane come in person. "I at once proceeded to the Courthouse and went through the ceremony of receiving it." The letter was from W.D., urging her obtain a pass to see him at the river. Colonel Horner and General Granger were in Decatur; they were the only two people authorized to issue such passes, and they were expected in Huntsville at any time. That evening, Mrs. Burton called at the Chadick house to pass along that she'd made her way to the river with only a pass to allow her outside the pickets. With this knowledge, Mary Jane resolved to take her chances using only a permit from the Provost and risk the other formalities. Billy agreed to accompany her.

Ready by 8 am, she brought a silk handkerchief, two cigars, and a bottle of homemade wine as "tokens of remembrance. Oh, how did my heart flutter and tremble with fear lest I should fail in seeing him, whom I had not seen in 10 long months. I took little Davie with us whom he had not seen for two and a half years." At the river they met with the formal military protocol through Captain Klingman who asked for "requisite

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papers authorizing him to bring my husband over.” She handed over the only pass she had: the pass to come outside the pickets (Granger and Horner had not arrived in Huntsville, so they could not issue the full pass to Mary Jane). Pleading her case, Mary Jane told Klingman her husband would most likely be leaving Morgan County the next day. He knew the colonel, “but it would be the last time he would cross anyone without written permission from the general.” He was running a great risk as it was. Such was warfare, “the soldiers took us to their quarters and gave us a cup of hot coffee” before they went to the river. “The flag of truce was waving upon the boat. The captain and the soldiers jumped in and soon landed upon the opposite shore.”

As all this took place, a gunboat passed by. Having never seen one, Mary Jane wrote that it reminded her of pictures of Roman boats.



Gunboat St. Louis (similar to the one Mary Jane saw)

There was no time to inspect it; “all my thoughts and my eyes were upon the returning skiff and its precious freight. Soon we were clasped in each other’s arms.” He looked handsome in a gray military jacket with gray buttons. He was delighted to see Davie and Billy; they all walked the riverbank together, sitting upon carriage cushions on some rocks under trees, “and seated ourselves vis-vis for a chat, as they only had a half-hour. Soon, too soon, it was over and bidding each other farewell, he returned to Dixie and I to Yankeedom.” Mary Jane tried not to shed tears, but on her return, “the excitement was too great for me. I went to bed, sick and unable to hold up my head for two days.” She was fortunate for the opportunity to visit with her husband; the very next week, Colonel Horner was appointed as the new provost. Under his rule, anyone requesting a pass or a favor of any kind was required to take either the amnesty oath or

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the oath of allegiance, “more severe measures than have heretofore been used.”

In the last week of September, uncertainty reigned for the army and citizens alike. A strong force of Rebels had apparently taken Athens, capturing three Federal regiments. Reinforcements were sent from Decatur, but they, too, were “gobbled up” by General Forrest. (Mary Fielding wrote a great deal in her own journal regarding Forrest’s outwitting of Colonel Campbell.) Where would Forrest go next? Huntsville waited. By September 30, General Sherman was expected to arrive with the 15th Army Corps in preparation for General Forrest. “If this is true, we as citizens have everything to fear. Yet, it may be just a ‘ruse’ to cheer and encourage the small force that is here.” Federal scouts went out to locate Forrest. About nine miles out of town, 50 were captured, “the remainder came tearing back – sans hats, etc.”

Mary Jane Chadick and her neighbors had faced unfathomable challenges at home during war time, but their circumstances could now turn deadly. The town was soon to be under direct attack by units of Gen. Abraham Buford, CSA who was known to demand unconditional surrender. Buford would be immediately followed by Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, dreaded by Federals and revered by Rebels. On September 30, Federal Col. Gilbert M. Johnson sent a message from his commanding officer, General Granger, to General Buford who appeared to be an immediate and dangerous threat to Huntsville. Granger, for “the sake of humanity,” offered the following propositions:

If you pledge yourself that your forces shall not occupy any position of the city, he [Granger] will not occupy it except that portion which is in immediate vicinity of the fort which is essential. If you will attack us on the South side of the city, we will withdraw our forces to the fort and meet you there. Or if you will designate some portion of the city which shall be held sacred the citizens shall be removed [to] there and we will not occupy it with our troops. These propositions are made solely to give protection to defenseless citizens.

Rebel General Buford responded:

I am here in command of the advance of General Forrest’s army with instructions to demand the surrender of the city, the Fort and Garrison. An answer to this demand must be made before nightfall. If refused, the citizens must leave the city at once, certain conditions will attend the surrender which conditions Col. Kelly the bearer will acquaint you with. Very respectfully, Brig. Gen. A. Buford.

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The next message, from Gen. Nathan B. Forrest himself, reinforced Buford's words in no uncertain terms:

I expect to attack tomorrow morning from every rock, house, tree and shrub in the vicinity and feeling very confident of my ability to succeed in my anticipated attack now bid you prepare yourself for the fray. I however cheerfully accept the proposition you made to Brig. Gen. Buford viz: to allow two hours of daylight tomorrow morning for the purpose of allowing non-combatants to remove beyond the lines. At the expiration of the 3rd hour of the coming day I shall commence offensive operations unless another communication from you with before that time.¹⁸⁹

Mary Jane wrote for a second time in her journal at five o'clock that evening. The Rebels were thundering at the gates, drawn up in line of battle across the Meridianville Pike. She wrote yet again that night. "All is quiet." The children had gone to bed with no fuss. Thunderstorms blew through, and Mary Jane tried to calm her excited nerves by reading. At 9 pm, just as she was going to sleep, she wrote that a neighbor had violently rung the bell and spread news that General Buford demanded an "unconditional surrender" of Huntsville. General Granger answered this message with defiance: "he would burn the town first, and he would fight him there, or in the Fort." All the citizens had two hours to get out of town! "Horrible. Now what is to be done?"

Mary Jane quickly roused the children, dressed them, and gathered up other clothes to take for their journey. The general sent word that women and children must leave town by 7 am. The family ate a hasty breakfast while neighbors gathered in groups, deciding what to do. Most people were torn. Leave, some said. Others believed the safest course of action to be remaining in their own homes; their street was under the guns of the fort. Nervous excitement filled Mary Jane's mind. She had several helpless children whose safety depended upon her decision. "Most of my neighbors resolve to stay, and so will I." Billy arrived with a small wagon. He and Ed begged her to leave with them. "Cannons boomed from the fort and of course the children are crying and beseeching to go." They were packed into the wagon with a lunch provided by sister Jennie and sent out to old Mrs. Steele's home.

¹⁸⁹ Edward F. Reid Papers, Indiana Historical Society Digital Collections, #31068, F 2.

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Oak Place (HABS)

“Resolved to stay ourselves and risk the chances.” Mary Jane was now alone with Margaret, a faithful servant, and she suffered tortures with her “Mary Jane disease.” General Granger informed the remaining citizens that, if Confederates came within 300 yards of the fort, he had orders to set fire to every house in town. (Laura Wharton Plummer’s memoir described buckets filled with turpentine and long faggots kept at every corner in anticipation of torching the town.) Mary Jane next wrote at 9 am when firing appeared to cease. “No attack yet from the Rebs” although town was surrounded on three sides. Again at 1 pm, “All is quiet.” Her last entry on that long, terrible day reported that Yanks said the Rebels had retired. She finished her entry, “It is raining very hard, accompanied by thunder. Oh, that my little ones were at home!”

By October 2, “All quiet. The Rebels have disappeared. The little refugee children have just returned, all mud and dirt. The pickets said as they went out that such a pretty family of children could pass anywhere,” and there had been a large crowd at Mrs. Steele’s house. By now everyone “understood the whole thing was a feint on the part of General Forrest to get 200 wagons, which he had captured from the enemy across the river.” After the citizens’ night of terror, General Buford calmly mounted his men and went west to join General Forrest.

Hard rain continued. Mary Jane tried to bring a sense of normalcy back to her home. Her two younger sons went to the depot to purchase rations from a soldier, “one month’s provisions – four pounds of sugar, two and a half pounds of coffee, 22 pounds of bacon and a half box of

crackers.” Georgie went to pick up two letters at the provost’s office but was not allowed to take them because he did not have the required ten cents. “What new system of extortion is this?” she wondered, suffering from another terrible nervous headache. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson were arrested for feeding Rebels on the previous Saturday. They were required to take the oath, post a \$10,000 bond, and endured “the humiliation of being escorted to town by a negro guard.” She blamed this arrest on a spy and informer named Kincheon Britt, a home-made Yankee notorious for telling lies about people to the Federals.

Mary Jane once again sent her boys to the depot. The provisions they located this time included dried beef, cheese, a bottle of vinegar, and half a box of hard crackers. Three soldiers noticed her blooming roses and asked permission to pull some, which Mary Jane readily agreed to. One of the men, Canadian born, told her he thought this the prettiest place he had seen, and hoped to return after the War. Mary Jane was suspicious, “their tongues had been a little ‘oiled’ with ‘how come you so’ as he thanked her for our courtesy. ... They walked off like they were stepping on eggs, but managed to sustain their equilibrium.”

Food and supplies were continually scarce. Zenia Pruitt, a servant from Meridianville brought her a ham, side of meat, sweet potatoes, and green corn “truly acceptable in these times of scarcity and dearness of provisions.” Bacon was 40 cents per pound at the market, and there was very little of it.

On October 12, Mary Jane recovered from another severe nervous headache. She and her two friends had a hearty laugh when George and Davie gave an account of their attempt to get a pass to gather nuts. At the courthouse they were asked if they had taken the oath. Had their father? They had not, nor had their father, therefore no pass would be issued. “The little fellows came home in a high state of indignation.” The boys were so angry, the ladies enjoyed themselves, perhaps at the boys’ expense. “So, we urged them to go back and take it, and not let all their pleasure be spoiled by so trifling a ceremony. George’s face flushed with angry surprise, and he said that it was ‘a pill he could not swallow.’” Davie declared, “it would not stay on his stomach, he would throw it up. We urged them to each take a spoonful of preserves and go up to the Provost and tell him they had brought something to take it in.” The Provost, Colonel Horner, exhibited such malice and ill will that he reminded Mary Jane “of another illustrious namesake, Jacky Horner, who in his unbounded pride, exclaimed, ‘Oh, what a great, big boy am I.’” Mary Jane kept herself busy creating an embroidered bridal pincushion for the wife of a Federal minister. She earned \$1.50 for her handiwork; there would be more such opportunities.

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Possible action heated up again with confusion over the whereabouts of Generals Forrest and Hood's armies. Federals were on edge, particularly after the loss of ten wagons, which had been sent out on a foraging expedition. General Granger's family, among others, were leaving Huntsville hurriedly, as were Federal troops. Lieutenant Whitton called to bring the Chadicks coffee, sugar and candles. He brought them himself and left a lady's book and bid her, 'Farewell, Mrs. Chadick.'" There were no entries for the next two days until she rose from "a spell of severe nervous headache." Zenia came into town from Meridianville with a gift of 75 pounds of flour, a bag of turnips, sweet potatoes from Mrs. Pruitt and a basket of onions and apples from Mrs. Otey. Sue at the Matkin's plantation sent in the servant Nancy with a basket of nuts for the children.

In late October, an outrageous disturbance occurred. "A negro soldier came into my back yard this morning and took deliberate aim at my house dog, and fired right in the midst of a group – Margaret and her children – the ball plowing the ground within a yard of one of the latter." The ball missed the dog, and Mary Jane went to the door calling out, "What are you shooting my dog for? He replied, G—Damn you why don't you come out and keep him off me? Margaret exclaimed, "What if you had killed my child? It's nothing but a damned little Secesh no how, he replied and got away in a hurry with two other black cowards standing sentinel at the gate." Incidents like this happened with increased frequency. The next day, Mary Jane wrote, "Panic no. 6!" Everyone believed General Hood to be at Decatur; cannons from that direction could be heard all evening. Every available soldier was sent from the fort with the result that no pickets were on guard. For the first time in a year, everyone could walk about without a pass. The fear and uncertainty among Federals continued:

It is now generally believed General Hood's destination is Nashville! A good many troops passed to Decatur yesterday evening, raw levies, two-months men. A sutler from there reported 300 of them got sudden sick, unable to cross the river when they got there, and 90 of those who did cross were killed.

Fighting in Decatur continued, while in Huntsville, nearly all the females used their newfound freedom to shop, and with good reason: "The rush was caused by the new order which is to go into effect on Monday, viz: that no person can buy over one dollar's worth without a 'permit,' for which they pay 25 cents, and over \$10, they must take the oath."

Mary Jane's description of an afternoon tea in November with Mr. Herrick revealed the scarcity of the times: a good cup of coffee, broiled ham, chipped beef, biscuits, batter cakes and light bread. Canned fruit (peaches and cream) finished the meal.

That very night, the contraband camp for refugees and impressed slaves at ex-governor Chapman's estate on Chapman Mountain was burned. More unsettling news emerged: no one could determine the whereabouts of Hood's army. On November 4, Mary Jane sent a letter to Sue at the Matkin's plantation where she taught the children. She was only five miles away, but Sue did not have the required permit to make a visit home. "Colonel Horner (alias Do-much-the Colonel of the regiment being Col. Doolittle) will not give her a pass unless she takes the oath! A Federal (Capt. Fordyce) knowing the facts, unsolicited, very kindly procured her a Pass from General Rousseau." This was Mary Jane Chadick's first mention of Capt. Samuel Fordyce, but it would not be the last. The handsome Yankee captain had met daughter Sue, and the two took an immediate liking to one another. Sue arrived home the next day using a pass, and everyone was overjoyed to see her. The following week, news reached the family that Colonel Chadick was at the river, "How my heart yearns to see him, not only now, but daily – nay hourly. I can safely say he is never mentally absent from me." Mary Jane, meanwhile, took time to make a pair of black cloth gaiters, sending them to the country to be sold. "My first attempt in the shoemaking line."

On November 11, citizens of the area were relieved to hear of the action at Forrestfield, James Robinson's nearby plantation. The detested Colonel Horner had taken a company of fifty men, along with Kinch Britt as a guide, to capture Matt Robinson and other alleged bushwhackers. They surrounded the house, ordering the men to surrender. A reply came from within: "If you want us, come and take us." Britt, who was stationed at a window, was immediately shot. "Thus, have the enemy lost a most valuable scout and the citizens of the countryside rid of a most dangerous foe." The Rebels escaped, but Mr. Nugent and his family who were living in the house were killed. Horner returned the next day and burned the house to ashes, "an inglorious revenge."

Fanny Mayhew and Hattie Figures brought their sewing to the Chadick house for the morning. Another nervous headache eased for Mary Jane. The buildings of the college were ordered vacated, leaving several families and young ladies stranded. Mary Jane then suffered through four days of unremitted headaches, barely able to hold her head up when she wrote next on November 15. As usual she heard Davie and little Mary's lessons. "Mary is a droll little creature. When she spells a word, she stops to explain it. She spelled 'p-a-s-s, pass; passed by the pickets and didn't have no pass and wouldn't stop." Three days later, Sue came in from the country again. "The pickets did not question her pass, but their curiosity was excited, and one of them said to another, 'I will register that pass.'" The pickets seemed to be aware of something uncommon, even if Mary Jane was not.

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The uncertainty of the Hood army's location continued to stir panic everywhere, on both sides. "The enemy are actually taking their departure. The whole town is in commotion." Trade stores either packed up merchandise or sold out at cost. Mary Jane, Sue, and Jennie joined the crowd at the Square to find treasures. Mary Jane wrote again that evening of her visit to Mrs. Davis. On the way she passed Corinna, the woman she and her husband had previously kept enslaved, who was off for Nashville to be protected by the Federals. The officer who remained behind asked for a Yankee lady to take Corinna under her charge, "telling her that she was a very smart servant, and that her master was a tyrant. Mrs. Davis told the lady to have nothing to do with Corinna, she had a kind master." Mary Jane asked Corinna where she intended to go. "She was at first inclined to be important and impolite, but when I talked kindly to her, she changed her tone." Corinna told her that things had gone too far for her to return. Mary Jane let her know, "if she was ever in want or needed a home, she could come back and that she should be kindly treated. She commenced crying and the Yankees hurried her off." To her great dismay, that evening she became "very sick and unable to see or speak to anybody, consequently missed the opportunity of finding cheap bargains at the stores only to spend the day in great suffering from a violent sick headache, increased doubtless, by the excitement." In her writings, Mary Jane never indicated recognizing a pattern of increased physical suffering corresponding with the increased stresses of life during war. The next morning (November 26), weak from illness, Mary Jane nonetheless went "on the Square to buy myself rich. Purchased shoes, calico, soda, pickles, oysters, knives and forks, plates, tumblers and a hat and pants for W.D., etc."

Chaos and destruction surrounded the Chadicks. Federals burned papers from the Provost Marshal in the yard of the Courthouse; Greene Academy was on fire that very moment. Federal soldiers made clear their desire to set the entire town aflame, so a strong guard was posted. Now nearly all the servants had fled with the Yankees. Quietly, soldiers were "still getting away as fast as they can." Their exit had now become difficult because of a collision on the tracks. Men were forced to march out, "followed by a long line of contrabands. Stragglers are going around town, taking all the horses they can find out of the stables."

As the Yankees filed out of Huntsville, the cavalry accompanied the last train to safety. Reality began to wash over everyone: Huntsville was once again free! As a parting measure, the common soldiers still threatened to burn the town. The next day, the Yankees sent back a train removing the remaining contrabands guarded by 75 or so Black soldiers.

During the chaos, Russell's Confederate cavalry had entered town and fired upon the Yankees, who returned their fire. The Rebel officer "fired again several times and called to his men to charge to the right and to the left, not having a single man at his command! The soldiers took panic and ran the engine off the track and then took to their heels toward the woods!" Women flocked to the Square, hoping for information about loved ones. "But, for ourselves we stayed at home and mended and tacked down a carpet and regulated everything generally as the arrival of W.D. is confidently expected soon."

Mary Jane spent the week preparing for the return of her dear colonel. Civilians enjoyed freely roaming about town and visiting friends for the first time in many months. She heard that old Uncle Tom had been captured by the Rebels and wrote that he deserved "a good scare considering his ingratitude and unfaithfulness to his master." Eddie, her second oldest step-son, enlisted in Jordan's Life Guards, "made up of most of the nicest boys in Huntsville." Thomas B. Jordan, who had already lost his brother Jesse in action and his mother in the tragic train wreck, organized this home regiment. The men and boys registered to form a company of about 100 and marched to the muster grounds after electing Jordan (then about 20 years old) as captain; William Rison, a 29-year-old bookkeeper was 1st lieutenant; Alex Bently about 25, was 2nd lieutenant; and James Seat, a merchant of about 35, served as sergeant. The company drilled into the evening. At noon the next day, they met:

on the Square and formed in a line for inspection, which occupied about an hour. After the officers finished inspection our Captain rode around in front and pronounced 'The Company ready for action,' well-armed and equipped with good horses. The company was composed of young men directly out of our little city and a few from the vicinity of town, but they were all raised up together, and there were no strangers.¹⁹⁰

December 4 was W.D. and Mary Jane's 15th wedding anniversary. "Wonder if he recalls it to his recollection amid his wanderings. As he is not particularly sentimental, I fear he does not, especially as he has matters of grave importance to fix his attention just now. Am looking anxiously for his arrival." Two nights later, everyone was awakened by soldiers

¹⁹⁰ Life Guards. (The writer of this account was unidentified, but it was donated to ADAH by John M. Doyle. One of the two young Doyle brothers, Joseph or John, may have been the writer, as they were in their mid-teens at this time. Their father, Joseph Doyle, was a successful farmer who ran a livery stable. Both boys were familiar with horses and wagon-driving, also mentioned in the account.)

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coming for Eddie because Yankees were thought to be nearby. Thankfully, this was a false alarm. Yankees may have been as close as Larkinsville, so it was fortunate that W.D. had not arrived, but Mary Jane continued her anxious watch for him.

On December 12, while the Federals were preoccupied elsewhere, W.D. suddenly appeared. Mary Jane “sprang up and ran out, and was clasped in the arms of W.D. After an exile of 14 months, he is once more permitted a short repose in the bosom of his family. Our joy is great, too great for expression.” Two nights later, a new panic brewed as the Yankees were sighted again. Ben Harris, the renegade, led a raid on Vienna (New Hope) to burn what little remained from the last attack. The following Sunday, the Chadick family left the house together for church services for the first time in 15 months.

On December 20, Mary Jane wrote of her husband’s arrangements for the family to survive the winter. He prudently sold his gray horse to Nick Davis for \$150 gold just before the Yankees arrived yet again. W.D. hurried away on foot, asking Mary Jane to take care of his saddle while young Eddie, as a member of Jordan’s Life Guards, was called to action. One young member of the Guards who was unable to flee remained in town and wrote about the reviled enemy who, in recent weeks, had lingered on the edges of the county. The enemy returned with their “Yankee despotism and contempt.” Worse, “Thousands of our fallen braves are crying aloud from their narrow earth cells for revenge! Revenge!... The bleached bones of our brave heroes scattered over the battle plains and mingling with the deadly missiles of their destruction are calling for revenge! For wives and daughters had been wronged and made homeless!”¹⁹¹

The Chadick men departed quickly and quietly, leaving their gear behind. Mary Jane hid her valuables. Through cold, heavy rains, escaped soldiers ran to the mountains that night. Mary Jane sat up late reading and worrying over their possible capture. Yankees burst in at daylight with loud, menacing whoops and yells, firing their guns into the air. “Their appearance was more like imps from the bad world than like human beings.” They broke into private homes and opened stores, even at Mr. Jolley’s, who was known to be a good Union man. She was mortified to hear that while there had apparently been no boots for sale for Confederate soldiers, the Federals broke into stores and found plenty. Two Feds came by her house to compound the insult by attempting to sell them at \$5 a pair.

¹⁹¹ Life Guards, 7.

The family got little sleep that night. Any attempt at rest was interrupted by loud pounding on the door by the traitorous enemy Ben Harris. He demanded breakfast for his 18 men, ordering that they “should be fed like gentlemen and if he found a single man of ‘Jordan’s Company’ he would sever his head from his shoulders.” The only meat to be seen by Harris (although the family had hidden a thousand pounds of pork in the garret earlier) was three pounds of old bacon. The men ate the bacon, bread and corn coffee and Irish potatoes, leaving a small bit for the family. The troops promptly left, not offering to pay for their meal. The lady of the house had not expected them to: “Dogs do not offer thanks for a morsel of bread and meat it is not their nature, and they were dogs in human shape.”¹⁹²

Three soldiers arrived at the Chadick home just before noon that same morning, claiming to be on the hunt for arms. They would not take Mary Jane’s word that the home contained none. Undaunted, Mary Jane asked to see their orders; they had no papers. “That was done away with,” one told her. Although she objected because they had no commissioned officer with them, the men went through the house. She “professed to be a lady and trusted I had gentlemen to deal with.” The sergeant replied nothing would be touched unless arms were found. The soldiers entered her room and headed straight to the wardrobe. “I told them to stand back and examine as I removed the things. Some bottles of wine immediately attracted their attention. After draining the only one that had anything in it, some cans of oysters and peaches” got their attention. They continued to the bureau where her silver and W.D.’s clothes were, but she kept them back. Her large trunk one soldier said, “looked like it would hold the government,” but nothing was taken by the good graces of the sergeant. “These are truly terrible times. Alas! Alas! There is the railroad whistle. They have actually come back with all their infantry and cannon to occupy. Our hearts sink within us.” Huntsville was once again a military post, which meant that, once again, the citizens were subject to military laws.

Private home invasions grew in frequency. On December 22, an officer with a guard of six men came to search for W.D. Mary Jane told them he was not there, but Colonel Fish “such was his cognomen and rank” informed her that he could not expect her to tell the truth in such circumstances. They:

looked under the piano and behind the divans in the parlor, in the wardrobe in my room and then behind the pillows upon my bed! I

¹⁹² Ibid., n. p.

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began to suspect him of being a shark instead of a swordfish! He then placed a guard in the hall and around the house and desired me to open the smokehouse and lock room and servants' room.

Good manners won out as she "persevered to treat him with great kindness and politeness, he seemed to become ashamed and commenced an apology for the intrusion." Mary Jane reasoned that he was only doing his duty. Colonel Fish dismissed his men and sat with her in the sitting room to apologize for the imposition, explaining that he would not have entered the room of the young ladies had he known it was theirs. He asked if locals had reports of Hood's army. She had no current news to offer and asked what the Federals might know. News was not good: "General Hood had been badly whipped and was retreating," perhaps even to Huntsville.

Colonel Nick Davis informed Mary Jane that W.D. was safely at the river at Lacey's Spring. Near the end of December, friends Annie McClung and Aggie Scott were going to the river. Mary Jane asked Colonel Lyon if she might send clothes for W.D. via Miss Scott. He replied that he could not give permission as, "consistent with his duty," but, if perchance she put some items into Miss Scott's trunk, "they would not be molested, and advised me to act upon that suggestion."

Two days before Christmas, news arrived of a skirmish near Ellick Jones' place involving Jordan's Life Guards. Federals brought in 49 prisoners, several of whom were badly wounded by saber cuts. "The enemy says the young Rebs fought bravely." Captain Jordan was one of those captured. Mary Jane went to the guard house to ask about Eddie. He was safe, "most likely." Violence was not limited to military action when soldiers found whiskey and "knocked down General Lowe, stabbed a negro, sabered another and knocked a third one off his horse." Even worse news arrived about the total rout and demoralization of Hood's army. She did not:

begin to believe half of the reports. The croakers would have us believe we are whipped beyond redemption. Got into a nest of them this evening. One gentleman, Mr. F., said, after relating the doleful news, if he was asked to point out the worst enemy of the Southern Confeds, he would say Jeff Davis, and the best friend, he would say Abraham Lincoln.

Mary Jane came down with a dreadful headache but continued sewing for Jennie. Doctor Reverend Ross was arrested again, "escorted by a negro guard and taken before Gen. James B. Steedman" headquartered at the depot. While the Feds had been gone for that brief period earlier, Ross had delivered a sermon at the Presbyterian Church in which he "gave those men a severe lashing who tried to avoid the conscript, and said if every

man had done his part, the Yankees might have been whipped out of here in six months.” The sermon was not well-received; Ross was told to choose whether to go north or south out of the lines and was given two hours for himself and his family to prepare and depart.

This issue of resistance to conscription became painful for many reasons. How could one remain neutral in this setting and avoid the conscription officers? It was said in their search “enrolling officers burned the woods and sifted the ashes for conscripts.” Or when asked if the officers took every man, “Hell, stranger, I should think they do: they take every man who has not been dead more than two days.”¹⁹³

Any man who resisted conscription for any reason identified himself as a cringing coward. All of society viewed him as one who’d failed his duty and his community. As early as July of 1862, the state of Alabama not only offered bounties to anyone apprehending deserters, but the law included a bounty on any conscript who evaded the draft. This became an unintended inducement for some men to remain at home and enlist in the “home guard” to bring in deserters. As an added incentive, one could now legally act on a grudge, seize a disliked neighbor, take him to the authorities, and earn a reward. Dogs normally used to hunt enslaved people attempting escape were also occasionally used to pursue these “criminals” adding “terror and humiliation” to their actions.¹⁹⁴ This compounded stress and worry for women who aided their outcast husbands and sons with food, clothing and a watchful eye for authorities. Spies and informers could be anyone – a friend, relative, passing stranger, or the trusted neighbor next door.

On December 26, Mary Jane reflected upon an exceptionally sad Christmas. She’d spent the day ill in bed with no idea where W.D. was, “and poor little Eddie – his soldiering met with rather an unfortunate beginning.” General Steedman in exasperation the next day, “ordered the torch be applied to the town because local citizens had been kind to their own soldiers. It was through the earnest remonstrance of Colonel Lyon that it was prevented. With such men in power, what may or may we not expect in their hands?” Nick Davis stopped to visit and to report that W.D. was safely on his way to Athens with several other soldiers. Davis had his own problems, and they directly involved the Chadick family. Mary Jane wrote that he had been charged with the crime of giving “a negro \$50 in

¹⁹³ Fleming, *Civil War*, 102.

¹⁹⁴ Margaret M. Storey, *Loyalty and Loss*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 2004), 67, 69.

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gold to help W.D. get away” in an earlier panic. She added that bedclothes were now requisitioned from citizens for hospitals, a new low in wartime hardship.

New Year’s Day was starkly different from the one five years previous, “before the advent of this miserable war!” Five years before, the house had echoed with everyone offering cheerfully, “I wish you a Happy New Year. But this year every child seems to know and feel by common consent there is no happy year in store for us.” As a result, “all such expressions are hushed.” Mary Jane continued:

When each day brings with it such terrible and startling events, what may be the record of the coming year? I dread to think of it ... Separated from my husband under the most trying circumstances, for I know not how long a period, with the cares of a large family upon my hands with prospects of the gloomy.

Recognizing her own health issues, she wrote “I am just recovering from another one of my nervous attacks, which are becoming more frequent of late.” Little wonder.

Billy came in from the country, bringing Sue with him, along with two of the Matkin children. Sue told Mary Jane that W.D. had spent the night there after fleeing Huntsville, then departed safely for Athens. He sent Mary Jane money with Sue. News of Eddie was not as reassuring. Yankees had captured him, and he was now a prisoner in Nashville. Adding to the misery for civilians, soldiers, and contrabands alike, the weather stayed exceedingly cold, even for January. Officers in Huntsville crowded private houses; soldiers overflowed tents and continued to tear down old buildings and fences to build winter quarters.¹⁹⁵ “Destruction is the order of the day.”

Former Governor Clay (now about 74 and very frail) was arrested in early January and taken to Nashville, along with a few other local men. They were imprisoned as hostages for the safety of the Unionist political figure, David C. Humphreys. Reverend Ross and his family returned, but he was not allowed to preach. Billy brought news of a skirmish at Mount Hope where Eddie was one among the 228 captured and now in the block house at Decatur. On January 10, Sue Bradley, Miss Hattie Figures, and Mr. Banister started for Whitesburg Pike to cross the river into Dixie when

¹⁹⁵ Many years later Willie Clay wrote a delightful account in which he and his brother, Clement, helped Yankee Billy build a shebang and roast a “found” goose. (Clay Papers, HMCPL)

an officer sent word for them to return because of cavalry raids south of town.

The train carrying prisoners from Jordan's Life Guards passed through, taking them to prison in the north. Everyone was called to the depot to see the men for the last time in what might be many months. Billy, Dave, George, and Jennie accompanied Mary Jane to see their brother Eddie and to give him clothes and ten dollars.

She heard five Yankee chaplains had looked at the Episcopal Church of the Nativity and W.D.'s Cumberland Presbyterian church for services – for northern preachers. Any local member of the congregation who did not attend would be sent South, rumors said. The Yankee chaplain of the 13th Wisconsin came to Mary Jane's back door one morning asking for milk for his sick child. He asked meekly because he was holding services at Reverend Chadick's very own church. The minister's wife came the next morning, also to the back door. Mary Jane Chadick treated her with kindness, gave her the milk, and showed her out, this time through the front door.

One week later, news arrived about the much-disliked family of George W. Lane. Judge Lane had previously accepted a federal judgeship in Louisville, but died before he could be sworn in. His widow and children resided at the Galt House Hotel when it was destroyed by fire on January 10. The family lost everything – money, clothing, and baggage:

Captain Allen, who was quartermaster here last spring and who made himself so notorious in appropriating Southern furniture, etc. was also a great sufferer – his nose was burned off and his fingers to the second joint. He is prone in the hospital at this place in precarious condition – surely there is retribution in this evil life.¹⁹⁶

On a different note, after great difficulties, Mrs. Pruitt, Miss Sue Bradley, and Miss Hattie Figures finally departed for Dixie on January 19. "They had an escort to the river." Mary Jane was almost certainly aware that Federal cavalymen did not accompany just any group of women travelling out of Federal lines. According to a notebook kept by Emile Bourlier, a spy for the Federals, there were some exceptions to his long list of guerrillas and suspected bushwhacker supporters. In the last pages of the notebook, Bourlier listed Dr. Wilkinson and Judge Dox as "true" along

¹⁹⁶ This was possibly the most malicious of any of Mary Jane's accounts. Although residents were left homeless and the large staff without jobs, the injuries to Captain Allen were not as serious as Mary Jane hoped. While fleeing the building, his hand was scraped. *Incidents*, 254.

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with the names of Jere Clemens, Judge Humphries, Ben Jolley, and the Thomas Mastin family. At that time, no Huntsville resident would be surprised to hear any of those people listed as Federal supporters. The last grouping on that page, however, offered three new names: Miss Sue Bradley, Miss Annie McClung, and Miss Sue Chadick were listed as “Rebel Friends.”¹⁹⁷

Five days later, Mary Jane had another nervous headache; the day before, she hadn’t left her bed, and suffered with intensely throbbing temples and eyeballs. Her pale face now peered out from the long-used remedy of brown paper soaked in vinegar, wrapped around her head. The children had probably grown accustomed to this by now, but Mary Jane could not help but lament, “I presented a fascinating-appearing woman ... Oh, these sad, weary days of headache.” News came of Eddie: he had fallen ill at Louisville but now resided at Camp Chase. Mary Jane was aware of the miniscule ration men were given as prisoners in the north. Mrs. Toney’s grandson had earlier reported that a rat or dog never left Camp Chase alive. Eddie sent a letter from Camp Chase, “Poor little fellow, he is sick at heart and sick in body, and had to be carried in an ambulance all the way after leaving the railway. He begs me ‘to try and get him paroled. He says he never knew before what a good home he had and promised to be a better boy if spared to return to it!’” She heard from Mrs. Rogers of freezing and starving conditions at northern camps. “No vegetable diet is allowed, and only 14 ounces of bread and eight ounces of meat are issued daily to each prisoner.” Scurvy flourished at these camps, and the cold that affected Southern men turned into thousands of cases of pneumonia. With a new intensity on the part of the Federal war effort, no more paroles were available.

A terrifying event befell the Chadick family in late January. Four soldiers (regular burglars, according to Mary Jane) entered the servant’s room at the back of the house where they took off their shoes and stealthily lit a lantern. “The men put a pistol to her head and told her they would kill her if she made the slightest noise to alarm the family.” Then they unlocked Mary Jane’s “food safe” and took “all my milk, three hams and dried beef and bottle of wine, my silver caster and everything eatable they could find.” Her faithful servant begged back the caster and a large bowl when she promised not to let the “sesesh” woman have them. “They then

¹⁹⁷ Edward F. Reid Papers, Indiana Historical Society Collection #SC1068, F 7. General Gilbert Johnson returned to Huntsville after the War and married Sue Bradley. He served as postmaster in 1869 but died in 1871 of wounds attained in action. He is buried in Maple Hill Cemetery.

took from her a breast pin and a pair of shoes, and returned the latter for a \$1.50 in silver. A pretty enemy this to contend with. Housebreaking and thieving are going on nightly.” Home invasions and blatant robbery had become accepted aspects of life during wartime.

In February, tuition fees for the spring session at Mrs. Mayhew’s school’s rose to 27 dollars. Mary Jane sent Davie and Mary to school, but taught George and Clara at home in an effort to cut expenses. Sue returned from the Matkins’ and could now help teach for a few days. Later, a compassionate Mrs. Mayhew told Mary Jane to send Georgie to classes with no fee to be charged. This was a welcome kindness in a war-torn household whose funds were quickly dwindling.

The most basic provisions were now almost impossible to find, much less purchase. All supplies in the countryside were taken; even farmers had little. Many families in town were fortunate enough to board officers who drew rations at army prices. Mary Jane expressed disgust at the news of a former provost marshal under General Mitchel, once very hard on citizens, returning to establish a large provision and commissary – selling at high prices. “He is now bland and smiling as a May morning extending the hand of courtesy and bowing gracefully and soliciting the patronage of the citizens. Pity our necessities force us to patronize such men.” Another Yankee money-making scheme emerged: advertisements in a Nashville newspaper proclaimed there were a “great number of fine plantations in this area to lease, well stocked and with plenty of farming utensils and laborers to work them.” They could be leased if one enclosed \$10 to Colonels Alexander or Selfridge, USA. “This is not true, as nearly all the plantations are stripped of everything, even the wood.” Perhaps the worst of all (to Mary Jane, at least): “Our beautiful town is full of Yankee women.¹⁹⁸ They are sweeping through the streets every evening on horseback.” She was “ashamed to be seen on the Square. It looks like Broadway, so thronged one can scarcely make their way with soldiers, citizens, and government wagons.”

Mary Jane’s February 13, 1865 journal entry introduced a new chapter in the War’s effect on Huntsville – the arrival of a young, newly retired Federal officer named Capt. Samuel Fordyce. He called to ask for

¹⁹⁸ Mrs. Chadick did not write before the Federal invasion of April 1862. She must have noticed, however, that soldiers and women are hardly ever truly separated in peace or war. During the time when Gen. William Hardee, CSA and his staff were in Huntsville, they were entertained at the most prominent homes. Hardee, a widower, was known to be fond of the ladies, and he was often seen about town in a calash full of women. Sterkx, *Partners*, 59.

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Eddie's address to offer him assistance with authorities at the prison in Ohio, and possibly help him receive double rations. "This is exceedingly kind and generous in Capt. Fordyce, and properly appreciated by us. He is singularly handsome and gentlemanly in his bearing and highly popular with both friend and foe. He is ever ready to do citizens a favor."



Samuel W. Fordyce

Considering her previous entries regarding Federal soldiers, "those fiends," and the hardships of recent years, Mary Jane wrote of a remarkable event three evenings later, "Captain Fordyce and Mr. Barnum called to see the young ladies." This implies that these men visited their house with her acquiescence, and perhaps even approval.

On February 18, Mary Jane wrote with great disgust about the unfortunate misadventures of the wife of Colonel Johnston, CSA from the Big Cove area, now detained in Huntsville. (Mary Jane validated events that Reverend Milus Johnston would write about years later in his account of his wife Mary Hamer Johnston's arrest.) Colonel McDanald, after burning out the homes of at least 50 small farmers, brought the wife of "Bushwhacker" Johnston into Huntsville as a hostage. Both sides were appalled at this misuse of military authority by McDanald. Mrs. Johnston was released after four days to return to the six-month-old infant she'd left behind.

Within the span of a few days, two women from differing sides of the war shared bonds of motherhood and loss. The wife of Chaplain Foote, current occupant of Chadick's church, tentatively asked Mary Jane if she

might borrow a child's dress to have a likeness painted of her child who had recently died. "She said she knew of no one else to whom she could go. I felt a pleasure in obliging her, knowing how lonely and isolated she must feel, here in an enemy's country without a single female friend to look to in any emergency, especially as she seems a worthy and unpretending creature." She thought decidedly less of Chaplain Foote, telling a neighbor he "preached from the pulpit of a pastor who was absent instead of being at home attending to his duty. He evidently thinks us quite heathenish." Perhaps Mary Jane's actions made him reconsider this opinion.

On February 22, citizens were alarmed to hear a cannon boom on the Square. They were afraid it might indicate the fall of Charleston, or possibly Richmond. In the end, they learned that the cannon fire was a celebration of the birthday of "the illustrious father of his country." Her day ended with a visit from a friend and Captain Fordyce calling to see Sue.

Ill will toward the enemy continued to wane in March. Three soldiers called and asked to hear music. "Gentlemanly in their bearing and conversation," Mary Jane invited them in; one played the piano remarkably well. She and the men enjoyed the two-hour visit even though "the young ladies did not make their appearance. They asked to hear them play, and I made some apology upon the score of their not being at home." Jennie Chadick left to stay at Mrs. Matkin's in place of her sister, Sue. Mrs. Foote, the Chaplin's wife, called again and Mary Jane listened with sympathy to this woman, residing in a land of strangers and enemies, who had lost her only child at 18 months. Spring appeared, beautiful and bright, and "The military bands of music are playing from different quarters of the town." She seemed to appreciate music that night until a Federal band planted itself in the front yard, lit lights, and serenaded the household. "Such impudence! The whole transaction is impudent from beginning to end."

Distraught, Mary Jane wrote of a new crisis. Georgie had been knocked unconscious by a rock to his left eye, and the injury appeared serious. Doctors Spotswood and Sheffey examined the boy and expressed deep concern. "Georgie is very sick; vomiting constantly all day and the eye is terribly swollen and black." The next day, his eye was badly inflamed. She treated it by alternating slippery elm poultices and cold water. Mr. Winston returned from visiting Camp Chase and shared news about Eddie, who looked well and was on the list of those to be exchanged, thanks to the influence of Captain Fordyce who had accompanied Winston there. She continued to write more about Samuel Fordyce, now a retired military man who was helpful to many citizens in Huntsville. He gave

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Eddie an entire set of clothes with two silk handkerchiefs and \$50 in cash. "This is a specimen of noble generosity in an enemy, if such he could be called." Four days later, Mary Jane's worries over Georgie's condition did not dissolve. He had a very high temperature and suffered from constant vomiting. To her great relief, he was better the next morning, and continued to improve on the following day. Thankfully, his vision seemed unimpaired by the accident.

Mary Jane woke the next day with another nervous headache. Given the sleepless night they'd experienced with Georgie, this was no surprise. That night, she was unable to sleep. It was stormy with thunder and lightning; Mary Jane secured the blinds in her room to prevent rain and wind from blowing in. About midnight, the blinds "were suddenly torn open and the window raised. Owing to my nervousness, I was wide awake and sprang up in the bed calling out in a loud voice, 'George, call the guard! Where is my pistol.'" Because of his recent injury and subsequent illness, Georgie was sleeping with her. He quickly replied, "Here it is!"

There was no guard for us to call, neither had I a pistol, yet the ruse succeeded, and whoever it was, 'they were taken with a'leaving.' I immediately struck a light and passed by the open window in my nightdress to Sue's room. She was up and terribly alarmed, as we two were alone in the house with the smaller children.

With force, they closed the window and nailed down the sash. "Sue then loaded her pistol and having recovered from her first panic assured me if they returned, she would certainly fire!" The two women secured the premises, dressed, and sat up for the rest of the night. They learned of other invasion attempts in the neighborhood. Tom Barnum would come to protect them the next night. Apparently, soldiers had been on half rations for some time, so break-ins now happened nightly throughout town.

Rumors continued to spread. The "grape vine" offered that "Jeff Davis has resigned, and Gen. Lee is Military Dictator and Richmond is evacuated. ...Everything looks dark and gloomy for the Confederacy." Federals expected one massive, final battle at any time. "For ourselves we do not believe our cause is hopeless, believing the Cause a just one." She continued, "We put our trust with the God of battles and if it be a just one, he will surely not forsake us in the hour of trial, but will work out our Independence for us, in his own good time and way." Uncle Tom, who the family had kept enslaved until recently, had fled with Federals and was now sorely missed. The Chadicks understood little about gardening. With help from Will Figures, Mary Jane and Margaret laid out rows and planted peas, radishes, and lettuce. Mr. Herford gave her Irish potatoes to plant, a welcome and generous gift, considering they now cost seven dollars per bushel. She found a man to plant the potatoes and plow a small piece of

ground; he charged her \$1 for half an hour's work! He would tend her plot for \$1 per day thereafter. With most of their men away, poor White women from the countryside also suffered and had to look for work of any kind in town. She hired a nice-looking White girl as a servant for board and clothes. Mary Jane braided a dress for \$3.50 for Cornelia Bradford. "I am taking all the work I can get of this kind to enable me to sustain my family in W.D.'s absence." She had heard nothing from or about him since his hurried December departure.

Captain Fordyce wrote Sue from Nashville, reporting the delay in Eddie's release from Camp Chase. Mary Jane quickly wrote Fordyce a letter of thanks. Meanwhile, local women of town went out to shop on the Square. Many restrictions had been lifted, and a person could purchase up to \$10 of merchandise without a permit. To purchase more, a customer had to buy a permit and take the oath. Mrs. Foote came by with the portrait of her child, painted by William Frye, a beautiful piece with the face of an angel. Funeral processions continued: "...a poor soldier or soldiers from the hospital. There they seem to be dying off rapidly. There has not failed to be a funeral every day for the last month, and the ambulance usually contains two or more coffins."

In early April, Margaret and George planted corn in the garden. "We are somewhat ignorant as to the mode, but trust to a kind Providence to make it grow."

Providence had not responded to the Cause. News came that Federals possessed Richmond and Petersburg. "Can it be possible after so much precious blood has been spilt to hold our capitol, and Gen. Lee has been obliged at last to abandon it?" Of course, "the Yankees are perfectly jubilant over it, as in proportion we are depressed. Several ladies had to go to bed in consequence. ...Just let a Yankee exult over me to the fall of Richmond and see if he don't 'catch it.'" There was little doubt of the truth of events now.

"Hark! A cannon is booming from the Fort – one, two, three, four. One hundred guns have been fired in honor of the momentous event. They ought to have fired 1,000 after nearly four years of struggle, toil, expenditure and slaughter to obtain it ... Several entertainments were given and, doubtless every officer got drunk from the excess of joy." A Federal newspaper viewed the War as over. Mary Jane disagreed. "Not so fast my lads. You may wake up to find yourselves mistaken. I say this to you in confidence dear journal, but wait and see."

A Cumberland Presbyterian preacher from the North came to call, inquiring about W.D. and the welfare of his family. He seemed amazed at the vehemence of Mary Jane's Southern feelings:

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I told him; I am the strongest Southern woman you ever saw! He seemed to be taken a little by surprise and then remarked that the Southern people had all his sympathies in their suffering but he did think the leaders in this rebellion ... ought to be punished! I expressed it was my humble opinion the Northern Abolitionists had brought on this War.

She seemed to enjoy the animated discussion that followed, and the two parted friends. On April 10 Mrs. Figures sent for Sue to hear the official news; Sue was so upset she could scarcely tell Mary Jane when she returned. General Lee and his entire army had surrendered. "Oh, my God, can this be true?" The deepest gloom prevailed because the news was generally believed. Two days later, "We are still incredulous." On the 13th, Mr. Figures shared news the Yankees received a dispatch to fire 200 guns. Up until 4 pm, not a gun had been fired – there was not a single artillery man in town. Mary Jane's plausible excuse:

Who knows but after all the star of the Southern Confederacy is in the ascendant! We will say to you in confidence, dear journal, right here we in the Yankee lines have become so thoroughly accustomed to these lying rumors, when then actually tell us the truth, we don't believe them. Keep this between the leaves and never divulge!

However, Mr. Wilson called to say the "grapevine knew that England, France, and Spain acknowledged our independence!"

On April 14, however, few doubts remained about the outcome of the War. "The firing has commenced. Cannons are booming from the Fort. The brass band is playing, town bells ringing. Railroad engines are shrieking out a prolonged doleful whistle, and the confusion is worse than confounded." She continued, "The boys have gone upon the housetops, and the dogs came into the house trembling with fear. Every boom comes to our ears like a knell, recalling our wandering thoughts for General Lee, and that noble and devoted band of Southern soldiers." Neighbors gathered in disbelief to comfort one another as "our hearts swell within us for the conflicting emotions." Mary Jane started for the Square to find the soldiers gathered to celebrate. Colonel Horner had given the men until 6 pm to get drunk, and they, of course, took full advantage of the indulgence. On her way to visit a neighbor, Mary Jane turned back toward home, heartsick and thoroughly disgusted with life.

The next day seemed calm as Mary Jane went to the provost marshal, Captain Moore, to have three letters approved. He examined them and remarked, "We have just got news I fear will be worse for your Southern people than anything that has yet happened. President Lincoln was shot last night, at the theatre in Washington, and died this morning." It

was done by Booth. "I was exceedingly shocked and felt in my heart it must be bad news for the South, if Andrew Johnson was to succeed him." General Granger "issued an order that persons exalting the death of President Lincoln shall be summarily punished." Mary Jane copied the entire statement issued from his headquarters. In part, anyone expressing approbation or approval of this most foul murder would be arrested, tried, and if found guilty receive punishment. "Such treason shall have no HOME in the District of Northern Alabama." Two days later Misses Ella Scruggs and Edmonia Toney were arrested and taken to the Courthouse. The charge: rejoicing at the recent news. The young ladies were given a lecture and sent home. April 18 became a day of mourning; at 6 am, a cannon fired, repeating every half hour until sundown. All businesses closed and shops were draped in mourning. Schools closed and "troops marched through the principal streets with arms reversed, the flags tied with crepe and the band playing a funeral dirge."

Amidst the pain of this immense loss, news of some slight consolation arrived to the long-suffering citizens of Madison County via a young boy who lived up the street (this boy kept a journal relating this incident; he wrote the following, which he heard from his family's boarder, Captain Bridges). Had they heard the good news? Ben Harris was dead; the Captain had seen his body laid out. Conversation continued between the family and the officer, when the boy's father said, "He was the D----st meanest man that ever I saw or heard of. The captain broke out in a hearty laugh all of family join in with him."¹⁹⁹

Mrs. Pruitt returned the next day from across the river; she had seen W.D. only 10 days earlier, and he appeared well. Willie Chadick also came to the river. Mary Jane did not report what, exactly, his enterprises were, but wrote "...his business is not quite concluded, will not be home yet for two or three weeks." Although the news from south Alabama was gloomy, she was "happy and buoyant tonight in the face of everything else, from having my anxiety relieved in regard to my dear husband and Willie." A two-day long nervous headache had just passed. Mary Jane admitted to feeling lonely with only Mary at home for companionship. Mr. Figures had taken her young children on a fishing trip with a group of several youngsters. Mary Jane fixed them a "dish of tictac-parched corn with molasses candy poured over it, of which they were particularly proud. They away and off in high spirit... They have been shut up inside the picket lines so long they were perfectly jubilant at the thought of escaping for one day." While her two servants worked in the garden, Mary Jane

¹⁹⁹ Life Guards, 8.

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washed and dressed her butter and sold two and a half pounds to Mrs. Figures for 50 cents per pound. She had somehow managed to hide and maintain “two splendid cows” through the perils of the previous two years. This was because, she wrote, the “calf took up quarters in the smoke house every time a Yankee raid visited Huntsville.”

News continued to trickle in about the final surrenders of Southern military units. One local lady, Mrs. Williamson, had recently married Capt. David Todd, half-brother of Mrs. Lincoln (this was Mary Jane’s only objection to the arrangement). Boys from Lee’s army were arriving in town daily; it was a profoundly sad sight. “Can it be this great struggle for independence is at an end?” At the same time, a few men returned who had been reported dead or missing. When Mary Jane caught a glimpse of one of these stragglers, she wrote that it was “like seeing one from the dead.” News slowly came of the capture of Booth, the remains of Lincoln being carried to Illinois, and the demonstrations along the entire route, “a perfect ovation to his memory.”

May arrived, bringing a visitor from across the street. Mrs. Colonel Horner, currently occupying the Bradford house, brought her baby, “a grum looking little creature of five months, the very image of its papa. Used all the arts and fascinations at my command to win from it one smile but failed. It would not smile upon a Rebel! It certainly bears a striking resemblance to its papa,” but was sweet nevertheless. Mary Jane sent them home with a large bouquet of choice roses. That evening, under bright moonlight, the army band serenaded Mrs. Horner. The music drew out contrabands and children, who filled the street. Sad soldiers continued their return from battle. They maintained a noble appearance, Mary Jane opined, especially when compared to that of the Federal soldiers who still occupied Huntsville. Prominent leaders of the Confederacy were now being hunted as co-conspirators, among them Jeff Davis, Breckinridge, and Huntsville’s Senator Clement Clay. “They are accused of participation in the death of President Lincoln, which bears a falsehood upon the face of it, and shows the vindictive spirit at Washington now operating against the unfortunate people of the South.” She thought rather “They had better take the advice of such men as Gen. Lee, who tells them ‘unless they pursue a mild, generous policy toward the South, the war is not at an end!’”

Formal battles had ended, but the War continued its adverse effects on the Chadick family. On May 7, Billy returned and brought “no new tiding of my best friend.” She heard a day later their “kind and disinterested friend, Capt. Fordyce, was lingering dangerous ill in Nashville. Feeling the deepest regret, I immediately wrote him a note, thanking him for all his kindness and generosity to Edwin, and expressing our sympathy for his illness.” Rumors, however, continued to rule the day.

The Huntsville grapevine alleged that General Forrest had been killed by one of his captains, General Roddey, who would surrender in a few days, and that Jeff Davis was safely across the Mississippi River with 3,000 men. "What Southern man or woman would not devoutly pray this might be true?" On May 11, Colonel "Bushwhacker" Johnston came into town with his men and surrendered to Colonel Givens:

He declined surrendering to Colonel Horner, saying he would only surrender to a gentleman. Their request to retain their horses, which were their own private property, had been refused by Colonel Horner. They came in on foot and every man had sold his horse, and they had only a few old muskets, which, when they were ordered to 'ground arms,' they threw down with curses and imprecations.

In his memoirs, Bushwhacker-Colonel-Reverend Milus Johnson offered a more entertaining account of what must have been a humiliating experience for his men. The plan was to surrender on May 8 under the same terms granted General Lee's troops, meeting at Trough Spring on the side of Monte Sano mountain. The 200 or so ill-fated Rebel soldiers could hear the Blue Coats approaching with a considerable crowd, two brass bands, and, apparently, a ten-gallon demijohn of aged apple brandy. Among the men were old friends that included Ben Jolley, Dr. John Patton, and Squire Tabor "making the welkin ring with music." The Yanks were, of course, already in good spirits and many of the Rebels soon felt better themselves. Milus Johnston, fervently religious, declined to enjoy the beverage; would that mean the treaty was finished? Luckily, Dr. John Debow sacrificed himself and offered to become authorized to drink for Johnston. Rain began to fall, making the work of signing paper paroles difficult, so they decided to finish the formal paperwork in town where "Old Ben Jolley offered plenty of meat and bread and two large rooms, and 'I've got the best Rebel gal in all of Alabama.'"²⁰⁰

By May 12, Mary Jane had grown very anxious. She'd heard no news of W.D.'s whereabouts or when he might return home. She did not believe Mrs. Bradford who said, "She heard he has gone to Texas to hunt him a home! Billy left yesterday morning, without letting us know he was to start South, or telling us goodbye." He expected to be away for the entire summer, "perfectly in keeping with his eccentricity!"

Restrictions on trade were lifted and pickets were removed; one could now purchase goods without permits and go anywhere they liked

²⁰⁰ Rice, *Hard Times*, 285, 286.

without passes. The family was delighted to hear of Eddie's release and current sojourn home. On the 18th, Matthew Steele arrived. Mary Jane ran out to ask him about W.D., of whom he unfortunately knew nothing. "Where can he be? Some say he has gone across the Mississippi. This we do not believe, but feel anxious and impatient for his return." Thus far in her journal, Mary Jane had not mentioned her fear that her husband might be lying somewhere unattended, injured or sick. She never wrote that she feared him to be dead; perhaps she reasoned that writing it might, in some way, cause it to be true. On a trip to the Square with Mrs. Matkin, she reported that she, "Saw several returned soldiers, but could learn nothing of my best friend." A day later, Jim Matt Robinson called, but he had no news. "How anxious I feel." She heard the state militia had surrendered. What was keeping W.D. from returning? Dejected, she now wrote, "Perhaps he is ill." More soldiers returned with each new day.

On May 26, "a memorable day, for with it, ends all my suspense and anxiety with regard to the absent ones. Soon after the whistle of the evening trains, Sue came in and said, 'Ma, Eddie has come on his way here in the omnibus.'" Eddie was expected, "but we were not looking for W.D. who got out of the omnibus as the same time, to our very great surprise. The meeting was one of great joy, mixed with sadness. When we thought of the painful weeks and months of separation, borne with patience and fortitude for the sake of the Cause and then the unfortunate result!"

Mary Jane's final, parting words were:

The War being over and the dear ones returned, there will be little more of interest for these pages. Therefore, you and I, dear journal, close friends as we have been, united by every bond of sympathy, must part. 'We have shared each other's gladness and wept each other's tears.' Whenever my eyes rest upon you, it will be with feelings of gratitude and affection for the consolation you have afforded me in these days of trial. Farewell.



The War had reached its conclusion, but what would come next? Another Southern writer, Annie DeMoss of Virginia, shared, "We cling to the past – we endure the present – we have no future."²⁰¹ Forebearers of

²⁰¹ Qtd. in George C. Rable. *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism*. (Urbana and Chi.: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1991), 223. Dr. Rable offers remarkable accounts and commentary about the role of women in the Civil War as they recorded their lives in diaries and letters.

the Chadick family had worked earnestly to achieve success and a secure position in the community. The Chadick family survived the military actions on the part of their men, lasted through invasions on their home front, and suffered together through struggles of extreme difficulty and terror. They would outlast Federal occupation and Reconstruction, which included units of the United States Colored Troops. They would build their futures just as everyone around them would have to. This was an entirely new frontier.

Mary Jane Chadick, now a woman of about 45 years of age, was a mother of eight children of varying ages with a 48-year-old husband. Due to the War and her own health conditions, she'd already endured terribly suffering from stress. What became of the Chadick family? One predictable outcome was the 1866 wedding of Susan Chadick's to a certain six-foot-tall, blue-eyed Yankee captain. Samuel Fordyce attempted business in the north for a time, but soon declared, "affairs of the heart know no North or South." He committed energy to renewed local businesses and helped established Huntsville's first Agriculture and Mechanical Association Fair. "I was in the Federal service during the War and have been in the Confederate ever since," he said.²⁰² Fordyce suffered with poor health, which eventually led the couple to Arkansas. After he had regained his health and renewed his energy, however, he made several successful business efforts there.

Like most Southerners, recovery for W.D. and Mary Jane Chadick from the upheaval and trauma of the American Civil War required repeated trials and losses in what was a long, painful period of time. W.D.'s church could not pay a salary to match his needs, so the family moved to Meridianville to join their many friends. With help from his son-in-law, Fordyce, W.D. opened a grocery business and preached at the local Cumberland Presbyterian Church. While in Meridianville, Mary, their youngest child (the "song bird" of the family), died at the age of eight. Reverend Chadick was in debt and decided start a new life outside of Alabama. He was called to a church in Murfreesboro and made welcome. Other churches beckoned to him later in his life, as well. Chadick was thrown from his horse while in McMinnville and confined to bed. He died in early September of 1878 of illness related to these injuries.

Widowed Mary Jane and her married daughter, Clara Gillespie, were visiting with family when Clara developed a severe cold and was unable to recover. She died in 1882. Willie Chadick, the oldest son, was the only family member to remain in the Tennessee Valley. He married a

²⁰² *Incidents*, 317-322.

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local woman and they had seven children, all named with great affection for friends and family. Jennie Chadick married William Whitson, a lawyer she met in McMinnville, but died 18 months later with her newborn child buried beside her. Edwin “Eddie” Chadick, who promised to be a better boy if allowed to return home from prison camp safely, sought a more adventuresome life dealing in cotton in New York City. There, he married a concert pianist named Sophie Groschel, and they had one son. Eddie then pursued business opportunities in Texas and welcomed his half-brothers, George and Dave, when they joined him there. He invested in coal mines and established the Choctaw Coal & Railroad Company, then disappeared suddenly. His wife, Sophie, returned east with their son. Family stories passed down indicate that she’d hired the Pinkerton Detective Agency to find the vanished Eddie. She never heard from him again. After making their way west to brother Eddie’s hospitality Georgie Chadick, the oldest of the second set of children, and Davie, the last son, found it difficult to lay roots in one place. They lived in Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas at times.²⁰³

After the death of her husband, Mary Jane Chadick resided in Arkansas with her daughter, Sue Fordyce, for a few months at a time, then moved to their estate in St. Louis. She died there, in 1905, at the age of 87. Through her pen, Mary Jane shared her voice. Though educated and privileged, she saw hardship and tragedy in the War years and described them just as she experienced them.

²⁰³ Ibid., 317-329.

Mary Elizabeth Hamer Johnston (1833-1889)

Tearing her infant from her breast

In the Big Cove area of Madison County, Mary Elizabeth Hamer had been raised near Vienna, the rural farming community of her parents Reverend John and Anna (Brown) Hamer, his third wife. Hamer came from Anson County, North Carolina in approximately 1818 to land earlier patented by his father. He added 240 acres to this. By 1850, Hamer kept 11 people enslaved. He had a growing family and an estate valued at \$2,000. The Hamer's fourth child, Mary Elizabeth, born in 1833:

...was rocked in a religious cradle...reared, also, with much tenderness and care, and we presume she never wanted any of the comforts of life. When grown to womanhood, it, perhaps, would have been hard to find a more perfect model of woman kind. About the medium height; weighing about one hundred and thirty-five pounds, she stood erect, with her head always thrown aloft; large dark brown eyes with heavy lashes; her hair almost as black as a raven; while her rosy cheeks showed the picture of health.²⁰⁴

The Hamer family history gave Mary an image as “a lovely young lady with flashing brown eyes, long hair black as a raven’s wing, rosy cheeks and an erect carriage...the Belle of Madison County.”²⁰⁵ In the spring of 1848, at not quite 15 years of age, Mary married Dr. James Findley. Her young age was not unusual for the time and for Mary’s apparent beauty and spirit. Findley had studied in Philadelphia and was practicing in nearby Marshall County.²⁰⁶ As a practical man of medicine, the doctor probably understood what the future held for his health. On February 1, 1849, he sold a large lot to his father-in-law, John Hamer, for \$500 “in hand.” It included his entire stock of drugs, medicines, paints, oils, dye stuff, window glass, office furniture, shoes, two horses, medical books and surgical instruments.²⁰⁷ Eleven months later, on January 27, 1850, Mary Elizabeth was widowed at his death by consumption.²⁰⁸ By

²⁰⁴ Rice, *Hard Times*, 95.

²⁰⁵ John E. Hamer, *John E. Hamer 1792-1865: His Antecedents*. Unpub. HMCPL, 1974, 36.

²⁰⁶ Gandrud, *Notices*, 356.

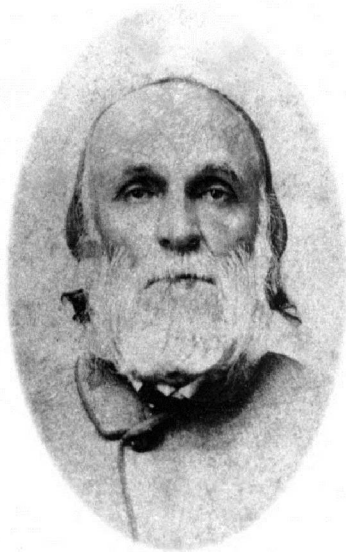
²⁰⁷ Bragg Collection. Miscellaneous Court Records, HMCPL, Record Center, 1849.

²⁰⁸ Gandrud, *Notices*, 500.

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the time the 1850 census was conducted, Mary Findley, now aged 17, once again lived at the Hamer household.

Here at her father's home, Mary Elizabeth met Rev. Milus Johnston, 10 years her senior. Johnston and Hamer were ministers of the same faith. Johnston was a widower visiting at her father's home. Johnston's first wife, Susan Ray, had died in 1853, leaving him with three sons: Fountain, Melville and John, and two daughters, Caroline and Louisa. (In 1862 Caroline [Callie] died while a student at the Female College in Huntsville and Sarah Lowe wrote, "Poor girl... her sprightliness and kindheartedness endeared her to us all.")²⁰⁹



Milus Johnston (HMCPL)

In October of 1859, Mary Elizabeth and Milus Johnston were married by Rev. Wilburn Mooney.²¹⁰ The couple would have four daughters together: Willie Anna born in 1862; Emma May, 1864; and after the War, Ella Davis, 1867; and, Frances born in 1869. The first two girls and Mary's energetic spirit would soon be called upon: the War years were ahead. Reverend Johnston had been preaching on the Fayetteville,

²⁰⁹ Sarah J. Lowe Journal, Huntsville Madison County Special Collections and Archives, 4. Priscilla Larkin also noted this death in her journal.

²¹⁰ Madison County Marriage Book, 4B, 359. Mooney's wife wrote her memoirs later in life.

Tennessee circuit with his family, but at the second Yankee invasion of north Alabama, the Johnstons and Hamers were living and farming together at the Hamer home place. By late 1863, fighting had become intensely local.

Federal soldiers burned Reverend Hamer's house, and the two families moved into several smaller outbuildings left standing. Soldiers returned intending to arrest Reverend Johnston for the dubious reason that four Hamer in-laws were fighting for the South. He quickly fled with a group of like-minded men across the Tennessee River into Dixie. They volunteered together and were sworn in as Company E, and Johnston became captain of 58 men under Col. Lemuel Mead. Milus Johnston quickly proved to be a first-rate leader and was promoted to the rank of Major. Johnston and his men knew their own territory well and severely harassed the invading army. The damage inflicted by "Bushwhacker" Johnston's men drove the Yankees to distraction with unexpected raids on the railroad and soldiers at distant isolated outposts.

At this time, most men who volunteered, were conscripted, and the uncounted mossbacks hanging out in the hills faced a terrible dilemma: their families were hungry. Mrs. Johnston never wrote of it, but, like her neighbors, she must have felt their absence direly at times. Any one of her neighbors might have written, as this woman did, "We have nothing in the house to eat but a little bit of meal" if you don't get home soon on, "to fix us up some... 'twant be no use to come, for we'll be out there... in the old grave yard with your ma and pa." The end of enlistment period, the long-awaited furlough or even desertion could not come soon enough.²¹¹

Union troops found it difficult to capture local bushwhackers, who had the advantage of advance notice (via rumors) of approaching soldiers and the ability to quickly run to a nearby mountain whose geography was familiar. In mid-January of 1865, Lt. Colonel Bedan McDanald of the Ohio 101st Infantry lost a first lieutenant, four men, and a forage team to bushwhackers in the Big Cove area. Consequently, McDanald decided to protect his own men with extreme measures. On the 17th at 7 pm, his regiment was issued three days rations of hard bread. They crossed the mountain from Huntsville, sweeping into the Tennessee valley. After crossing the Flint River by rafts, they were joined by one company of cavalry led by Captain Ben Harris, USA scout and guide, into his old hunting grounds. They scoured the land between the Flint, Paint Rock and

²¹¹ Patricia B. Mitchell., pamphlet, "Home Front Regiment: Women Fighting from the Hearth, 1861-1865. (Chatham, VA: Self-publ., 1999), 7, f. 26.

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Tennessee Rivers, and captured four bushwhackers and two citizens who were harboring and feeding bushwhackers.



(Harper's, Jan. 2, 1863)

Colonel McDanald gave orders to burn out all the houses of those even suspected of any guerilla action in the area between Paint Rock and Flint River “I burned some fifty tenements on my line of march that were occupied by bush-whackers and their supporters, leaving their families in a houseless, helpless condition, with orders to leave that country by going north or moving south of the Tennessee River.”²¹² This occurred during one of the coldest winters in memory.

By this time, Union soldiers had burned down the Hamer family home, leaving them to inhabit makeshift buildings. Unfortunately for the family, the Yankees returned to burn once again. Mary Johnston and the two children were living in the loom-house, the baby asleep on a pallet on the floor while a bed above was made for the older child. This still-fresh

²¹² McDanald noted in his report the captures of John Cobb, William P. Hornbuckle for harboring and feeding the outlaws, and they captured the arms held by Adam Cobb, Theophilus Cobb, George W. Hunt and Harris L. Herring. 101st Regiment Ohio Volunteer Infantry.” *Ohio Civil War Central*, Jan. 30, 2019.

picture was described by Milus Johnston for the Guntersville *Democrat* some 37 years later:

To get the house on fire, one of the men took a new broom...stuck it into the flames and set the mattress, which was just over the sleeping child. The mother seeing the fire falling upon the sleeping babe, pushed the blue-coat away and punched the mattress down, when the rascal struck the mother over the head with the burning broom, which singed her hair and burnt at least a dozen holes in her dress.” She was able to beat at him until he left the house and into the yard. As a result, she was able to save much of the furniture before the men succeeded in burning the last house to the ground, which left the family entirely without shelter.²¹³



Refugee Family (National Archives)

Colonel McDanald did not report his following actions to his superior officer. He proceeded to arrest Mrs. Johnston, “tearing her infant from her breast” and forcing her to leave the baby behind with neighbors now living in the nearby woods. He placed Mrs. Johnston in the saddle and made her ride horseback for 23 miles through the roughest weather of that winter on a two-day trip. Mary Johnston essentially became a prisoner-of-war. Once in Huntsville, she was quartered in a local hotel, much to the disgust of the men of the garrison and citizenry of both sides. When he

²¹³ Qtd. in Charles Rice, *Sword of “Bushwhacker” Johnston*. (Huntsville: Flint River Press, 1992), 95, 98.

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learned of this, Johnston later wrote, “She who had soothed his pillow in sickness, who had stood by him in health and encouraged in all his duties and trials... The temptation was to cherish vengeance against everything that wore the blue.” He and his men were determined to slip into town and rescue her, “or to die in the attempt.” Fortunately for those concerned, Confederate Capt. Robert Welch sent a dispatch threatening to kill any and all of his 35 Yankee prisoners if Mrs. Johnston was not released immediately. Dr. Thomas Wright, a family friend, escorted her back to the Vienna community and her young children.²¹⁴

Officially, the local Confederate surrender in May of 1865 was handled with respect for the losers; men were allowed to keep their horses and, surreptitiously, their weapons. Nonetheless, it was defeat. It would take massive effort to rebuild homes, farms, churches, and their very lives, with countless husbands, fathers, brothers, sons, and sweethearts still missing or wounded.

One hopes that nights when “the children went to sleep crying for bread” had come to an end.²¹⁵ Families did as they always had: they worked hard. Rebuilding houses, farms, food, and livestock were essential goals. Vienna was renamed New Hope, a fitting title, since all that remained of the former town was the Post Office building and the Masonic hall.

The Johnstons’ story did not end there. Reverend Johnston returned to his itinerant ministry, working the Vienna circuit of Madison and Jackson Counties for many years. In the past, Mary Elizabeth had traveled with him to backwoods churches, camp meetings with their stump preachers, and to the yearly conferences staying at friendly Methodist homes. Moving about now became limited to trunks; carpet bags were definitely out of favor “with the influx of new rulers after the war.”²¹⁶ She travelled less frequently with four young daughters at home. In 1887, with the girls grown into young ladies, Mary Elizabeth accompanied her husband to the Camp Hill Circuit in Tallapoosa County. She died there on October 21, 1889 and was buried in the “Old Cemetery.”²¹⁷ It is unlikely that anyone currently residing there knows of this remarkable woman.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 94-99.

²¹⁵ Sue F. Dromgoole Mooney, *My Moving Tent*, 1903. (Memphis: Electronic Reprint, General Books), 33.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 16.

²¹⁷ *Hamer*, 37.

Octavia Wyche Otey (1831-1890)

***The Next Generation Will Cause the Yankees More Trouble than
Ever Their Parents did***

South on the main road from Nashville to Huntsville, just a mile or so below Meridianville, Alabama, the Otey family lived at their plantation Green Lawn; the home still bears that name. When Mrs. Otey returned to her journal in September 1864, Union troops occupied almost all of north Alabama. She recorded events regarding her family, as she said, White and Black, during the darkest days of the occupation.



Green Lawn (HABS)

18-year-old bride Octavia Aurelia Wyche married 31-year-old William Madison Otey in 1849. She was unsure of her choice. His widowed mother, Mary (Walton) Otey shone as an example of the strength of frontier women. Widowed since 1823, Mary Otey raised nine children in the original dog-trot log house on a quarter section of land (a modest farm, near Meridianville). William Madison, called Matt, was the only one of Mary's sons to remain nearby; the newly-weds lived in that cabin with her in the early years of their marriage while William maintained a mercantile business in Meridianville. His marriage to Octavia included land; he supervised his wife's properties in Mississippi and in nearby Madison County, Alabama, upon which the couple built a plantation

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house. Matt's mother's room, located at the back of the house, overlooked the original log house.²¹⁸

Octavia had several relatives close at hand. Widowed cousin Eliza McCrary Battle lived just across Meridianville Pike at Sunnyside, and three Wyche uncles were doctors in Madison County. Matt Otey's sister married the merchant John Pruitt and lived in Meridianville. Down the Meridianville Pike leading to Huntsville, Matt's sisters also lived in fine homes. Mary Frances married James Robinson and lived at Forrestfield, later destroyed by the Federals; Lucy married Rodah Horton, a member of the state legislature, and lived at China Grove; sister Caroline married John Robinson and lived at Oaklawn, still standing, and by all accounts was a mirror of Forrestfield. Unfortunately for Octavia, however, any additional familial support faded as the Robinsons evacuated to live in safer territory in southern Alabama.



China Grove (HABS)

²¹⁸ <http://www.thesouthpaw.net/greenlawnforsale/history.htm> accessed 9/2/2003.

Madison County



John Robinson Oak Lawn (HABS)

By 1850, Otey, as head of household in Madison County, enslaved 28 people. He showed a value of \$8000 on the census, even though most of the enslaved people had been bequeathed to his wife, Octavia. In 1860, the real estate value totaled \$25,000 with a personal estate worth over \$58,000; this included 28 enslaved people. By 1864, in the midst of martial actions, residents of the big house included her step-father John Kirkman and Will, her half-brother. Her family also included the children Imogene about 14; Willie Walter (Willie), 11; Molly Beck, 9; Madison Wyche (Mattie), 6; Ellise, 4; and the baby, Lucille Horton (Lucy), just 2 years old.

The children seemed to have more than the usual run of childhood illnesses, and Octavia suffered from heart issues and neuralgia which frequently sent her to bed. The men of the Otey household struggled daily with life-threatening conditions, and as a result, Octavia made many household decisions regarding, food, clothing, transportation to church, health care, rearing children, and dealing with impositions by Federal soldiers, all the while hoping and praying for Southern liberation. She wrote of activities in her journal from September 19, 1864 of that year through June 3, 1865; one can only guess of the difficulties Octavia had already endured.

Because of the relatively small size of their plantation, one might assume that food supplies were readily available. In the third year of warfare, that was not the case. Notations in Octavia's journal reflect the

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new reality. The children picked chestnuts not already picked over by servants. The few hogs hidden from soldiers and thieves were hard to keep in unaccustomed pens in the forest. Octavia was aware that one could not fatten pigs in the wild. Feral dogs had already killed four of their eight remaining sheep, “We had to eat the meat. We had no other.” By early October, the cows were “most all gone dry, and we get very little milk or butter. This morning we had neither. It is very hard on the poor children, nothing but a little piece of fried middling, and bread and water.” One Sunday dinner was a scant one; there was no meat of any kind, nor had there been since the previous Friday morning. Octavia had genuine “anxiety about something to eat something to wear and anxiety about everything. That which is not taken in the day from us, is stolen at night by negroes and robbers. God only know what will become of us.”

In the fall, sugar cane was harvested and ground for syrup and peaches, and grapes were gathered for wine and jelly. The children picked tomatoes for tomato ketchup. They picked corn and white peas, and a man they kept enslaved named Tom dug ground-peas. Thirty bushels of apples were gathered, enough to share with family and friends in town.

Mr. Kirkman snared partridges with a net he painstakingly stitched together and Mattie caught a mess of fish, but by November, no real meat was available anywhere. Octavia had served the last bit of chicken to her husband and brother who were ill, recovering upstairs. The children and her step-father sat at the dinner table together. The four children watched politely as Mr. Kirkman served himself first, and took of the “stewed fruit, potatoes, and bread, no milk, but water.” This apparently left little to none for the children:

And I looked at him and then at his plate, and it seemed so unreal and ridiculous that I burst out laughing, but other thoughts soon sent me from the table to finish a hearty fit of crying. I passed it off to the children as a fit of laughing hysterics. And poor things, they did not know that their Mother was crying for them. I never saw starvation so close to me before.

By October, the need for stockings for 10 pairs of feet became apparent. The girls knitted but seemed unable to tend to their task. Octavia cut out two shirts for her father and two for Will, a pair of pants for her husband, and began sewing with a woman they kept enslaved named Nina. Her son Willie still wore the same pants from the previous November; they were rags. She took apart her black silk dress to “turn it.” Winter approached, and all the spare bed clothes were already given to “our poor soldiers.”

Responsibility for the people she considered to be her Black family led Octavia to scold Parthenia, the cook, who used up her share of meat four days too quickly. The enslaved people at the Otey house seemed to come and go on their own time, and some disappeared. "If we commense reproving the servants we only make matters worse." Parthenia and her family had returned during Yankee rule, and Octavia regretted the stress of dealing with her.

Octavia fretted over what to do about enslaved man Tom. Earlier, the Federals had impressed Tom against his will, for work in Nashville. Mr. Otey had allowed him, now a runaway, to hide out on their property. Many enslaved Black people were seized for labor at this time. Octavia reported that Black Yankee soldiers chased and even shot at Tom and others. Tom decided to turn himself in rather than live in terror of being hunted down and caught again, or worse, being shot and killed.

In September, 14-year-old Imogene and the adults attended church in what should have been a joyous occasion as the young women joined the Cumberland Presbyterian Church that morning. The congregation suddenly found the church surrounded by Yankees with drawn swords and bayonets, apparently sure that the service was "a cloak to military movement." It was humiliating to be treated so, "It is worse than we ever treated our negroes." Young Erskine and Imogene went to church in Mr. Strong's school wagon. On a few occasions she borrowed a horse from Cousin Eliza Battle across the road, and along with their mule Coaly, who balked all the way, drove their carriage to church. They "liked never to have got up the hill." Their old horse, Mary Jane, was now of little use, and Octavia recalled fondly the two "matched blacks" that once pulled their carriage.

Mr. Otey, her 47-year-old husband, had suffered from chronic diarrhea during the last five years, and rapidly grew worse. Once a healthy 240 pounds, he now weighed only 160 pounds and was "falling off every day." Having no access to suitable food exacerbated his illness. He spent many days unable to get up from bed, and when he did, Octavia described him as weak and feeble. As his carbuncles swelled, Mr. Otey dosed himself with quinine and Nitro muriatic acid. Earlier treatment with water from Johnson Wells and tea from the bark of the red oak made little difference to his condition. She used "opium pills almost constantly to keep his bowels in check." Later because he thought "his liver was not acting at all," Mr. Otey used a "Blue pill with a little Calomel and Dovers powders." (Calomel is a form of mercury; Dover's Powders contain Ipecac, Opium, and 1% morphine.) Unfortunately, he was quite sick in the night and "the Blue Pill has no effect on him. I had to check his bowels

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with those Opium Pills.” The blue pill mixed with the tea from sarsaparilla root proved just as ineffective.

Her step-father continued to suffer with jaundice and her step-brother was an invalid. (Mr. Otey had initially joined the Confederate army, as had her brother, Will, but none of the men were able to serve.) Octavia suffered from heart palpitations which occasionally sent her to bed. “Sometimes I feel quite desperate, all seems dark around me, I feel like I could struggle no longer, but that would not increase my happiness, so ‘I must en`en keep a trying.’”

In the early fall, baby Lucy was sick again, and was given three small doses of Calomel for fever and a sick stomach. At the same time, Mattie had fever and a headache. Lucy came down with a bad cold in October and refused to take her medicine. “I had to whip the poor little thing to-night to make her take her medicine. Mattie [six-years old] cried like I was whipping him.” Mattie was sick with chills. Octavia gave him Calomel and planned to dose him with quinine. Imogene came down with a violent cold, but said she would tend the baby while Octavia went to town to find protection from Union officials and to buy meat. When she returned home, all the children were very unwell.

Octavia found it difficult to raise her children in the accustomed manner. The children cause “a good deal of trouble now, they are so restless and reckless, and I am sorry to say, some of them are disobedient.” Nine-year-old “Mollie is so wild I can not keep her at any house work.” Four-year- old Ellise caused more trouble and was always in mischief and “does not mind correction or reproof.” A Yankee soldier passed by and in a conversation with Octavia commented, “What do they expect to do with us when the very babies hate them... Yes, there is a feeling of eternal dislike, and hatred for our oppressors growing up in the hearts of the babes, and children of this generation that will be never be obliterated.” Formal schooling was out of the question, so Mr. Kirkman, able to do little else, heard the children’s lessons.

Someone stole the old mare named Jenny Lind, who was apparently a poor specimen and blind in one eye. Through the neighborhood grapevine, the family sometimes heard when foraging parties were about and hid some of their animals. Union men took nine head of cattle, and a turkey out of the hen house. When she protested:

the soldiers cursed me, and told me they did not care if we did starve. My little children were standing by and heard them curse their Mother twice. What was in the heads of those children? If human nature is what I think it is, the men and women of the next

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generation will cause the Yankees more trouble than their parents ever did.

Farm animals regularly disappeared, whether taken by enslaved people or thieves, and everyone suffered. Octavia went to town to have the work-oxen and milk cow, stolen earlier by soldiers, returned. Her husband Matt was too sick and helpless to come, she explained to the officer. When she described their plight, “tears came to my eyes, but they were not for myself.” Extensive paper work had to be filled out and taken from officer to officer down the line. Once released from the Federal corral, she and Willie Walter, about 11 years old, drove the oxen, two calves and four other animals up the dirt road to Green Lawn with the help of a young Negro. Before long, arranging the animals’ release from authorities would become an even more painful, involved process.

In September of 1864, she heard the news that, in order to do business or even enter town, women would be required to take the oath of the United States government. “It created quite a stir amongst the ladies.” By the end of the month Octavia heard that Cousin Amanda, who had been to town, was required to take the dreaded oath. She refused and was not allowed to leave for several days. Octavia saw that the time to make decisions about principles and morality grew short.

In mid-October, cousin Eliza asked if Octavia would accompany her to town the next day. In dread Octavia acknowledged, “I do not know what to do?” The rules, had there been any before, had now changed. In the past, the very act of entering the court house had been beneath her and most women’s dignity.

“I was too late so only got a soup bone, had to pay 50 cts. for it.” With this journal notation, it is evident that Octavia Otey signed the hated pledge to the United States in order to obtain this one small piece of sustenance.

The news of Octavia’s “shocking” transgression made its way south to her half-sister and her in-laws, safely ensconced in southern Alabama. In December, Ella Burke wrote to Octavia of her astonishment and Octavia offered a poignant response: “I am very sorry you have had your feelings hurt by those representations of my taking ‘the oath.’ I should have guarded against it by telling you of it long ago, but had no idea that any one up here would think it worth their while to chronicle my acts.” She continued, “I have never felt like I had taken the oath, as though I have signed my name to such a document, which was all that was required of me.” In order to purchase over 10 dollars of goods, one was forced to sign the oath. Soon, a signature was required to buy even one dollar’s worth of items in town. Mr. Otey did not want to take the oath. “I was violently

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opposed to his taking it, and if I had not taken it, he would have done it, and my pride was for my husband more than my self, and believe me my dear sister, it is only a matter of pride.”

She continued:

We who are in the enemy’s lines, with their clutch, as it were, on our throats, can do our cause no harm by taking their oath....So I subscribed to their oath to keep my husband, brother, or Father from taking it, and to keep my family of ten white ones from beggary or starvation....I thought it more honorable and less degrading to take the oath in the manner I did, than to beg, to fawn on our enemies, or borrow, when we have no way to pay our debts... They have taken every thing here, almost, except the house and furniture.

She continued, “It was distinctly understood between me and the ‘Provost Marshal’ that I took it because my husband was sick, and had to attend to his business... It was the hardest task I ever did.” At the conclusion of her letter Octavia wrote across the top, “Rest assured my dear sister, our subscribing to their oath was a perfect sacrifice of my self to our family.”

Her half-sister, Ella, had recently lost her baby daughter named for Octavia, who shared her heartache, “you must not grieve too deeply for dear little Octie. You never heard the dear little ‘angel’ begging for something to eat... At least your dear little one has her wants all supplied in heaven.”

Her journal has no entries for the next two and a half months, then, “Oh my God, what shall I do, my poor dear husband is gone, he has left me and his poor little children here all alone, how can I live without him.” William Madison Otey died on June 2, 1865, only 47 years old. She wrote of their final words to one another, “I told him how hard it would be for me to give him up” and how much I loved him. She had written earlier in anguish, “If it were not for our poor children, I would want to die at the same time that he does.”

Octavia’s step-father, John Kirkman, and her step-brother, Will Kirkman also died that year and are buried at the small cemetery behind Green Lawn. Octavia was only 34 years old at that time. All hope and responsibility now rested on her already aching shoulders. “It requires courage to endure as well as to do.” Truer words were never spoken.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ Mickey Maroney, Ed. “Civil War Journal of Octavia Wyche Otey” in *Huntsville Historical Review*. Vol. 18 #3 (1991), 1-30. *passim*.



Like almost everyone in the country, Octavia Otey's trials had not ended. With no money and no income in November of 1868, she was forced once again to the courthouse. In November of 1868, lawyer James Robinson stood with her as she bid to purchase her own land, "I ascended the steps with a feeling of friendlessness, but I had not been there long before I was conscious of a silent sympathy for me in the crowd... I was surprised for feeling it, and although I was a woman in a crowd of men, I heard no offensive language and no loud talking but once." She purchased her dower for \$200 and "the rest of the place for \$1500 dollars."²²⁰

That same month, Octavia and her children experienced what may be the earliest recorded visit from the Ku Klux Klan in Madison County. She wrote that, as the children slept, "I was sitting here by the fire when all at once I heard the whistle." Her emphatical underlining most likely denotes that she recognized people in her yard. She saw:

a body of men filing in by two's through the lower lot gate and coming up the hill... To look back to this sight, it is a beautiful moonlight night and everything so quiet, and still, that it looked strange indeed to see that body of men winding along in the moonlight, horses and riders all clothed in white, and masked. Most of them with tall strange looking hats on. Well! They came to our back window and about a dozen would insist in shaking hands with us.

The girls were awake now and handed out apples to a few of the "visitors" who came to the gallery side of the house, and Ellen and Lucy played two songs on the piano for them. The men rejoined their group and before riding off, "they formed a line in front of the house. The leader said 'Three cheers for the ladies' which they gave! And then rode off by two's, all moving like experienced cavalry. It all seems strange and unreal, I can almost fancy it a dream."²²¹ The Green Lawn household was most likely now under Klan protection. Octavia probably could have named the hooded riders, many of whom were probably her acquaintances and neighbors. Her situation was regarded by them as one needing a show of protection from troublemakers who might take advantage of her situation, and they were ready.

²²⁰ Robert G. Barinowski, Ed. "Diary of Octavia Aurelia Wyche Otey from 1868-1869," 1995, 5.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

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She wrote in early December, “Well! Last night the Ku Klux came again.” The dog had given a “series of doleful barks” and Willie Walter announced the Ku Klux were there. Four men dressed in black rode up to their window, their horses covered in white, asked “if the Negroes were humble and respectful and obeyed me, etc. I laughed and told them I was not certain I would tell them [the riders] if they were or not.” They said “Madam, you need not fear to tell us, we will see that you are protected.” They rode off after saying good night.²²²



Tenants and sharecroppers of the property came and went, often without making a crop or paying any share at all. The family had by now adjusted to their changed life style. Seemingly unembarrassed, Octavia acknowledged in her journal that Willie Walter put a rocking chair in the wagon, where she rode comfortably. While she worried about her seeming loss of social status, the children were cared for, clothed, fed, and educated and married. Octavia Aurelia Wyche Otey died in December of 1890 at 59 years old.

²²² Ibid., 10.

Louisa Britt and Caroline Harris

On the Wrong Side

Some women suffered during the War years because they were perceived as being on the “wrong” side. This demarcation was sometimes decided arbitrarily by friends and neighbors, depending on whether Union or Confederate forces controlled the community. Louisa Britt, widow of the notorious civilian spy Kinchen Britt (known as a “homemade Yankee” by those who hated him), made her own choice.

In November of 1864, Britt had led Federals in an attempt to capture Lt. Mac Robinson and others. In an exchange of fire, he was killed. Some said he was “aimed at first.” Kinch Britt was so despised that local author Robert Bentley based a wicked character in his novel *Forrestfield, A Story of the Old South* on Britt, portraying him as a contemptible traitor. After Britt’s death, Louisa remarried, fled the ill-will of town, and abandoned her step-son James Britt to the care of others. James Britt resided at the Alms House for his entire life; he was the first and last person entered at the Madison County Poor House when at the age of 72 he died. How many other women in similar circumstances wished, even prayed, that they too might find escape?²²³

Louisa Britt was at least fortunate to flee the landscape of a bitter neighborhood surrounding her. Other women who were painfully aware of their husbands’ traitorous acts had little means of escape. What would become of Caroline Harris, widow of the notorious traitor Ben Harris? Benjamin R. Harris was from Madison County, as was his wife Caroline A.E. Vann. They were married by their neighbor Reverend Hamer in the Vienna (New Hope) area. Caroline’s father owned over 700 acres of land at one time, along with two town lots in Vienna; part of this would be her inheritance. The first two Harris babies were affectionately named, not for his parents, but for her parents, Martha and Thomas. Neighbors like the Harris family, Hamers, Vanns, Drakes and others had known one other for generations, worked together, attended the same churches and schools. But then Harris, not particularly successful, moved his family first to Arkansas, then to Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, where he became an overseer with a personal worth of \$4,200 (a substantial amount in 1860). He and

²²³ Madison County Marriage Book 4B: 302; 4B: 509; See *Incidents of the War*, for those written accounts by Mary Jane Chadick, 205, 220 and others; Bentley, *Forrestfield*, 285.

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Caroline now had five children under the age of 13, with another child arriving in 1862.²²⁴

Leaving his wife and children, Harris arrived sometime during the War in Madison and Marshall Counties as a self-named “Captain.” The Union army hired Harris by the day as a scout. Several other diarists in this work mentioned meeting him or hearing of his exploits. For example, he and his band of men shot and murdered four unarmed civilian members of the Roden family at Buck Island, Marshall County on December 27, 1863. A fifth victim, Charles Hardcastle survived by pretending to be dead when the men were all thrown into the icy river. Hardcastle’s story spread, and with it, the dramatic news that Harris himself had pulled the trigger each time. Mary Jane Chadick reported the account in her journal within days of the occurrence.²²⁵

The *Rome Georgia Courier* reported that at Paint Rock, Harris’s men “took Mat V. Rich from his house, carried him to a creek about a mile distant, where they murdered him and threw his body into the creek”. David Lemly, William McCay and old man Mr. Hodge were the next people murdered by the band.²²⁶

In 1864, Harris led Union troops to no less than 50 houses of suspected rebels in his old neighborhood near Vienna. The houses were promptly burned down, “leaving their families in a homeless, helpless condition” with orders to leave the county. Among these was the house of Reverend Hamer, who had performed Ben and Caroline Harris’ own marriage ceremony some 18 years earlier. (This was the same foray in which Mary Hamer Johnston, “Bushwhacker” Johnston’s wife, was taken hostage.) Many would have vied for the honor of killing him, but Ben Harris died in Huntsville on May 5, 1864 and was eventually buried in the National Cemetery in Chattanooga.²²⁷

Caroline Harris, residing in Louisiana with her six young children at that time, was far from her Madison County family. Her parish, however, was also a hotbed for violence which later led to the most flagrant massacre of African-Americans in United States history at Colfax, just 40 miles away. It is unknown how, but by 1870, Caroline made her way back

²²⁴ Madison County Marriage Book 4A; 121;

²²⁵ Rice, 164-169.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 168.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 76, 99.

Madison County

to Madison County with at least three of her children, relocating to Gurleysville. In December of 1875, she applied for a widow's pension, but was unable to prove her husband's official status in the army. She assumed he had enlisted in May of 1863 in the U.S. Cavalry at New Orleans. The request for pension for her or any of the children was denied. Caroline's closest relatives lived less than 10 miles away. Had she any idea of the events of her old neighborhood, family and friends? Did they visit and share news with her, or was her life now tainted by the actions of her husband? The answer is grim. Caroline A. Vann Harris "on the night of the 5th [January 1876] wife of Capt. Benjamin R. Harris, living near New Hope committed suicide."²²⁸

²²⁸ Ibid., 76; Fold3 Co. F, 1st Louisiana Cavalry; Pension Appl. #224.031; Gandrud, *Notices*, 37.

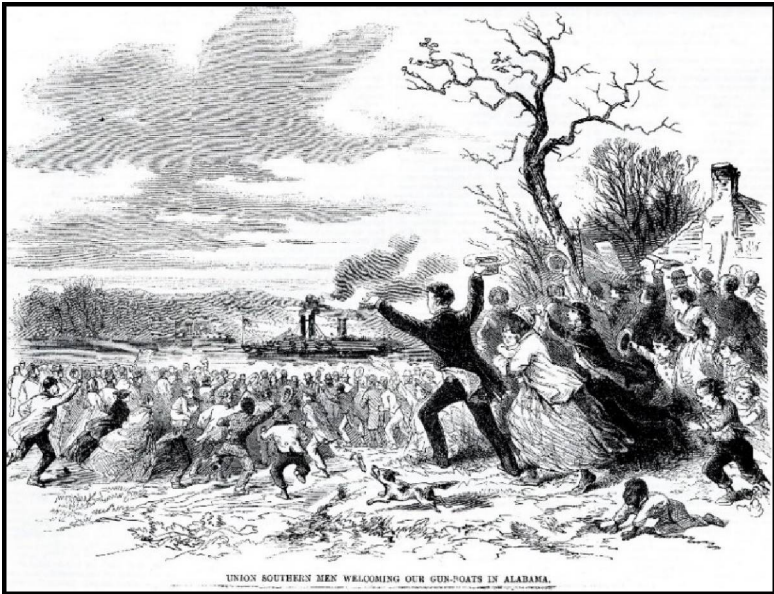
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LIMESTONE COUNTY

Mary Frances Fielding (1832-1914)

I Have Seen the Elephant

Mary Frances Fielding's journal is nothing short of exceptional. She observed and recorded, interacted and shared, laughed and satirized, experienced and raged, commented and endured through each day, keeping family and self together in perilous times. Already a single woman with no children to care for, the War brought more than enough to fret about. Her defiant tone conveyed her thoughts at the time.



Athens, Alabama, (Harper's March 1, 1862)

Many in the town of Athens first welcomed arriving Union boats with the Union flag flying high in March of 1862. Once war was declared, however, citizens rallied for their country. Historian Faye Acton Axford admirably described the advent of Civil War events in Limestone County, Alabama on June 6, 1861. As the soldiers of the newly formed Company F

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of the 9th Alabama Infantry under Capt. Thomas H. Hobbs boarded the train cars to leave Athens, William Eppa Fielding in his “green and drab homemade uniform... ardent and hopeful and foolish...to do battle for our country, the Confederate States of America. How proud we were... knowing full well our return would be “crowned with glory and triumph.” He wrote later, of course, that everyone present was more than a little tearful, except for him.²²⁹ Captain Hobbs wrote in his journal “A very sad day, and one which impressed its sadness on the most thoughtless of the company.”²³⁰

Eppa’s sister, 29-year-old Mary Fielding, who was among the crowd to see the 90 or so young soldiers go off to win a war and save their country, did not return to her family farm to recount the scene. She first walked to the Maclin house on Marion Street to visit her companion, Anne Eliza Hobbs Maclin, the delicate 31-year-old wife of Dr. Benjamin Maclin.²³¹



Maclin House

²²⁹ Faye Acton and Donnell Axford. *To Lochaber Na Mair: Southerners View the Civil War*. (Athens: Self-publ.), 1986) vi, vii, x, *passim*. This work by the Axfords was written with great attention to detail pertaining to the Athens community. Theirs was a work of love, and it shows.

²³⁰ Robert Henry Walker Jr. *History of Limestone County Alabama*. (Athens, AL: Limestone County Commissioners), 1973.

²³¹ The Maclin house, built in 1848, was considered to be one of the finest homes in north Alabama. Little would the actors know that, years later, it would be the residence of Judge J.E. Horton, who presided over the 1933 Decatur Scottsboro Boys trial. The house has since been moved from this location and is now in the Greenbrier community.

Mary then crossed the street to the home of Mrs. Maclin's sister Rebecca and her husband Ira Hobbs, who had been forbidden by their son to attend the emotional scene, with news of what had transpired. Mary Fielding's burden the next day was to inform her own family, who lived about six miles northeast of town, that Eppa was truly on his way to war.²³² Mary's subsequent journal entries confirm that the home front conflicts were as devastating for these women as many faced by Eppa and, later, Mary's brothers in battle.

Widow Sarah Ann Fielding, age 48, was in charge of the household near Piney Creek, valued at about \$5,000 with a two-story house, quarters for people she enslaved, and out-buildings. Sarah's household included her mother, Frances Thompson, now 73; William Eppa, 22; Louisa Virginia (called Puss), 19; Eliza Jane (Piggy), 16; James Madison, 13; Alice, 12; and, Louella (Ella), age 8. Missing from this household was Sarah's husband, William, a veteran of the War of 1812, who had died in 1855, their son Henry Rhodes, 27, who had a home of his own, Eppa, now off to war, and this eldest daughter, single Mary Frances.²³³ The letters and journals of these family members make it clear that books and education played a significant role in their lives. The young men probably attended the log cabin Classical Academy, established by John Fraser near his extensive grove of oak, chestnut and hickory trees in Athens.²³⁴ The girls were most likely well-educated as well.

Mary lived in Athens, and began her journal there on April 25, 1862 as Federal soldiers made their way into the village of about 900 (even fewer now, with so many men serving in the army). Federal pickets guarded the streets leading into the countryside, and Mary had "seen the elephant," her first sight of the enemy. She "had a good view of the animal, & come to the conclusion he's rather sheepish." Of course, with time and constant turmoil, this opinion would change to dismay, disgust, anger, and revulsion. That very Sunday, five soldiers attended church and impudently joined in the singing! She admitted her devotions were diverted in hopes that Capt. John Morgan and his men would come galloping to their rescue.

Mary mentioned little of the Union loyalty of some residents in northern Alabama. Many North Alabama delegates had originally favored a role of cooperation that might have helped delay Secession. Numerous

²³² Acton and Axford, *Southerners*, vi, vii, x.

²³³ 1860 Federal Census ages adjusted for the year 1861.

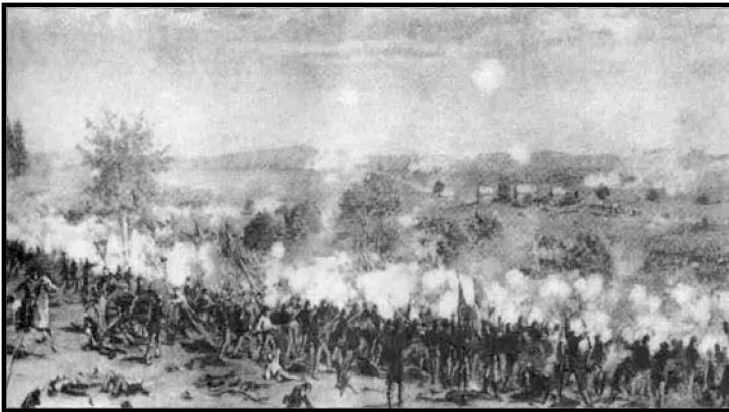
²³⁴ Fraser's extensive grove was cut down for railroad ties in December 1864.

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people were angry that there had been no actual vote for Secession within the state of Alabama. The local newspaper reported on January 22, 1861, “We have this day run up the glorious flag of our Union on the Court House, and the working men of Athens have just been out and fired one hundred guns in honor of the Union and the flag. Long may it wave!” That flag was removed on February 15.²³⁵

Now, with Union troops occupying town, she wrote, “so many things are jumbled together in my brain ‘tis like a tangled skein not to be easily unraveled.” The report of cannon sent the Federals moving in double time towards the Depot, leaving piles of gear behind and some men trotting towards Huntsville. One foot-soldier, cursing on his way, said “we are the biggest fools, we ought to whip these Rebels with our knapsacks.” Unfortunately, citizens fired guns from rooftops at the fleeing Yanks, burned the Memphis & Charleston Railroad bridge near Mooresville, and, adding insult to injury, jeered and ridiculed as they followed the retreating Union soldiers. It was said that the “ladies of the taverns” unfurled a Confederate flag long since hidden away. The much hoped-for release from Union occupation arrived with Col. John Scott’s Rebel cavalry, greeted by citizens with cheers and waving of hats and handkerchiefs. Scott burned all the equipment left behind by the Federals and let Black people take anything else they wanted. Scott’s men took five wagon-loads of guns and ammunitions, and left in the night.

The Union cavalry returned with a vengeance on May 2, led by Col. John B. Turchin

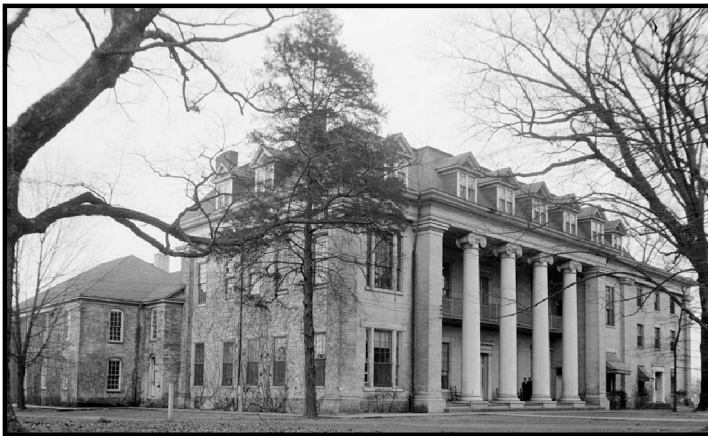


Attack on Athens, Illinois Periodicals Online

²³⁵ Walker, *History*, 96, 98.

Few Union sympathizers remained after “The Sack of Athens.” Mary and all the citizens heard that the Colonel had told his men “he would turn his back for two hours,” but the rioting and raiding continued for at least two days. This sort of military action was generally unknown in western warfare. The business district was destroyed as store after store was robbed, people were assaulted, and possessions were threatened. All private homes were searched for arms and, if no one was home to protest, pillaged.²³⁶ “Men who had been sleeping in the mud laid fine broadcloth on the ground that night and slept on it.”²³⁷ The soldiers had no tents or provisions, so they stayed in churches, the court house, yards and simply walked into kitchens, demanding to be fed. “She maintained her contempt for General Turchin as neither “brave nor a generous soldier.” She was aware of his chilling proposal that “the only way to put down this rebellion is to kill every Southern Rights man, woman and child as they go.”

Among the many descriptions of devastation, the Female Collegiate Institute was never invaded. Guards were, in fact, posted outside the wooden palings to secure the Greek-revival mansion and its outbuildings. During the duration of the War, Madame Childs’ school appeared to carry on with “business as usual.” No wounded men of either side were documented as being there, which is surprising because the space would have served as an ideal headquarters or hospital for the 8,000 invading Union soldiers at that time.



Founders’ Hall, Athens Female Institute (HABS)

²³⁶ In Huntsville, Mary Jane Chadick would later send her children to the county and bravely remain at her house alone to protect it from marauders.

²³⁷ Walker, *History*, 108.

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Mary Fielding most likely knew Mrs. Childs personally, but she only mentioned her once after attending a musical rehearsal around this time. Rumors, then legends developed later, saying that that Madame Childs saved the school because she produced from inside her reticule a letter sent by President Lincoln. But some influential Union authority must have secured the Institute for the duration of the War. In an undated letter to his mother Susanna, John Withers Clay hinted that he had personally “heard nothing of Mrs. Child’s disloyalty,” so some rumors must have circulated in Huntsville.²³⁸ The only house protected throughout the War was the Beaty-Mason home and, for a time, that of Dr. Stith Malone.

Mary developed a headache from the excitement and took to her bed.²³⁹ In a day or so she rallied to visit her Uncle Matt (Madison) Thompson, whose store had been plundered with a loss of \$3,000.²⁴⁰ “He’s completely down in the slough of despond, thinks we are going to starve, are completely whipped and ought to give up and go back in the Union.”²⁴¹ She, on the other hand after the acts of violence, wrote, “I know I feel less and less like going back every day.” She knowingly told one Yank, “Maybe when all the men are killed, you’ll have the glory of conquering the women and children, but we won’t give up before.”

At her Pinehurst home, Mrs. John Fraser had probably never considered the possibility that the enemy might appear at her very door until her daughter Virginia (nicknamed “Virgie” and residing at the Institute) heard the “steady tread of men and horses, and up the Huntsville road could be seen the waving banners of an advancing army. Like a surging wave, it covered the town.”²⁴² Mary Fielding said “they” treated Martha Fraser very badly. Mrs. Fraser had written her son earlier at Camp Bradford near Huntsville, and she admonished him to search direction from God. “If you are always ready to die, you will not be afraid to die, and if not afraid then the sting of death is taken away.” Furthermore, “I want you to be kind to every soldier ... Do not let any circumstances even induce you to take intoxicating liquors and always speak and act the plain

²³⁸ Clay Collection, HMCPL Archives, 76-1, Box 4. Withers Clay to Susanna Clay.

²³⁹ Mrs. Chadick also observed her own headaches had become more frequent throughout the Union occupation.

²⁴⁰ Walker, *History*, 114.

²⁴¹ Mary Fielding knew her *Pilgrim’s Progress*.

²⁴² Qtd. in Elva Bell Maclin, *Madame Childs*. (Nashville: Rand-McNally, 1993), 235.

unvarnished truth.” His mother was probably relieved to know that the man her son enslaved named George, “was a state’s right man and anxious to go to War” with him.²⁴³

By May 6, Dr. Maclin asked for protection, and a young officer was assigned to guard his house. Mary found the young lieutenant “rather conceited and I never could abide that.... He frets me almost beyond endurance.” News came that her mother was ill and needed a doctor, which was, of course, of deep concern to Mary. The lieutenant assured her she could get a pass to go out into the country but would need an approved escort. It just so happened he was available. “Thinks I to myself, please excuse me, you seem to be, and may be, a very nice, clever gentleman but – you may not.” Fortunately, her mother recovered without the aid of a doctor or Mary.

Newspapers filtered in with information about the War elsewhere. Mary clearly understood the geography and followed the movement of troops from both sides. Within two days of its destruction, they heard of the loss of the ironclad Merrimac, and within six days knew it was blown up to keep the enemy from capturing the ship. Names of the dead, friends and neighbors, were reported. Billy Richardson was so badly hurt it would be months before he was well enough to enter the service again. There would be no shirking of duty for many. Mary, no shrinking violet herself, shocked their house-guard because she hoped the spent-shell that hit General McClellan on the arm had blown his head off.

Civilian life began a slow return to status quo. Dr. Maclin received the Nashville newspapers and the ladies resumed walking and visiting in the downtown area. She called on friends purposefully, carrying a newspaper in which she hid letters about nearby skirmishes.

General Ormsby Mitchel arrived from Huntsville to implore the citizens not to encourage the guerilla mode of warfare in exchange for protection. That protection had already been offered, Mary wrote, “but what does it amount to? Just nothing at all, for not a day passes that they don’t steal something from somebody and from some people in the country they have taken everything almost, horses, cattle, forage, and food of all kinds.” No one believed their submitted claims for losses would ever be honored. Ladies called socially on Mrs. General Turchin, who refused

²⁴³ Fraser and Doris Stephens. *The Name is Fraser*. (Clinton, AK, 1990), 91, 92, 99.

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to receive them.²⁴⁴ Mary heard other stories about Mrs. General Turchin who, it was said, hoped “none of the boys will fall in love with any of the she rebels.” The idea!



Mrs. General Turchin

By the end of May, Louisville and Nashville newspapers arrived four days late through the grapevine telegraph. There was news from afar of General “Stonewall” Jackson and fighting in the Valley of Virginia. On a closer front, General Mitchel moved his headquarters into Tennessee. Upon hearing this news, Mary wondered at his strategy of leaving behind the railroad, so essential to the movement of men, supplies, and the wounded. In Athens, Colonel Stanley’s troops left to be replaced by Colonel Norton. The town settled as much as possible in those circumstances. She thought there were more deaths among the residents

²⁴⁴ Nadine Turchin accompanied her husband Colonel Turchin throughout many of his campaigns. Mary Jane Chadick also noted her, unflatteringly, in Huntsville. Mrs. Turchin was often seen riding with the cavalry officers in a costume that included a saber. Northern officers like Col. James Connolly admired and considered her “a great politician... has been in the field with the General nearly three years... She is fine looking, intelligent and a thoroughly womanly woman.” James A. Connolly, *Three Years in the Army of the Cumberland*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 1959), 188.) It is likely that her husband’s dismissal from the army was negated due to her appeals before President Lincoln; Turchin was appointed brigadier general.

than usual due to the excitement of the times and two men, deserters, returned to take the oath of allegiance to the Union. On the anniversary of the start of her journal, Mary worried about brother Eppa. "What wouldn't I give to know where, and how, he is now. When I think of the day they started, it seems but a short time ago; but when I think of the events of the past year it seems an age."

June brought an unusual cool spell that was attributed to several unlikely sources. Doctor Maclin thought "'tis the frost thawing out of the bones of the Yankees." Captain Walker, the Provost, at the house for dinner, commented, "'twas because they had knocked all the fire out of the Southerners. Thinks I to myself, you have only knocked it deeper. I'll warrant 'tis burning hot in every Southern heart, and will blaze out all the more furiously for having been smothered awhile." Mrs. Maclin added "they hadn't knocked all the fire out of the ladies, he said, no indeed, he knew they hadn't." The captain seemed to think the fighting would be over quickly, and that everyone would be united, resuming affections which might be even stronger than before. "We told him 'twould be after this generation had passed away, then I think several more will have to pass away first... the theory of storms clearing the atmosphere of social and political life and the sunshine being brighter for the storm, all a humbug." It was now June of 1862. Ever-perceptive, Mary Fielding knew that oppression was not calculated to make the oppressed love their oppressors.

In mid-June, General Mitchel's three daughters passed through Florence on their way to Huntsville, where they were to stay in the commandeered house of Hugh Lawson Clay, a son of former Gov. Clement C. Clay. Mary hoped none of the Huntsville ladies would make social calls on them. News of victory at Chattanooga was "over the left," and sincerely doubted as injured men passed through town with their reports.²⁴⁵ Doctor Maclin's home continued to be a stopping place for Union officers who frequently shared more up-to-date news. She liked Capt. John Edmiston, who never said anything about "quelling this rebellion, restoring the Union and all that gammon." As he took his leave of Florence, "he promised himself the pleasure of coming back. I told him, if they whipped us not to come back, we never wanted to see any of them again, but if we whipped them, we'd feel more charitably disposed." Dining room conversations between the two sides appeared to be free-flowing, at least at the Maclin house.

²⁴⁵ The First Battle of Chattanooga was a minor artillery event, but Union forces withdrew. According to Mary Fielding, General Mitchel acknowledged to Nick Davis "the Rebels gave them h---."

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News from the front continued to reach Mary and her family. She visited neighbors and relatives, and even found time to read. Unless she was preparing to leave for a visit or errand, however, Mary found it difficult to settle her thoughts. She finished a history of the United States with the gloomy and dark times of that revolution and it had been a triumph. She read *Ursula, Dollars and Cents*, James Fenimore Cooper's first novel, *The Spy*, and other books.²⁴⁶

Reverend James Plummer was unable to come from Huntsville for the quarterly Methodist meeting.²⁴⁷ Even worse, they heard Lincoln's appointee Andy Johnson, military governor of the retaken-Tennessee, was going to require the oath of allegiance from all preachers.²⁴⁸ Mail delivery out of Athens had been cut off, but the ladies discovered they could send out mail through friends' kindness to Mooresville, where it would be taken over the river to Somerville, then up to Chattanooga in hopes that the letters would find their intended soldiers there. The roadways were covered in dust and dirt from the constant traffic of Union soldiers, who often stopped in to ask for food and appeared to eat almost anything with a partiality to onions and pies. Reports came in of worse behavior; soldiers who located whiskey drunkenly killed livestock and stole.

In 1862, Independence Day was celebrated with grand reviews ordered by Gen. William Nelson.²⁴⁹ General Mitchel, in the meantime, left

²⁴⁶ Given the information available, one might surmise that Mary Fielding and her kin were unaware that *Ursula*, published in Brazil in 1859 was one of the first novels written by a Black woman. Anna Bartlett Warner wrote *Dollars and Cents* and other successful novels. She also composed religious music, including the noted song "Jesus Loves Me."

²⁴⁷ Reverend Plummer's wife, Laura, and her sister Mary Bruckner wrote memoirs of their own later.

²⁴⁸ Andrew Johnson had been the only sitting U.S. Senator of a Confederate state who did not resign his seat, and Lincoln appointed him military governor of Tennessee. His name was known in north Alabama. Johnson and his brother William fled their apprenticeships in Raleigh and briefly resided in Mooresville, Alabama in June of 1824 to learn tailoring. It was said there was at a \$10 reward for information leading to his whereabouts in North Carolina during that time. (Jones, Virgil [Pat] Carrington Jones, *Huntsville Times*, Oct. 8, 1933.)

²⁴⁹ General William "Bull" Nelson, earlier a naval officer, secured the advantage for the Union in a timely manner at Shiloh and was the first man to enter Corinth after the siege. He was killed in Louisville by Union Gen. Jefferson C. Davis after confrontations that led to Davis shooting and killing Nelson in late September 1862.

for Washington City to justify his military actions. General Turchin and his officers would stand before a court martial for the “Sack of Athens,” as it quickly was labeled. Torments in the rural countryside continued and two Yankees raided Ma’s milk, taking buckets and all. Mary had no sympathy for a civilian couple passing through who asked for something to eat. They complained that they had found no work, and Mary suggested strongly that, because he was a Union man, he should head north to look for work. Mary heard that her brother, Eppa, had been slightly wounded, and was relieved; his injuries could have been far worse. Brother Jack (John Everett) was not well at his place, and Isabella his wife, called “Sweet,” was doing the best she could. Youngest brother Jimmy still helped out at Ma’s. Along with her sisters Puss and Eliza, Mary was busy making straw hats; it was a tiresome chore. Plaiting was not Mary’s best talent, and she eventually declared the chore finished. “I never was so sick and tired of a job in my life. If I had known it was going to be so much trouble, my cranium would have gone without a kivering in the hat line.”

Turchin’s court martial, conducted by Gen. James Garfield began; unsurprisingly, Garfield stayed at the Maclin house. The General wrote to friends that he appropriated “the finest house in Athens and took a shower bath every morning and played backgammon with Doctor Maclin.”²⁵⁰ As it progressed, the trial moved to Huntsville; everyone eagerly awaited its outcome. Mary felt that, militarily, General Turchin, “was only a little ahead of the times” and that the charges against him might become less severe as others allowed his actions. General Pope issued orders for the army to subsist off the land even if they were loyal citizens who would be reimbursed later. Mary read from available newspapers and commented about the “Grand Army of the Potomac,” General McClellan, battles at Richmond, Gaines Mills, Malvern Hill, and the names of the dead and wounded in hospitals, even names of deserters were published. Eppa, she knew, had been wounded, but the news of Captain Hobbs’ knee injury was not good. It was likely he would lose his leg. The Huntsville reports included the deaths of the Tom Patton son of Mary and William Patton and William K. Acklen at Malvern Hill on July 1. Mrs. Jesse Jordan, she knew, had returned from the north to retrieve the body of her son Jesse.²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ Acton and Axford, *Southerners*, 216.

²⁵¹ Qtd. in Rohr, *Incidents*, 80. Young Jordan’s last words were, “Tell my mother I gave my body to my country and my soul to God.” Mary Jordan would later lose her life in the flames resulting from a fiery train crash at Stevenson. *Incidents*, 140, 141.

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There was a skirmish across the river in Courtland, as well as fighting to the northeast near Stevenson. Rebels burned old buildings at Whitesburg and Union troops returned to Mooresville. With dismay, Mary heard a few men had raised a Union flag on the 4th of July in Lentzville, just a few miles away.²⁵²



Lentz House

²⁵² Mary mentioned little about loyalty to the Union in northern Alabama. Originally, many North Alabama delegates considered the idea that cooperation might be useful to delay actual Secession. Various people were angry that there had been no real vote for Secession within the state. The local newspaper reported on January 22, 1861, “We have this day run up the glorious flag of our Union on the Court House, and the working men of Athens have just been out and fired one hundred guns in honor of the Union and the flag. Long may it wave!” However, the flag was removed on February 15. (Walker, *History*, 96, 98) Lentzville (in the hilly countryside just a few miles west of Athens) was known to be strongly Unionist; Southern neighbors apparently swore they’d hang every one who raised the Stars and Stripes. Mary did not yet know that Matthew Ramsey shot and killed one of his Southern neighbors, thinking him a robber. She probably heard that Solomon Lentz sent his son, Abraham, to fight for the Union; it was a father’s duty and that of his son. The old man said “he would have furnished 10,000 in the aid of the glorious cause” if able to. Neighbors might have suspected that Abraham was a “scout” or spy for the Union, he was paid \$100 for November 1863. (Storey, *Loyalty*, 39, 155) To avoid Southern conscription, William H. Lentz took the job of constable. After the War, in the beginning days of Federal rule, William H. Lentz was elected Sheriff and James B. Lentz became Superintendent of Education. A Sons of American Revolution chapter currently exists that is named for John Henry Lentz. (Walker, *History*, 130)

The worst news – only a rumor at first – was that the much-admired Captain Hobbs had died of his injuries in Richmond on July 24. Should his parents, Ira and Rebecca Hobbs, residing in the house just across the street, be informed that their only son was thought to be dead? Mrs. Hobbs was told the next day and “sometimes it seems as if she can’t stand it, but altogether they are both more quiet than I expected, tho’ I believe they have very little hope that the rumor isn’t true.” Mary stayed with Mrs. Hobbs at night, though the worried woman remained in bed around the clock. Regrettably, an obituary was published in a Southern newspaper leaving no doubt. On August 14, news of Captain Hobbs’ death was confirmed and “they bear it much better than I expected, tho’ she looked like she’d die night before last when he told her.” Ann LeVert Mastin sent Mrs. Hobbs a letter a few days later that shared “some of the particulars of Captain Hobbs’ death. Mrs. Hobbs was almost as much afflicted as when she first heard it. We had to give her brandy and rub her hands, etc. Mr. Hobbs and Dr. Maclin scolded her, and tell her it’s sinful to give away so to grief, but I know she can’t help it.”

Union Gen. Robert McCook’s brigade passed through on August 5 and, within three days, news spread of his death. It had occurred near New Market as he rode in an ambulance unaccompanied by his brigade. Union newspapers call it a “fiendish murder.” Although the actual number was less than the reported 17 deaths, local citizens were hanged and property was destroyed for miles.²⁵³

By this time, Mary Fielding seemed to be recording much of the war news she heard. Dink Thach, under the influence, apparently cheered what was in his heart and “hurrahed” for Jeff Davis while the Yanks were having a dress parade. Once they were dismissed, the men caught and beat him about.²⁵⁴ Fanny Early and her husband fled Memphis without even a change of clothing in order to avoid taking the oath; they returned home in their barouche with no servant there to help Fanny with her baby. The ill, now exhausted Fanny, who had been married for less than two years, soon

²⁵³ This event was noted by Mary Jane Chadick in Huntsville, Cassie Fennell in Guntersville, and Sallie Foster in Florence in their journals; the news quickly spread. 17 were not killed, but emotions ran high, and locals were hanged.

²⁵⁴ Dink, a lawyer, should have known better, but he was apparently “bad to drink.” Robert H. Thach died on November 4, 1866 leaving his wife Eliza, daughter of prominent Judge Daniel Coleman, to teach at the college to support their two children. (Acton and Axford, *Southerners*, 220) One of the two children, Charles Coleman Thach later became president of Alabama Polytechnic Institute, Auburn.

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died at home in Athens. That day's entry concluded with the report about Turchin being cashiered and Mitchel being sent home without a command.²⁵⁵

The few newspapers and Federal soldiers shared stories; there were "a hundred and one vague rumors." Some of those same soldiers were unmanageable, with their prowling and stealing all over town. During these days, Mary stayed active by visiting and offering comfort to grieving parents and sick neighbors. On August 25, she was thrilled to announce "Eppie has come! Eppie has come!" He had made his way south from Richmond "through Dalton and Rome, Georgia, down the Coosa River to Gadsden, across Sand Mountain afoot, and by chance conveyance to Somerville," on horseback, and crossed the Tennessee River to a neighbor's home to stay overnight. He walked home the rest of the way. He had a furlough of 40 days, two weeks of which were already spent. She would walk to the farm to see her wounded brother if she had to. Their reunion was not a dream and he "proved a living, breathing reality" with his injured eye resting behind colored glasses.

As the Yanks prepared to leave town late in the day of August 19th Illinois burned the much-admired, and newly completed Nipponia Fairgrounds, several businesses and homes, and "went through town firing in the streets and at houses, cursing and yelling like demons." She reckoned "they were gone for good, tho' the people are fearful that there are some lurking about to do more mischief." The streets then felt eerily empty. Citizens no longer had to show passes to pickets in order to walk about. She heard the Federals had abandoned the city of Huntsville, leaving behind wounded and sick Union soldiers who Rebels quickly captured. In September, a Southern company of cavalry appeared at dinner time and were royally fed, "'twas the best dinner they've had since they left home nine months ago."

In this interlude a copy of the Huntsville *Southern Advocate* arrived with the latest political details: Stanton was out, Halleck was in as secretary of war, Pope was sent to the extreme west, McDowell was under

²⁵⁵ Turchin was dismissed from the army, but his court martial was nullified and he was promoted to brigadier general. General Mitchel was reassigned to Hilton Head, South Carolina where he contracted Yellow Fever and died in October of 1862.

arrest, and Mary described Stuart's raid on Major General John Pope's headquarters (worth \$10M for the Confederate side.)²⁵⁶

On the home front for the first time since last autumn, she and the Maclins enjoyed a carriage ride, though they had to use part of a wagon harness. Brother Eppa had recovered from his wound, and now both he and brother Jack, who'd fought at Corinth, would soon leave for their units. Henry, from Columbus, Mississippi had traveled too quickly with his injuries and was now ill again in an Atlanta hospital. He said he suffered "all the camp diseases, a whole Reg't, commanded by General Debility." Mary planned to make her way to Atlanta if she could find anyone to go with her. It would be simple enough, she reasoned, because the "cars run from Winchester to Bridgeport now and there you are put across the river in a steamboat and go on." She would have – gladly.

Mid-October of 1862 remained quiet until four gentlemen appeared at Mary's home. One of these men she thought strange – a little old man with white moustache and whiskers seemed out of place. Off came the disguise, and there was Brother Henry, and the boys Eppie and Jack joined them all! Henry was wearing the same coat, old red jeans pants and old shoes he had left in. Now the sisters began sewing uniforms of grey homespun. When their furlough time was over, Brother Jack took Henry and Eppie to Winchester in a hack. It was such a cold and snowy day that a lady where they stayed overnight offered Henry a blanket. Eppie sent word to Ma that she should not worry about Henry as long as there were any women in the Confederacy.

November was scheduled for the Quarterly Methodist meetings. Rev. James Plummer was now in west Huntsville; Wellborn Mooney, their station-preacher, had not yet arrived.²⁵⁷ Some local people, including Doctor Maclin, scouted possible locations as they considered refugeeing across the river, in the mountains southeast of Somerville. The family of Stith Malone was already across the river; most of their friends had already moved. Mail delivery might be more reliable there, at least. Mary

²⁵⁶ Stuart-led Confederates raided the train depot at Catlett's Station to discover the spoils of war before them: canned lobster and whiskey. Showing great restraint, the men did not take any more than they could carry. Additionally, 330 prisoners and 500 horses and mules were taken, along with clothes, a payroll safe with \$500,000 in greenbacks and \$20,000 in gold. Pope's papers revealed maps, plans and troop movements. Among this baggage was his formal hat and dress uniform, labeled, "John Pope, Major General."

²⁵⁷ The wife of Reverend Mooney, Sue Dromgoole Mooney, later wrote memoirs of her recollections of these years.

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continued recording the war news as she read and heard it. The Confederate conscription officer came to Huntsville; agents were to be appointed to start in four counties north of the river. For Mary, "All I hate is, that those I'd like best to see go have some petty office that exempts them." This was a common complaint.

Mrs. Maclin and Mary travelled to Huntsville, and, while the weather in that first week of December was unpleasant, they enjoyed seeing friends. They found time to visit the Episcopal Church of the Nativity where they admired the stained-glass windows. Mary noted that these were not as lofty as those at the nearby Presbyterian Church. Returning to Athens, news awaited her. Eppie described the horrific battle scene at Fredericksburg, "the battlefield was far more thickly strewn with dead than any he has seen. They were lying all over the streets, alleys, yards and gardens of the town." Townspeople there fled with only the clothes on their backs. Everything left behind was destroyed.

The new year of 1863 began with telegraphed news of death and wounded friends; every name was familiar in such a small community. Mary's beloved brothers shared news in letters home. Henry was in the "rain, mud, and slush in Chattanooga; that we'd hardly believe him if he was to tell us the mud was forty feet deep and still raining... he hopes it will entirely 'squinch' the fires of war." Jack wrote that he was well and hearty, now residing at Jackson, Mississippi after leaving Grenada about 100 miles away, often in snow with no tent for two or three days at a time. Eppie, at Fredericksburg, sent \$40 home and hoped everyone was doing as well as he. The letters urged the family not to worry, but how could they not? As the miserable weather of February arrived, the roads became particularly bad. Rebel soldiers were now trickling home, sick or wounded. The Donnell sisters were "going to the army," starting out from Athens in their father's spring wagon. This was not an unusual occurrence; had she the opportunity, Mary would have gone herself to see her brothers.

General Bragg now prohibited telegrams, so news could come only from persons returning from the army carrying letters or sharing personal accounts. John Coleman was buried, and Mary was sorry for Beck Vasser, "they say she was almost crazy yesterday... I reckon she regrets now that she didn't marry him."²⁵⁸ One Sunday after church, Rev. Wellborn

²⁵⁸ Rebecca Vasser's father Richard was considered "the merchant prince" of Limestone County. Vasser "possessed more influence perhaps than any other man in Limestone County." He had partnered with Judge Coleman when they both arrived in the area. Capt. Daniel Coleman received a distressing letter from Rebecca, and she asked "him to pray God would take her to be with him."

Mooney, who Mary thought highly of, took dinner with the family.²⁵⁹ At the end of January, youngsters from the Huntsville Echols family – Charley, Ellen, Sue, Ann Eliza and her husband Capt. Oliver Gaston – came to visit at the Maclin house. It was the last time Mary would ever see the Captain.²⁶⁰

Grandma Thompson was confined to her bed as she became increasingly frail, but she remained patient and seldom complained. At the end of February she died. In the meanwhile, Yankee gunboats and transports came up the river to destroy uniform factories and other supply sources.

In April of 1863, Sister Louisa, known as “Puss,” began teaching 25 students in the county. Mrs. Maclin began packing up to leave, as did many townspeople. The Yankees, estimated from 8,000 to 20,000, were now at Waterloo, about 70 miles to the west. Mrs. Maclin took little clothing and left valuable items with friends who were staying behind, such as Mary Fielding’s mother, who was secluded in the country. Now that his home was being used to quarter wounded Federal soldiers, Dr. Stith Malone and his family were refugeeing in Somerville. On a cold wet day in mid-December of 1863, the Hobbs were evicted from their home. They resettled in Somerville, then finally in Talladega. Others went to Bailey’s Spring, and some even to Georgia and Mississippi. These families, safely shielded from fighting, most likely did not mingle with the “grey-back” refugees, Southern women who traipsed along the country-

Norman M. Shapiro. Ed. “Diary of Daniel Coleman, 1863-1864 in *Huntsville Historical Review*, Vol. 26, #2 (S-F 1999), 5. After the War, Becky married Gen. William Pinckney Howard; they toured Europe in 1871 with “Blind Tom,” a former slave and musical prodigy who performed for Queen Victoria.

²⁵⁹ Reverend Mooney had been assigned to Athens, but it was initially deemed unwise for his wife and children to leave Marion in south Alabama.

²⁶⁰ One of Eliza Hobbs Maclin’s sisters, Mary Hobbs, married wealthy merchant William Echols of Huntsville. Of the 11 Echols children: son, William graduated from West Point; Mary married Col. Egbert Jones who commanded the 4th Alabama Infantry and was killed at the Battle of First Manassas; James died at the Battle of Atlanta; John was Secretary of State for Mississippi during the War; Jimmy was captured at Lexington; and, Eliza Ann married Oliver B. Gaston (who was captured by Union troops and, while imprisoned, died in January of 1863). Jimmy was wounded but paroled home. William Echols Spragins. *Beirne, Patton, Echols, Spragins Pedigrees*. (Hsv.: n. p., 1967) 40. (Further, this connected the Hobbs women to Ellen Saunders in Courtland, Louisa Harris in Huntsville and Cassie Fennell in Marshall County, who also kept journals.)

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side lugging their children with them, perhaps following their soldier husbands or hoping for bread.²⁶¹

Lizzie Fraser later wrote the Hobbs that she was “shocked to find yard and garden, all turned out to the street” where soldiers had run back and forth. The Maclin house, so far, was not disturbed, although it was occupied by a merchant – a Union sympathizer.²⁶² General Nathan Bedford Forrest’s men passed through. Mary noticed the young men, but knew none by name. The general, she wrote, was “much more gentlemanly” than expected, having heard him to be “as an illiterate, rough man.” Like Generals Mitchel and Turchin, Forrest’s wife Mary Ann accompanied him.²⁶³ The general told local citizens that there was no danger from the Yankees and that the farmers should remain and continue to plant. Food would be needed. Even though cannon fire was heard, “he could keep twenty thousand in check.” Mary did not despair as Forrest’s men fell back toward Decatur; perhaps it was a ploy. On the other hand, as, several women prepared to leave town, she, a single lady, hesitated, writing, “It must be a blessing to have someone to think and decide for you, and tell you exactly what to do.”

May 2 brought news that General Roddey’s men had defeated the Federals who retreated and then set fire to Tusculumbia burning, everything along the way. Huntsville’s Gen. Edward Tracy²⁶⁴ was killed, they heard, and Mrs. Maclin wanted to come back to Athens. The most dreadful news came from, however, and was almost too painful to abide. Baby Annie, Brother Jack and Isabella’s only child who had been ill with spasms, died. “Poor Sweet, it seemed at first to be almost more than she could bear, but since the baby was buried, she has been quiet tho’ very sad.” It was Mary who wrote to her brother about the baby, “Sweet said she felt as if she

²⁶¹ Elva Bell Maclin. *Mollie!* (Athens, AL: Athens State Coll. Archives, 1993), 37, 44.

²⁶² Elva Bell Maclin. *Madame Childs*. (Nashville: Rand-McNally, 1993), 157, 235, 159, 160.

²⁶³ According to a family story, Mary Ann Montgomery and her mother were on their way to church when their buggy became hung up while crossing a stream. Some local young men were on the riverbank laughing and teasing the women, doing nothing to help. Nathan Forrest rode up on his horse and immediately waded across the stream and carried Mary Ann and her mother to safety. He asked permission to call, and they were married six weeks later in September of 1845.

²⁶⁴ Brig. Gen. Edward Dorr Tracy, a lawyer from Huntsville, was only 29 when he was killed at Port Gibson.

couldn't do it, so I did it, tho' I never hated to write a letter so much in my life."

Mary heard news that Stonewall Jackson had been killed by one of his own men, and General Van Dorn killed by one of his surgeons, "Some difficulty over the Dr's wife. He ought to have had patriotism enough to put off his revenge 'till after the war."²⁶⁵ In Athens, Forrest's men were in the streets "galloping or strolling about continually coming for something to eat." She considered them to be good Southern soldiers, however. During this lull, young Jimmie Fraser furloughed in Athens and visited with Miss Bettie, Miss Mollie, and Miss Nina twice. As he left to return to his company he considered, "Farewell white pants, fancy cravats and ruffled shirts, kid gloves and pumped boots. Farewell Miss Nina, Miss Bettie, Mollie and "her whom I love more than all the rest."²⁶⁶ (She whom he "loved more than all the rest" later sent a note informing him she had found another.)

On May 18, General Forrest and two of his staff dined at the Maclin house. The general stayed the night while he waited for Colonel Roddey to join him. Mary liked Forrest, "he had such a pleasant face and genial expression, and looks so kindly at you out of his eyes." He entertained with table talk of amusing incidents in such a 'quiet matter-of-course way' that it doesn't sound egotistical as it would if repeated." General Forrest "indeed seems to have very little education, tho' he has good sense and good manners, not at all refined, however, either in word or expression; makes a good many mistakes in conversation, and uses one expression that was always an abomination in my ears; taken instead of took, 'I taken,' Ugh! It sets my teeth on edge." That mattered little to Mary, who wrote a good deal more about the man; his untiring energy, action against the Federals, and yes, "The story of a young lady near Gadsden, riding behind him to show him a ford, is true."²⁶⁷ Forrest, now a major general, would take Van Dorn's place in command; they left Athens on May 19 for Tennessee.

²⁶⁵ General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson died of pneumonia after being accidentally shot by his own troops at Chancellorsville. Gen. Earl Van Dorn, once called the "terror of ugly husbands," was shot in the back of the head by an enraged husband at Spring Hill, Tennessee. (National Park Service accessed 6/19/17)

²⁶⁶ Fraser, *Fraser*, 129.

²⁶⁷ 15-year-old Emma Sanson is well known in Alabama for riding behind Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest to show him a place to ford a creek, allowing Forest to capture troops of Col. Abel Streight near Gadsden.

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Mary Fielding made no subsequent entries until late September of 1864. (It was during this September that Madame Childs made a two-week, 200-mile trek through war zones to Federal offices at Nashville to insure further security for the Female Institute.) Because the Maclins had relocated while Federals occupied Athens, Mary most likely resided at the family farm with her mother, sisters Louise (Puss), Eliza Jane, and Luella, and teen-age brother Jimmy. She began a new page with the grand story of General Forrest retaking Athens, Alabama.

On September 23, 1864 Jimmy, the only son living at home, drove Mary Fielding and her mother into Athens, which was now occupied by Union soldiers. They were escorted to the Provost office by a Negro soldier. "I was so mad about that I didn't get over it all day." Furthermore "a battalion of Negroes had gone down on the train to see what was the matter" because the railroad tracks were torn-up and [telegraph] lines down at McDonald's Station south of Athens. All of a sudden, cannon commenced shelling and the soldiers on picket duty ran into the fort, a "square redoubt on a steep hill with parapets eight feet high, encompassed by a line of abates eight to ten feet deep and a ditch fifteen feet wide, lined with sharpened palisades."²⁶⁸ Those troops, about 900 in number, were mostly made up of formerly enslaved men from the area, under Col. Wallace Campbell of the 110th United States Colored Infantry. Other Black soldiers were drawn up in a line across the street from her Uncle Mat's house. Mary watched it all from the upstairs windows of the Maclin's house. The firing was enough, she thought, to have killed them all, but she could not discern whether or not anyone was hurt. Buildings were set on fire. She heard the "whistling of minie balls and shrieking of shells." She wrote that her brothers would never need to describe these sounds to her again. It grew quiet at around midnight, and she slept. In the morning, the eerie quiet made it seem "as if there was no such thing as soldiering and bloodshed."

The Confederates drew closer. Eight rebel cannons were hauled around to face the fort while campfires, with their telltale smoke rising above, appeared all over the countryside. Rumors suggested to the commander, Colonel Campbell, that Forrest had 2,000, possibly 10,000 with him. Mary had her own personal encounter with the army when cavalrymen led by General Forrest appeared. He rode "up to the window and asked me about some rifle units over near the fort." Mary wrote, "They seemed to come in all directions; marching, countermarching, going first one way, then another." Although she could see women and children

²⁶⁸ Walker, *History*, 127.

running to houses with cellars, Mary defiantly kept her head out of the window all day. Soldiers repeatedly warned her of the danger, but she decided to wait until the very last minute, “in the meantime she could see all I could.”²⁶⁹ Was there a possible flag of truce around mid-day? With much cheering, the Stars and Stripes was pulled down with no bloodshed. That evening, while everyone was out in the yard, General Forrest stopped by again for a few minutes. He planned to go up the railroad line towards Nashville. “His guns were the best the U.S. had ... Lincoln being a better quartermaster than Jeff Davis, he patronized him.”²⁷⁰

The next skirmish to occur happened among the family. Ma and Mary planned for 15-year-old Jimmy to take them back to the farm, but in the evening, he appeared “mounted, armed, and equipped, and told me he had been pressed into service and belonged to Forrest’s escort. I told him he had as well get down off that horse; we were waiting for him to escort us home.” Ma Fielding went into action, and General Forrest released Jimmy to her. Allowing a son to join the army was painful for mothers. Earlier, Mrs. Martha Ann Fraser had written from Athens to her son, Jimmie, who resided at LaGrange College as he prepared to enlist in Capt. Jim Malone’s Company of “little Rebels” in June of 1861. “Now Jimmie you are almost of age, be firm and determined never to do an act of which you ought to be ashamed.”²⁷¹

Back in Athens, Jimmy Fielding disappeared with three other boys to join General Forrest about nine miles north of town. On Sunday the 27th, Mary closed that hectic week’s news frustrated by Jimmy’s departure, but, being a doting older sister, blamed it on the influence of other boys. The boys probably would not have missed the following events for anything in the world, however. Jimmy was just in time for the action as General

²⁶⁹ In order to impress Colonel Campbell with the number of his troops, General Ford paraded his cavalry and apparently had them dismount and appear as infantrymen, marching them around several times. The “battery of eight guns were said to have been seen by Campbell no less than 28 times in as many different spots surrounding the fort.” Campbell surrendered the fort. *Ibid.*, 126.

²⁷⁰ Besides the Federal soldiers, Forrest reported the capture of “fifty wagons and ambulances, five hundred horses, two trains of cars loaded with quartermaster’s and commissary stores, with a large quantity of small arms and two pieces of artillery.” (Fraser, *Fraser*, 155)

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 91, 92, 99.

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Forrest captured and burned the important fort guarding the Sulphur Trestle of the Alabama & Tennessee Railroad.²⁷²

Mary ceased writing for two weeks. She and Sister Puss had been up in the New Garden area tending wounded Southern soldiers in neighbors' homes. The men, many of whom she knew by name, patiently and gladly accepted the ladies' attentions, that is, except for Willy Anderson. His was the most serious wound, but he was "a spoiled and petted child." The next Sunday she took supplies back up to the wounded men. That was followed by writing in matter-of-factly, "The Yankees have moved their wounded to town. I believe that I forgot to mention that they returned a few days after Forrest's fight."

Late in October General Hood's Confederate army was at Decatur; heavy cannoning could be heard in the night. Lizzie Fraser, who sat up with a wounded soldier at her house, wrote to Rebecca Hobbs and the Maclins refugeeing at Talladega, "I am listening to the boom of cannon at Decatur. It is solemn and awful in the stillness of midnight to listen to that boom and feel that it may be dealing death to some loved one."²⁷³

Captain James Fraser wrote about Hood's crossing of the Tennessee River the next day:

On the 30th day of October, 1864 I witnessed the most beautiful, the grandest and the most inspiring scene I ever beheld... At the very earliest peep of day, we were in line of battle at the edge of the water. A hundred pontoon boats were moored at our feet. The broad, smooth, placid water of the beautiful river spread before us. The little city was dimly visible on the opposite bank nearly a mile away. At the command 'All Aboard,' every boat instantly filled. The made a half wheel to the right and with banners unfurled in one long line of battle, beautiful as a flock of swans, the advance began. The bands played 'Home Again.' The soldiers took up the song, the steady dip of the oars, the martial music of the bands, the songs and shouts of the soldiers in the face of the fire of artillery and Cavalry of the enemy on the other bank made a most glorious scene. Before we reached the other bank, the enemy had fled. As the morning sun rose over the hills, citizens from every upstairs window and balcony, crowds of ladies, not yet fully attired, greeted us with

²⁷² Ibid., 105.

²⁷³ Ibid., 156, 157.

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waving hands, handkerchiefs, banners and other things, and with shouts of welcome. Such was the soldier's return to his home.²⁷⁴

A former neighbor of the Fieldings, now a soldier, crossed the river and reported the news to be true. He refused to come inside, "but being very sleepy and tired, rolled himself in his oilcloth and went to sleep in the yard." Jack's wife, Sweet, had received a bundle of letters to give out, and Mary, well aware of the dangers, took the letters into "town and distributed them; had them in my clothes and delivered them privately, swearing each one to secrecy. Was a little afraid to do it, there were so many." Men of Sherman's Federal divisions came up the Elkton Road and into Athens, hungry as usual. They killed all of one man's stock. Two Yankees came to Ma's house and, without saying a word, took two hams from the smokehouse and kept going. That evening 17 gray-coated soldiers stopped by, and the very next day Yankees soldiers appeared again from around the out-buildings, and she asked them to "walk in." Mary wanted the men in the house where she could keep an eye on them! They left with food and a horse.

Family occurrences continued as Sister Puss and Bent (Henry Benton) Love, childhood sweethearts, announced their intention to marry. This surprised no one. Bent had to go to Lincoln, Tennessee for a license because the local Federal official might get too inquisitive. "Ma was opposed to Puss marrying 'till the war is over, but Bent says that may last a dozen years longer... and he won't go to the army 'till she marries him; so, for the good of the country she gave her consent." After a terrible buggy ride in the rain for an entire day, the family attended the wedding at Mrs. Love's house. Mary threatened to divorce the newlyweds if she got sick from the trip.

At the end of November, in advance of General Hood's movement into Tennessee, Yankees evacuated Athens, but not before loading up with food from the Fielding's (and everyone else's) farm. A letter from Brother Eppie, the first in six months, informed the family that he was still in the trenches of Petersburg, although he hoped for a furlough during the slow winter fighting. Mary continued to live at the farm. The calm of life ended when news arrived during Christmas week. "So many things have transpired... I hardly had time to think." Brother Henry reported that Hood's army was totally defeated near Nashville and in full retreat, "the greatest disaster that has ever happened to us since the war commenced." The severity of this crushing news was exacerbated by the fact that it had come so unexpectedly. Mary went into town on the 25th; no Yankees were

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 157.

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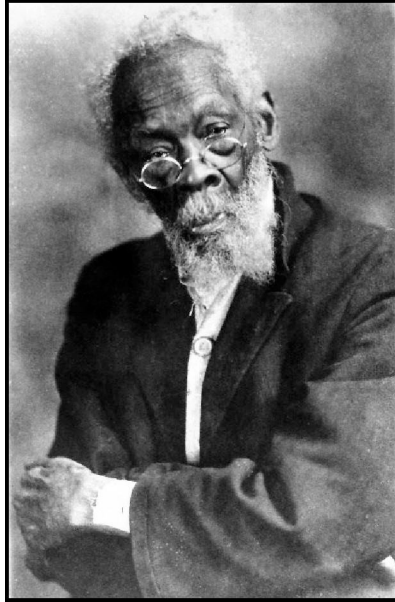
in sight yet. She had never experienced such “dull and gloomy Christmases before, never one like this.” The “dark day” was truly upon them. She considered the “justness of the cause” through eyes not normally despondent, but quite confident. Now, however, her voice became doubtful, “It will be might, not right, that conquers if we are conquered.” The Yankees arrived the last day of December.

On the first day of January 1865, the Federals began to rebuild the essential railroad, and groves of trees were cut for crossties “without so much as a ‘by your leave.’” Camp fires she wished were Rebel, and not Yankee, pulled up every fence for kindling. Cavalrymen in pursuit of Forrest arrived with neither rations nor forage, commandeering all they wanted from the citizens. Some families were left with no food for themselves, and children were crying in hunger. Things got worse: “the Second Tennessee Cavalry, the meanest in the Army, came in.” Mary was appalled that the soldiers seemed to think “we ought to give them the best we’ve got and didn’t care if we suffered” for food or any needs. They showed respect for neither side: even Union sympathizer Mr. Isom’s supplies were taken. Doctor Maclin’s home, used by General Hatch as his headquarters, was wrecked and appeared to have “nothing left in the house that any of them could possibly use about anything.”

Corn, an essential ingredient in daily life, could not be found; Mary and Ma traveled out into the county looking to buy it with the little cash they had. Perhaps Mary, accustomed to her independence, would settle down to teach school if arrangements could be made, “I know, however, that I’ll not like teaching, neither will I like the neighborhood, boardinghouse or anything connected with it, but anything now to make money.” For good for for ill, not enough pupils enrolled near the Crutcher families; she would try to get a school up at Pettusville. “Sweet” sent clothes they had sewed via Mr. Smith to her husband, Jack, but Smith planned to go to town and take the oath. Sweet hoped the Yanks would send Smith north and keep him! Mary said, “Tis the strangest thing in the world to me, that men have no more patriotism, or sense of honor, or sense of duty, than to give up in that way.” She sensed a bigger failure, “I’m afraid that things will eventually cause the overthrow of our armies.”

Brother Eppie came home on furlough after being away for over two years. The word of his return was out; friends came to visit and hear his news about their kinfolk. Mary was uneasy that he might stay too long, and that the Federals would find and capture him. He left to rejoin his unit in Virginia but was unable to get past Talladega. Because of his earlier eye injury, the doctor there gave him a discharge – he returned home in late March. In April, he ordered a pair of shoes made from a free man of color, Uncle Otho Fraser. It was said that Otho hid his shoemaking equipment in

a large tub of water when Union soldiers were seen outside his window. Otho then pretended to scour the floor with a scrub brush kept nearby as soldiers entered the house. Mary sneaked her brother's shoes out of Fraser's shoe shop, tied under her hoops.²⁷⁵



Otho Fraser

Mary was relieved to at last have a man at home with whom she could share responsibilities. Eppie immediately left for Madison County, hoping to find corn to purchase. He made the same trip again in an attempt to locate and purchase wheat. Eppa later accompanied Mary to inquire about managing a school at Pettusville for an income they would all now need.

Mary and her sister Eliza Jane walked to Athens, stopping to stay overnight with friends along the way. "Am becoming quite independent now that we have nobody to go with us, and nothing to ride." There was no news "except that of Sherman's triumphal march thro' South Carolina." Brother-in-law Bent Love was down and the "bluest" knowing there was little chance of success, and she admitted to her journal she had little hope

²⁷⁵ *Mary Mason's Scrapbook*. Comp. and Ed. Limestone County Historical Society. (Athens, AL: Limestone Co. Hist. Soc. 2010), 6-26. Uncle Otho Fraser celebrated his 99th birthday among friends White and Black.

since General Hood's retreat. How many others also considere, "the bare thought of defeat and its consequences is so dreadful that I try to avoid it as much as possible"? Her last entry of the War years reflected no emotion or opinion – simply, "Hear that Abe Lincoln has been murdered."



The countryside had become desolate by October of 1864, when General Hood observed "most of the fields they passed were covered by briars and weeds, the fences were burned or broken down. The chimneys in every direction stood like quiet sentinels and marked the site of once prosperous and happy homes... No cattle, hogs, horses, mules or domestic fowl were in sight. Only the birds reigned supreme."²⁷⁶ Where would they find money to pay debts and bills, for food and clothing? Mother Fraser wrote her son when he first joined the army, "Be economical save your money, by doing so you can be both just and generous. A man in debt is not a free man and is often debarred from praise of worthy deeds because he has consumed all of his means in trifles." Jimmy Fraser apparently had not learned that lesson when, in October of 1863, he wrote from Missionary Ridge, he paid \$250 for a watch from Major Gilbert (In 2019, this would amount to over \$6,000). He sent the watch home with his letters by Mr. Hine a week later.²⁷⁷ In June after the War, Jimmy wrote, "My first work was to procure a horse, and clear off and prepare a piece of ground on which to sow turnip seed. Through July, I plowed for the widow of a Yankee soldier at one dollar per day. She paid me every week and I used all of the money to buy rations for the family. I also got from the widow a blind horse... It was at this time (in early autumn) that I pulled crab grass in a Darkey's corn patch for one half of what I could pull to feed my mother's cow."²⁷⁸

After the War, Henry Fielding remained in Virginia. He declared, "he had walked over the Southern Confederacy 'till he was tired, and says if the Yankees wouldn't give 'him' transportation by the Northern route, he'd get into some business and stay 'till Fall." He returned later to Athens, then moved on to Harrison, Arkansas where, he became a lawyer. He later served as a judge and published the *Boone County Banner* with his brother, William Eppa. He avoided the "epidemic of matrimony which ravaged many a man" and remained single. Eppa, once so confident of

²⁷⁶ Cited in Walker, *History*, 129.

²⁷⁷ Fraser, *Fraser*, 100, 150.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 165.

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success, seemed to be the most distressed at the loss of the Cause. Returning soldiers were expected to come in and take the oath, but for a time, he considered never voting again. Eppa also became an attorney; he and his wife (Medora Layton) had a large family. Brother Jack had already married Isabella “Sweet” Newby and continued to farm on Poplar Ridge. He served in the state legislature for a time. Louisa, “Puss” had married Bent Love, and they later moved to Lamar County, Texas to raise their family. Seldom mentioned in Mary’s writings, sister Eliza Jane married John Sanderson; they remained in Limestone County. The youngest Fielding son, James Madison, “Jimmy,” who regretted that he was born too late for the War, married Alice Hall. They, too, remained in the area.²⁷⁹

Mary remained single and taught school in Pettusville, Limestone County until she moved to Fort Worth, Texas to live with a niece, Sallie Love Peele.²⁸⁰ Her recordings of the long days, the undercurrents and events of war, and the consequences as they unfolded before her eyes, were wise; her voice resonates even today. In August of 1865, she had cried:

The Surrender! How it hurts me to write that. I haven’t had the heart to write anything since it took place. To think that after all we have endured, lives lost, the untold suffering of thousands of widows and orphans, that it all should be for nothing, worse than nothing, ‘tis almost unendurable... We are utterly overpowered tho’ not humbled. We are still defiant in spirit. Our will is good to resist still, if it would avail us anything.²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ Acton and Axford, *Southerners*, 74-77, 159.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 159.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

LAUDERDALE COUNTY

Eliza Bedford Weakley (1815-1898)

I gave them some ginger cakes.

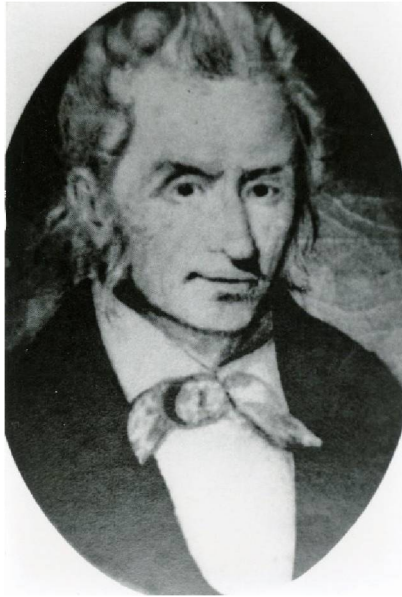
*Eliza Weakley's slim notations began in Florence on January 25, 1864. She may have begun an earlier journal, but those entries have become lost to time. It is unfortunate that she did not write more. She was likely exhausted and traumatized from events that had occurred earlier in her home and community. Maintaining the household of her husband and children still residing there provided more than enough activity to fill her days.*²⁸²

Eliza Weakley did not have the same formal education level of her Civil War diarist counterparts, but her background was no less worthy. Her mother, Isabella Smith, had married Dr. John Bedford, considered to be one of the four earliest founders of Florence, the first physician in the community, and a stockholder in the Cypress Land Company. After the initial land surveys by clerks S.D. and James Weakley, under the supervision of Gen. John Coffee, the land was sold. Investors anticipated great profits for what could become the largest commercial center in the northern part of the newly formed state of Alabama. The early results for their company showed gross profits of over \$225,000 and a new town was planned on a hill overlooking the Tennessee River by Ferdinand Sannoner. General Coffee was so pleased with the work that he allowed Sannoner to select the name Florence, after his favorite city in Tuscany. In her

²⁸² Although Eliza Weakley began her journal on January 1, 1864, parts of the journal from March 28 – June 22, 1864 were donated to the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Accession #1605 and will be cited hereafter as UNC. The larger sections are part of the Eliza Bedford Collection, University of North Alabama Archives and Special Collections, University of North Alabama, Florence, Alabama, cited as UNA.

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travelogue, Anne Newport Royall proclaimed that the people of Florence showed more wealth and better manners than even those of Huntsville.²⁸³



Ferdinand Sannoner

Eliza's husband, Samuel Davies Weakley, moved to north Alabama at the urging of his older brother, James, who later became the surveyor general of Alabama public lands, and, later, Land Commissioner when Gen. John Coffee died.²⁸⁴ S.D. and Eliza Bedford married in 1836 at her

²⁸³ Weakley Papers, Florence-Lauderdale County Public Library, Florence, Alabama (FLPL); *Anne Newport Royall*, Ed. Lucille Griffith. (University, AL: Univ. Press, 1969), 235-236

²⁸⁴ Of the nine children of Samuel and Sarah Weakley, several married into families of influence. Daughter Fannie Weakley was the first wife of Brig. Gen. Benjamin Patteson, U.S. Marshal for 31 years, and a close friend to Andrew Jackson. Son James Harvey Weakley married Ellen Donegan, sister of wealthy Huntsville manufacturer merchant James J. Donegan. (As a former resident of Great Britain, Ellen, acquired citizenship by taking the oath to renounce forever allegiance to any foreign power, most especially to Queen Victoria and all her possessions.) The partnerships were closer as Elizabeth Weakley married J.J. Donegan. S.D. Weakley's business partner, James Martin, was also an Irishman and part of a contingent of wealthy merchants including Thomas Kirkman, Donegan, and horse breeder James Jackson at Forks of Cypress. Through cousin and cousin-in-law relations, the Weakleys were related to the nationally

father's plantation, "New Hope," at Cox's Creek just north of Florence. Consolidating his investments first with mercantile shops, S.D. Weakley became partners with James Martin. Together, they bought raw cotton and sold finished yard goods in their three textile mills, called Cypress Cotton Mills. Samuel also held extensive real estate in the Midwest, and, in Alabama, stated total value over \$60,000 in 1860, including the 13 people he kept enslaved. Theirs was a seemingly comfortable life with a family of one son and five daughters. In 1850, Eliza ordered furniture to be shipped by schooner from New York City and brought overland from Charleston to their home at the corner of North Court and North Pine Streets. The little girls would be delighted with the three crying dolls sent to them, most likely the only ones in the neighborhood. Among other expenses, however, Eliza also spent \$10 for the capture of Nancy, an enslaved woman who had run away.²⁸⁵

For almost an entire year, the Civil War did not significantly intrude into north Alabama life. Nonetheless, leaders saw the necessity of defending the Tennessee River, and attempted to safeguard Fort Henry to the west. S.D. Weakley served as aide-de-camp to Gen. Gideon Pillow, overseeing 5000 volunteers, while Col. Thomas J. Foster, also of Florence, both "men of large wealth, patriotic and energetic" was asked to raise a regiment. Among the "volunteers" were hundreds of impressed enslaved Black people from north Alabama who labored to build the forts. S.D. was elected, over Huntsville's Leroy Pope Walker, as major general of the Alabama Militia, regiments of "grey-haired men past middle age" ready, in case of emergency, to defend their homes.²⁸⁶ The efforts were not enough. Fort Henry fell, followed by the loss of Fort Donelson less than two weeks later. Union soldiers now took to railroads and waterways, challenging the area of the great bend of the Tennessee River. Simultaneously (in February of 1862), hundreds of Confederate sick and wounded men were evacuated as far as riverboat traffic could go, stopping in Florence, then spreading throughout the countryside. Florence was located at the edge of the shoals, which limited further navigation (except in spring floods), soon became strategic for both armies. With most able-bodied men fighting in the Confederate army, the region was ripe for invasion.

significant Gov. Patton, Gen. John Brahan, and the Donelsons. Gandrud, *Notices*, 382, 470; Robey, *Maple Hill*, 42.

²⁸⁵ Eliza B. Weakley Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Univ. of NC, Accession #1605.

²⁸⁶ Jill K. Garrett. *History of Florence, Alabama*. (Columbia, TN: Self-pub., 1968), 27.

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When Union Gen. James Negley reached Florence in May of 1862, he immediately arrested local factory and mill owners, requiring them to provide bond for their own release, including the Foster brothers and Martin and S.D. Weakley. That summer, the entire area was occupied by the 30,000 troops of Gen. Carlos Buell. They finally moved out in July to the great relief of the town, but shortly after, were sacked by unidentified men dressed in gray, Confederate deserters and unruly guerillas.

In May of 1863 Lt. Col. Jesse Phillips captured the town. In the harsh conditions of a now overtly aggressive war, every house was searched. Possessions, including enslaved people, were impressed. Despite these transgressions, kind-hearted local women and girls nursed wounded Yankee soldiers housed in hotels and private homes. In November, General Sherman and his 15th U.S. Army Corps took occupation of the town. Troops lived off the land, and officers took over finer homes, which caused enormous upheaval and displacement for citizens. Eliza Weakley had anxieties of her own: General Sherman made his headquarters at her house during the three weeks of his stay.²⁸⁷ For the general population, Sherman's presence managed to at least reduce the number of guerilla and tory (Unionist) attacks in the countryside. Sherman apparently gave Dr. Young of the College a note of "safe passage" on November 3, protecting the college.²⁸⁸

Unfortunately for Martin & Weakley, 4,000 bales of cotton and the machinery of their factories and mills had been totally destroyed.²⁸⁹ Now, after leading the state militia for over one and a half years, General Weakley appeared to have lost more than his life's work, according to one source; he sought "virtual retirement."²⁹⁰

As Eliza, about 49, took up her journal in 1864, she was worn down from long-term worry and nervous tension. The Weakley family now consisted of her now dejected 52-year-old husband, Mister Weakley, as

²⁸⁷ Ophelia Stewart Smith Letter, Weakley Papers, FLPL. Ophelia and her mother, Betty Stewart, nursed among others, mortally wounded Capt. A.P. Hall, and saw to his respectful burial in the city cemetery. *Mrs. Smith wrote, "WE had him nicely buried in our city cemetery, where his body remained until IT was disinterred by order of the War Department."*

²⁸⁸ Young, *Reminiscences*, 165.

²⁸⁹ Joel Campbell DuBose. *Notable Men of Alabama*, Vol. 2. (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press), 412.

²⁹⁰ *Northern Alabama Historical and Biographical*. Deland and Smith: Birmingham, AL, 1888), 289, eBook.

she always called him; 27-year-old son CSA Captain John and his wife, Mary Rice of a prominent family from Morgan County; daughter Ann America Weakley, 23, married to William F. Mastin in May 1863, who resided in Huntsville with their baby Annie; Sarah (Sallie), age 20; Catherine (Kate), 15; Martha Narcissa, 13; and, Samuella Jamina (Jem), about nine years old. Eliza frequently wrote of neighbors' visits and the exchange of recipes, food, and occasional news; she may have found comfort in her daily home tasks. She never shared any remaining stress at the end of each day in her journal. Hers was an ordinary life under extraordinary circumstances – Florence was fought over and occupied by Rebel and Union soldiers more than 40 times during the War years.

On Monday, January 25, 1864 Eliza described the results of a skirmish at Raccoon Creek (Four Mile Branch), where Confederate Col. William A. Johnson and his men met Lt. Col. Jesse Phillips and Col. A.O. Miller. She never seemed to be as concerned with or aware of outcomes of battles so much as the names of casualties she knew – men such as Capt. Thomas Ingram, Sr. and Thomas Rhodes. Some of the wounded were taken to the Hawkins place, John Price's, and the home of well-to-do lawyer and planter Judge Sydney C. Posey to recover. General Roddey took advantage of now unprotected Athens, taking prisoners and supplies before leaving. Four days later, Federals returned to the area and destroyed W. Foster's factory. The next day, they were seen passing through Florence with Foster's "Negroes, horses, mules, wagons, and everything with them." She knew the names of the dead and wounded and recognized the total destruction of years of toil – the factory and all that went with it.²⁹¹

The Tennessee River served as a natural boundary across north Alabama that, until near the end of the hostilities, allowed civilians going back and forth to seek shelter when Federals took control of Athens and Florence. Many people in Florence crossed to the safer area of Tusculumbia (or South Florence, as it was often called then). Eliza's daughter Sallie and her friend Mary Kirkland, arrived home because Mary had come home for the funeral of Mrs. Mary Kirkland, who was buried the next day.²⁹² Eliza

²⁹¹ "A True Copy of Mrs. Weakley's Journal," University of North Alabama, Special Collections. The Foster brothers were Benjamin F., Thomas J., and George W.; it is difficult to discern exactly which Foster factory was destroyed, but most were reduced to ashes. The Weakley-Foster factory was the most likely facility, which would have been especially painful for Eliza to report. This may have been a transcription error by the original typist.

²⁹² Journals often allow family researchers to date births and deaths in times of stress when they otherwise go unnoted in official records. The death could have

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wrote a long letter, sent across the river, to her newly married niece “Meckie” Falconnet.

What follows is a particularly intriguing story from Eliza’s journal. To distinguish the individuals involved, “Meckie” was Ann America Burtwell, Eliza’s niece, the daughter of her sister Cornelia (Bedford) and riverboat captain John Burtwell who had recently died (in 1862).²⁹³ Mecki’s wedding to Maj. Eugene Falconnet, CSA followed a romance cheered for by local sympathizers. A Swiss-born railroad and artillery engineer, Major Falconnet was not Mecki’s only suitor. While nursing wounded Federal soldiers at the local hospital earlier, she received attention from a Federal officer named Col. Jesse Phillips, who was visiting his wounded soldiers at Mrs. Stewart’s house. The recently rejected Phillips’ men were stationed outside of Florence as he got wind of the forthcoming wedding plans. Falconnet stationed pickets near the Burtwell house on North Pine in the event that his rival, Colonel Phillips, might attempt to capture the rebel groom and any of the men who accompanied him for the wedding. By now, both sides were probably on high alert. Townspeople who were aware of the plans watched excitedly. The ceremony was performed on the evening of Jan. 12, 1864 by the much-admired Dr. Wm. H. Mitchell (the Presbyterian minister earlier captured by Federals for openly and defiantly praying for president Jefferson Davis as Union soldiers stood in the church). Eliza Weakley was rumored to have a carriage and driver ready at the Burtwell house to whisk the newlyweds to the river. Here, Falconnet would row his bride to safety in a skiff across the nearly 500 yards (the width of the river).²⁹⁴ Some stories say Falconnet sent Phillips a piece of the wedding cake under a white flag truce. Mecki Falconnet now lived across the river, and her Florence friends crossed often, including Sallie Weakley and young Mary Kirkland.

been either Mary Kirkland, now 63, or Mary Kirkland, now 54. The only young Mary coming across would have been about 13; the death may have been her grandmother.

²⁹³ According to historian Bill McDonald, the Marquis de LaFayette said Cornelia was “the most beautiful girl he had met in America” on his triumphant tour to the United States in 1824-1825. (Florence *Times Dailey*), Sept. 7, 2013.)

²⁹⁴ After the War, Falconnet returned to his home in the Midwest and his profession as an engineer. He was noted as an inventor and held patents for aerial navigation, including an early dirigible. Later, he said he regretted serving in the War. After the War, Col. Jesse Phillips (now General Phillips), married the widow Jennie (Davis) Harris, sister of Federal sympathizer Nick Davis of the prominent Athens family. Findagrave at Ancestry.com (accessed 10/15/17).

On February 2, Yankees entered town once again. Eliza reported that they examined the Weakley horses, taking none, judging them, “too stiff and no account and not fit for service.” She added as an afterthought that Louis C. Moore was shot at the foundry and Bruce, most likely an enslaved Black man, was thrashed. Moore died that evening. His widow might have been left comfortably fixed were there not a raging war, and her four sons gone to fight it.

Dr. James T. Hargraves came up to tell Eliza that “the Boat” was at Waterloo. She immediately sent for Mr. Hooks and his wagon, and her friend Mary Posey. On March 3 at 7 am, Mary, Eliza, and H. Foster departed, headed for Chickasaw Landing; they arrived around 2 pm that afternoon. Eliza stayed at Mr. Witherspoon’s home and, before sunrise the next morning, started for the boat where they had breakfast aboard.²⁹⁵ She next went up to Smith’s Landing (Gravelly Springs) to finish trading there before turning back for home. They stayed overnight at Mr. Huitt’s and arrived home on Saturday afternoon. This was approximately a 30-mile overland trip each way and quite an accomplishment for Eliza Weakley to attempt, much less complete.

Spring arrived in late April of 1864, and Eliza began trimming the rose bushes. Her slave, Milly, told her she wanted a chance to make more money working for the Yankees. “I told her she had better work in the garden to cloth and feed her.” It is surprising that Milly wanted to work at all; she gave birth to a baby girl the very next day at about four o’clock.²⁹⁶

Eliza noted her usual duties about the property, including locating the nests of the yellow turkey hen and black hen, another hen commenced sitting in the ice house, Bett had eight piglets, and the Weakleys enjoyed strawberries for supper. The youngsters went fishing, but it rained on them. She planted lettuce, spinage [sic], lima beans, onions, cukes, and sugar corn. She loaned her horse (remarkable that she still had one at this

²⁹⁵ The carpenter John Hooks most likely provided the wagon for the overland trip toward Waterloo and Chickasaw Landing. Following the losses by the Confederate army and destruction of his years of work, Mr. Weakley, it seems, had come to the realization that their future might lie with a new, passive role. Eliza’s ability to travel and buy supplies with no fear of molestation indicates that her husband almost certainly signed the Oath of Allegiance to the United States. She gave other hints of this in the following months, as well.

²⁹⁶ This section begins the brief part of the journal in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina, Accession #1605.

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time) to Mrs. McAlester for a trip to Bailey's Spring.²⁹⁷ Louisa swept the garden walks around the garden squares, "but done them no good." Yankee soldiers asked for bread, eggs, and chickens, and she informed them Colonel Rowett didn't allow the men on private property. During the war years, most Southern women in the countryside were not fortunate enough to have the luxury of calling forth a protecting officer as Eliza was. There would soon be even less protection as the relentless War grew cruel, showing little respect for civilians or their possessions. She did not mention her daughters residing at home; they were most likely staying in a safer area with friends across the river.

Charley Hooks, a young man of about 18, stole a Yankee horse and tried to swim it across the Tennessee River. "He drown, horse came back" Eliza reported in her crisp manner. Her nephew Capt. John Burtwell crossed the river under a flag of truce, but he was only allowed to come to the bank of the river – not into town. Her daughter-in-law Molly sent the children over to hear her read a letter from her husband with news of General Forrest's actions.

In the first week of May, Eliza wrote an exhilarating account. "Yankees ran in a hurry from Colonel Johnson, dropped hats, guns, cartridge boxes, knapsacks, bacon, hams and blankets" as Confederates came into town, taking 57 prisoners. Eliza gave two soldiers breakfast and sent food for others. The Southern soldiers arrested several Black men who they claimed caroused at night and caused disturbances, perhaps even daring to agitate for freedom. A noted leader and pastor of the first Black congregation in town was dealt with most harshly, probably to set an example. "Colonel Johnson had Robbin Lightfoot hung near Mrs. Southerlands and then shot him twice." One witness to this horror, Pvt. J.W. Harmon, CSA wrote in his own journal, "I felt sorry for this old negro, when seeing him hanging and dangling to that tree, which was a sight I never wished to see again."²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ More evidence that Weakley signed the Oath of Allegiance: the family was allowed to keep a horse. Jonathan Bailey's Spring, with its distinctive mineral water, was a favorite resort in the area about ten miles northeast of Florence.

²⁹⁸ Robbin or Robert Lightfoot was a Black man who had been kept enslaved by Elizabeth Childress; he was about 72 years old at this time. The musician, W.C. Handy's father and grandfather served at that Church Springs M.E. congregation. (Florence-Lauderdale Digital Archive) Weakley son John stayed at the household of wealthy merchant Neander Rice in 1860, where he, too, learned to become a merchant. There also was Mary Ragland who later served as Mecki Falconnet's bridesmaid.

On May 8, there were several items of notice. Dr. Hugh McVay “was tried today and sent to the army of Tennessee.” Dr. McVay, a well-to-do retired physician and a relative of former Gov. Hugh McVay, had long been considered a spy for the Federals. His frequent visits to the northern wounded officers at Mrs. Pauline Stewart’s house, where Col. Phillips also visited, allowed him to learn and share military information.²⁹⁹

A significant entry begins casually on this day: “Mecki Falconet went over the river with Willie Ragland. She said Sallie Weakley and Thomas Sloss are to be married this evening at 4 o’clk.” If this Sallie is Eliza’s own daughter, it seems a cool pronouncement; was not Eliza or Mr. Weakley invited? Transportation was clearly available, as Mecki and Willie had gone over for the ceremony. Eliza mentioned that Sallie stayed with friends there the night before. One day later, along with other news Eliza wrote that Mecki, Willie, and Mary Ragland (who had been the bride’s “waiter”) returned from Tuscumbia to have dinner with John Sloss, Sallie and Tomie.³⁰⁰

There were more skirmishes at Raccoon Branch. Colonel Johnson said he would cross over to fight, but Eliza did not believe him. The Yankees flooded back into Florence. “They foraged of the people in town – horses and men.” An officer appeared demanding dinner for ten men; she told him they would not get it. What follows is the longest and most garbled entry of her journal; events were chaotic. After supper, soldiers rang the front doorbell, which Mr. Weakley answered. They asked for cornmeal, and her husband said he would allow it. The locked storage room was the woman’s domain, so Eliza was the one to take them to get a bowlful of meal. At this point in events, Mr. Weakley was no longer present. Eliza had to not only keep the Yankees from breaking the door down, but also keep candles lighted to see in the storage room, and answer their demands, such as, where did she keep the whiskey? (She replied that Rebels did not drink.) Eliza sent Kate for the officials, and the men left only to return shortly after with others, demanding more supplies. At some point the men took her key and events became truly confused in her writing. With no help from anyone, Eliza was forced to go to the

²⁹⁹ According to the Official Records General Dodge wrote Col. Phillips with information supplied by Dr. McVay regarding Rebel troop movements on Jan. 23, 1864. McVay returned from his exile to live in Florence with his wife, Eliza. <http://armyoftennessee.wordpress.com> (accessed 10/31/17); 1870 Federal census.

³⁰⁰ In 1850, Thomas Henry Sloss and his brothers, James and Robert resided with their mother, Letitia V. Sloss. Their relationship to John Sloss is unclear.

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authorities for assistance. In her retelling over the years, the indignation and injustice of this incident were most likely repeated often.

Soldiers were exchanged under a flag of truce. Sallie visited from Tuscumbia for a time; Eliza took to walking with other ladies to “hunt news.” Her yellow hen had commenced hatching, and she again wrote in a surprisingly casual tone, “Mr. Weakley and Stafford [either the merchant Abel or Samuel Stafford] started for Louisville.” In order to leave town, much less enter northern territory, Gen. S.D. Weakley would have to travel via train and take the oath of allegiance to the United States. The most likely reasons for his departure are economic necessity so that he could maintain his land holdings near Chicago, Illinois, or to facilitate future financial endeavors.

50-year-old Eliza now managed her home with daughters Kate, Narcissa, Jem and the house “servants” in a time of constant upheaval, imposition and military action. Kate was about 15 years old. She went across the river with friends, stayed all night and “saw Tillie and Sallie Weakley (Sloss).” The girls freely visited in Tuscumbia with the Tennessee River serving as an informal boundary line. At this point, it was still seldom crossed even by Federal troops, and the south bank became “Dixie.” In Florence, the Yankees captured four Confederate men who were probably home on leave: Bob Martin, Dred Smith, Jessie Brooks, and Eddie Irvin. Soldiers searched houses in town, paying two visits to the Weakley to take the horse, but left without it both times. Certainly, the Weakleys had a letter of Federal protection.

An entry on the first of June quietly mentioned “Mrs. J. Sloss and Sallie over,” adding that Eliza and Nancy Glenn rode to Dutch Johns in Sister’s (Cornelia Burtwell) rockaway to buy seeds.



Rockaway Carriage

Eliza worked another square in the garden, setting out parsnips, cabbage and tomato plants.³⁰¹ She borrowed a cart multiple times to go to the mill for much-needed bushels of meal, corn, and loads of firewood. Later that month “Sallie came over with Mollie and spent the day here.” Eliza sent clothes over for Narcissa, the younger sister, perhaps a peace offering to reestablish family ties on both sides. Sallie Young had a concert and, although they did not attend, the family could hear it from the gallery of the house.

Yankees continued to dash in and out of town. Some were bushwhacked, and at least 10 were killed. A few came to the house asking for food, but Eliza staunchly refused to give them anything. Reports were heard in mid-June that Lee fought within four miles of Richmond, Forrest had taken 3,000 prisoners, 1,000 Yankees had been killed, and Gen. Leonidas Polk had died.³⁰²

In late June of that year, Eliza became determined to locate her old horse, perhaps taken and hidden from her. Reports came that it was out at Mrs. Cones’, and Eliza went down by the river to look for herself. Four days later, a horse answering its description was spotted on the island. Friends swam the horse across, and neighbor Dr. Hargraves kept it at his place, out of sight. There was plowing to do, wood to haul, and meal, corn, and flour to be purchased and loaded from the mill. Most of the men were gone, and 13-year-old Jimmie House, who likely wanted to do his part and enlist, drove Kate and Nora Price. Adding to the stress of the days, whooping cough was in the neighborhood.³⁰³ Eliza used her ability to buy, sell or barter goods on what became an almost daily basis: Irish potatoes from Mrs. Pryor, Kate and Sue Farmer brought 15 chickens from the Foundry, and she sold five chickens to Lizzie Rice, still somehow managing to get corn from Mrs. Armstead. Mr. Wilson drove Lucinda, Mrs. Asher and Kate out to Mr. Wilson’s in Mrs. Farmer’s cart; everyone now was sharing what they had. Eliza stayed home and had the carpet

³⁰¹ Eliza mentioned working in her “square” several times. This gardening concept, once again in fashion, allowed access to all plants while keeping one’s shoes on a dry path. She sowed corn and cucumbers across from the parlor window, where she watched them grow.

³⁰² These were most likely accounts of General Lee at Petersburg, Forrest’s amazing win at the Battle at Brice’s Crossroads, and the death of their planter cousin to Pres. James K. Polk, “Sewanee’s Fighting Bishop Gen. Leonidas Polk on June 14.”

³⁰³ Subsequent journal entries pick up from the pages in the UNA collection of Weakley.

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taken up. Josiah Pollock asked to borrow the valued horse, and Eliza consented on the condition that he spare some feed. There was no butter to be had anywhere, even for trade. Amidst this scramble for basic necessities, there was housework to do. After making the morning fire, slave Willie scoured the front and back porches, only breaking for five minutes at the neighbors' and to nurse her child. Family relations may have been on the mend at this time because Sallie came over with her daughter, Kate, and her sister, Cornelia. Eliza's reporting may have sounded mundane, but this event was a major family reunion.

On July 23, Yankees once again came into Florence. About 20 called at the house and brought Southern prisoners with them to dinner. These were not the common enlisted men. Mr. [William] Stroud's wife was a sister of Governor Brown and a sister to Christopher McEwins' first wife.³⁰⁴ Dinner was not a complete social success because one of the Tennessee soldiers went to the kitchen and tried to get a pan of light bread. Eliza refused him, taking it to the table to serve the guests, forgetting there was another pan of rolls left behind; that one was half eaten before she returned to the kitchen. Worse, a captain helped himself to one middling, a ham or shoulder, as he left. Undeterred from their social life, the girls Kate, Sallie, and friend Ida took Mr. Wade's buggy to Alex Coffee's estate, Ardoyne, about four miles west of town. This was a rare treat. Captain Coffee, now in poor health, had returned from army service to continue managing the nearby Globe Cotton Factory on Cypress Creek, of which he was part owner with Martin and Weakley. After the destruction of the factory, Coffee, who was only about 38, took up farming full-time.³⁰⁵

Eliza could occasionally have friends in for dinner, but she used her daily entries to mainly report the real hardships of life, such as purchasing oats, wheat, and other essentials. In town, Linden Young and Dean shot someone named Grab, but without civil authorities, no action was taken. As expected, Yankees returned on August 25, and this time took her horse. Captain Battree assured her, on his word of honor as a gentleman, that the

³⁰⁴ Joseph Emerson Brown was the 42nd governor of Georgia; he married Elizabeth Grisham. Her sister Delilah married William Stroud. Christopher McEwin (McEwen) (McCuin) and his first wife were not noted.

³⁰⁵ Alexander Donelson Coffee was a son of much-admired Gen. John Coffee, early surveyor and friend of Andrew Jackson. Alex was also Andrew Jackson's great-nephew, further extending the prominent family connections. His daughter later married Edward O'Neal, Jr., son of the governor. The Florence high school later was named for Alex and a local hospital was named for his daughter Eliza.

horse would be returned the next day. She was left with a mule and never mentioned the horse in her journal again.

Later in August, Yankees returned. Three searched her house, albeit politely. On the same day, General Roddey led Confederates (“our men” to Eliza), across the river to Pulaski. Temporarily free from the chaos of military occupation by either side, her circle of ladies (Mrs. McAlester, Mrs. Hanner, and Mrs. Claiborne) sewed and took supper together. Jimmie Bristole came over on the 30th to share the news that Fort Morgan had surrendered to the enemy after days of bombardment. By this time, Eliza had learned to live with Federals marching in and out of her life, but “they” still were the enemy.

Trips to the mill for corn, meal, wheat, and flour became part of daily life. Bundles of fodder could sometimes be located on nearby farms. She bought a ham at Bainbridge and tried to buy bacon from the earlier captured supply wagons. The ladies met at the court house with sheets, bandages and light bread for “our” wounded. More bandages were needed when the Yankees returned on September 10, and a skirmish took place near Alex Coffee’s with wounded men on both sides. Two friends started toward Athens and met General Forrest’s cavalry the next day, and, on her way home from the Presbyterian Church, Eliza met more cavalymen on their way into town. By September 21, the entire area had become filled with not just cavalymen, but infantrymen who swam the 500 yards or so across the river, and flatboats transporting artillery and ordnance wagons. Eliza did not indicate that she attended, but General Forrest and 3000 men paraded through Florence. The general rode King Phillip, an earlier gift from grateful Huntsville citizens. Locals (who were now made up almost solely of women, children, the infirm, and the elderly) came to cheer them on to victory. General Roddey’s brigade soon joined forces with them, instigating the invasion into Tennessee.

On the 28th Eliza, Martha Walker, and her niece Mecki Falconnet started for Pulaski, Tennessee. They stayed overnight at Mr. Kersey’s near Taylor Springs about 15 miles northeast of town. The next morning, the women met a wounded Confederate soldier, C. Johnson, who was returning to his home. He reported to the women that some Confederate wounded had been fired into by bushwhackers. The other ladies suggested turning back, but Eliza wanted to continue. They changed their minds and direction, however, and decided to head east for Athens, which was at least 30 miles farther than their original planned trip. By nightfall they reached the home of Mrs. Sloss, where they heard Yankees were in Athens. They made their way home the next day. Martha and Mecki brought Kinki Ferrell in their wagon. At dark, in heavy rain, they arrived at the home of Judge Sydney C. Posey. The ladies arrived in Florence in continued heavy

rain around nine in the evening. Eliza mentioned seeing Mr. Kirkman (probably Thomas Kirkman) in Rogersville.³⁰⁶ and they saw Rev. C.M. Coffee, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church minister in Center Star. Eliza gave no purpose for such a grueling expedition, which had taken three full days and nights.

Safely back home, harsh War realities were once again apparent with the funeral of Capt. Jim Kirkman. He was buried at Mrs. Jackson's. On the 3rd, Eliza's nephew, Capt. John Burtwell's, brigade came through town along with General Forrest's cavalry. The hard, driving rain continued.

Now, in mid-October, Eliza still did not mention Mr. Weakley. She continued making all household and financial decisions to the best of her ability, noting the purchase of a cow for \$65. She may have called in some debts or used cash she'd managed to keep hidden. Her daughter, Kate, and a friend went to Brother's for oats, but the horse balked and would not pull; the wagon was left behind. Meanwhile, civil, well-behaved Yankees came in and out of the town and the Weakley house unopposed, capturing Confederates wherever they could. Two days later, however, a Yankee came into the kitchen and stole cooking utensils. She tried to take the items away from him, when fortunately, Tom Walker appeared, and the Yankee left with empty hands – that time.

Believing themselves to be in no danger, Mrs. Hood and Annie crossed the river, but were arrested by the Yankees and kept overnight at headquarters in Col. Armistead's house.³⁰⁷ Food sources became slimmer. Mecki and Kate returned from the mill empty-handed; there was nothing there to buy. Eliza's slaves Cloe and Milly hauled two loads of wood. Enterprising Mr. Morris returned from Nashville with brown sugar (11 pounds for 50¢ per pound), two books for Jem, and a pair of gloves (\$3.00). Eliza Weakley's source of credit or cash was dwindling, but not completely gone. Mecki and Kate went out to Brother's to find Yankees taking his potatoes, turnips, and anything they could dig up. The soldiers stole clothes which they strapped on their horses as they fled, but the girls

³⁰⁶ Eliza never mentioned the purpose of the trip nor its degree of success. Irish-born Thomas Kirkman arrived in Florence in early 1820; he was a successful merchant who had invested in iron works. He owned 35,000 acres of farmland and his stable contained the race horse "Peytona" among others. For more about the family and times of those with great wealth see Rohr, *School Girl in Paris*.

³⁰⁷ This may have been Scottish-born Mrs. Mary Hood, then about 66, and Anna Foster, 16, who resided with her. Armistead is most likely either Robert or George.

pulled the clothing off. The cousins immediately went to headquarters in town to get protection for the farm.

On Sunday, October 29, Yankees left hurriedly because they knew Rebels planned to cross the river that evening. At least one regiment of General Hood's men came in at dark. "The ladies ran down the street yelling and clapping their hands." For Eliza's part she "cooked until 12 o'clk." She went to the mill with Mr. Bates the next day, and was able to buy one bushel of meal, another of bran, and nearly half a bushel of flour; she fed soldiers all day. She got one dollar's worth of beef from Susan Bliss, the Irish-born wife of the druggist, and continued to cook. A few of Wheeler's scouts came for breakfast on Tuesday, and Eliza wrote of Oscar Weakley and Jimsey Webster by name. By Wednesday there was much to observe at the river as everyone walked down to see the newly completed pontoon bridge. Colonel Cunningham showed them the facility and even suggested they walk onto the island to view the bridge from there.



Pontoon Bridge

General Pierre G.T. Beauregard had met with President Davis in Augusta, Georgia on October 2, and was given command of the western theater, including Hood's Army of Tennessee. The remarkable Beauregard had ordered the firing on Fort Sumter and triumphed at the First Battle of Manassas. He arrived in Florence two days later to the elation of the citizens. Eliza prepared a bouquet for him but was unable to see him, so she sent one later by her daughter Sallie Sloss.

Eliza did not take up her journal again until almost the end of the year. During that time, Florence truly became overrun with soldiers of Roddey's and Forrest's commands after they recaptured the Federal garrison.³⁰⁸ Nathan Bedford Forrest and his men found themselves

³⁰⁸ She may have written entries, but those dates are in neither the UNC nor the UNA collections. The subsequent set is from the UNA collection.

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serenaded by Hood's infantrymen, and he responded with an encouraging oration. By October 30, 1864, General Hood's Army of the Tennessee, made up of some 30,000 men, began to assemble, horses, mules, and supplies. This was not entirely bad for the soldiers, who were welcomed with wild enthusiasm. The officers also found Florence attractive; just one hour after being involved in a nearby skirmish, Capt. James Hall received a ticket to a ball given by General Stephen D. Lee's staff. He quickly borrowed clothes from other officers and appeared decent enough to appear in fine company. Hall, "a perfect stranger" managed to secure introductions to all the ladies. "I am perfectly carried away by the fascinations of the young ladies of Florence. They took our hearts by storm... Besides they are pretty and graceful. A soldier passes a green spot occasionally." Another night he "was chatting with a bevy of young ladies while Generals Lee and Ed Johnson and other officers heard splendid music by a brass band, violins, guitars, etc. in a large, well-lighted hall." Hall and the others knew full well that the next day might be a long march.³⁰⁹

By late November, the weather punished civilians and soldiers alike with the early snows and lingering, harsh cold which continued throughout the winter. By the 20th the last Confederates had crossed the river; the next day Hood's army of 39,000 left to invade central Tennessee. Eliza recorded no news of Hood's advance north, nor did she mention the returning remnants of the once great army three weeks later after crushing defeats at Franklin and Nashville.

Eliza Weakley wrote next in December of 1864. Among the small memos in her diary, she recorded it was cold, then very cold, followed by very cold.³¹⁰ The many trips to the mill for flour and meal were made even more frequent with the added orders for more loads of firewood. Frank Foster's house burned one night in the midst of the harsh weather. Mrs. Foster, according to this account, was taken immediately to Dr. Brock's without any clothing on her and then she went to stay with her sister-in-law, Mrs. Wash Foster. (Mrs. Foster's niece, teenager Sallie Independence Foster, wrote more delicately in her account that Mrs. Foster ran down the street in her "nocturnal garments" calling for help.) The house was not a total loss. Neighbors save furniture from the parlor and Mrs. Foster's room. It was assumed by all that the fire was no accident, and, one early morning later at 3 am, Dr. Brock's garden house burst into flames. Doctor

³⁰⁹ Letter from James Hall to his sister, 11/4/1864. Bolling Hall Family Papers 1777-1892, ADAH, Call # LPR 39.

³¹⁰ This section begins with the UNC collection.

Brock's Negro woman discovered the fire as it began; someone had wrapped straw into an old dress and threw it into the structure. Eliza's tone suggested that these kinds of events occurred frequently.

The usual activities of housekeeping continued in mid-December, and the parlor was cleaned. Eliza still kept at least two people slaves; Cloe washed windows and Louis worked at the carpet. The news spread that General Hood was falling back, and the sick and wounded were brought into town. "Gunboats started shelling town whilst we were at dinner... Today is Christmas."

One day later, Federal gunboats started for Bainbridge and were fired on by Rebel batteries. The gunboats retreated. The next day, however, the boats were better prepared and fired back, killing two men. Amidst these military actions, Eliza continued her daily activities as best she could: she sewed a shift and went to the mill to secure one bushel of meal, two of corn and nearly a peck of flour. She paid \$8 for two loads of wood, but badly needed more. Yankees returned to town and examined her mule. They declined to take it, however. Mecki and Kate took Mrs. Williams' cart to the mill for supplies while Eliza stayed home and took up the parlor carpet. Sally visited; Eliza gave her \$50 of Confederate money.

In mid-January of 1865, Yankees passed through Florence without lingering. Their numbers increased daily. Some stopped to pester the household for food, so Eliza sent to Sister's for the guard (for protection). Her Yankee guards managed to stay for breakfast two or three times before departing for Waterloo in western Lauderdale County with ginger cakes and biscuits in their knapsacks.³¹¹ The bitter cold continued, bringing still more snow and ice – enough, in fact, to "put up" in the ice house.

Finally, after an absence of eight months, Mr. Weakley returned on the 27th. Any emotional tone of the Weakleys' reunion is unknown. Mr. Weakley owed his wife greatly for her tirelessly work keeping the household afloat in his extended absence. Not everyone was happily settled in the new routine, as Milly, a woman they enslaved, became "impudent," possibly because Mr. Weakley was home and she felt a new empowerment. On the following day, Eliza "drove her off the lot and told her that she should not put her foot on the place again – she took all the bed clothes and her baby."

³¹¹ The men joined what would become 27,000 soldiers under Maj. Gen. James Wilson, gathering in western Lauderdale County to head south through central Alabama. The goal was to take Selma's ordnance and naval foundries, shipyard, gunpowder works, and destroy the city.

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Women were quickly coming to terms with the new social order and living conditions of this time. Traveling, at least, was now easier; Mrs. Sloss (Sallie?) and Mrs. John Sloss planned to be on the first boat for St. Louis, and Eliza and Lucinda went over the river to visit Mecki after supper. Eliza heard Harriett Foster and Maggie Irvine, both from prominent families in town, came home in a Yankee ambulance escorted by five or six Yankee soldiers.

By mid-February of 1865, Eliza's notations once again became scarce. The dining room carpet was taken up and the Venetian window blinds were scoured.³¹² On the 17th Yankees returned. Two came to the house for bread, one of them attempting to steal the key to the smokehouse. The men did worse damage by burning the ferryboat, which was a terrible inconvenience to those who regularly crossed the river. Eliza endured, continuing with cleaning: she scoured the dining room carpet, dining room tables and chairs, and the presses.

Captain Donnelly's boat brought goods and arranged to carry passengers, which gave the people a sense of order and normalcy.³¹³ Eliza's last entries before the War's end offered only the information that many citizens left with the Yankees in early March of 1865. She mentioned feeding 13 Yankees for supper one night and tending to her garden. Eliza wrote only a few more times later in June after the surrender.



Eliza Weakley continued to write after the conclusion of the War. Reconstruction days were less settled than ever and would remain so for years to come. Eliza threatened the impudent Cloe with asking the Yankees to give her a good whipping. Her son-in-law, Major Mastin, took tea at Mrs. O'Neal's. A friend offered to lend Mecki his buggy to send for Mr. Smith to come to town to so that her baby might be baptized. Ophelia Smith, Pauline Stewart's daughter, who helped nurse wounded soldiers of both sides and saw their town under fire, later wrote, "I must say we had trying times through the War, and no one but God knows what other and myself endured."³¹⁴

It may have been painful for Eliza Weakley to write about her family and personal matters. She mentioned her daughter, Jem Weakley,

³¹² The following small section is from the UNC collection.

³¹³ This section is from UNA.

³¹⁴ Weakley Papers, Florence Lauderdale Public Library.

as leading her classmates at school, going for errands and occasionally sewing. Of her other daughters, Narcissa was mentioned only once as she went across the river. Kate made trips to the mill several times, bought a new hat, and accompanied Eliza to church when she attended. She and her daughter Sallie seemed to make some sort of peace. At no time in the journal did Eliza ever mention by name her daughter Ann, who lived in Huntsville with a new baby, and only twice did she mention her son, John, who was away in the army. Like everyone rebuilding their lives, recovery came slowly for S.D. and Eliza Weakley. The 1870 census showed them at home with Narcissa and Ella (Jem). Although the heads of household of his neighbors were listed in the census with an employment of some kind, his was “no occupation” with real estate valued at \$3,000 and personal estate of \$1,700. His was a broken world, and he was only 58 years old.

“The angel of death threw a white robe around the fair form” of daughter Ann Mastin in 1866, who died at the age of 26. She left behind two daughters, Annie and Bessie, for her husband to raise. The Weakley’s only son, John B. Weakley, partnered with his brother-in-law, Thomas Sloss, in a “Goods and Grocery” mercantile partnership in 1866. He worked as a traveling salesman and established himself as a successful farmer. John died as the result of runaway wagon wreck near his rural home in 1898, leaving six surviving children.³¹⁵

General Weakley and his wife seemed not to part with their daughters easily. One can only guess about Ann America Weakley’s marriage to William Mastin in Huntsville rather than Florence, but the events surrounding Sallie’s marriage to Tom Sloss were almost certainly strained. The general appeared to put his foot down regarding the marriage of their daughter, Narcissa, as reported in 1870 in the local newspaper. According to that account, Capt. William Millican of Paducah approached Weakley, “a millionaire” for the hand of his daughter. Millican gave references of good character, but, to the General, Millican simply would not do. The young couple defied the Weakleys. Escorted by a friend, Narcissa crossed the river to join William, only to discover that Alabama laws of the time made it illegal for a young lady not yet 21 to be married without parental consent. The couple then fled to friends in Columbia, Tennessee where a sympathetic minister performed the ceremony.³¹⁶ Years later, Narcissa returned to her family’s home on Court Street when

³¹⁵ Weakley Papers, lauderdalegenweb.com, (accessed 10/15/17).

³¹⁶ Jill Garrett, *History*, 57. Mr. and Mrs. Weakley’s prayers for the success of their daughter were most likely well-founded. Letters in the UNC collection indicate that Narcissa and her husband often struggled financially.

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she was ill. In 1889, her sister Jem brought back the remains of Captain Millican. After a long illness, Narcissa passed away in 1929, leaving behind four adult children and her sister, Jem.³¹⁷

Sallie and Tom were listed in the 1870 census, he 34, Sarah, 24 with three young daughters, Eliza, 5; Sarah, 3; and, baby Letilda, age one, named for his mother. Baby Sallie, at three, “the pet and idol of their home, the sunshine and happiness” died in November of that year, joining her baby sister already called by the angels. Thomas died in 1874; the 1880 census showed Sarah living back at home with her parents and only one child, Eliza, now 14 years old. Sallie Weakley Sloss lived 21 years after her husband, dying in 1895.³¹⁸

Even General and Eliza Weakley could find little fault with Kate’s choice of husband, Col. Thomas H. Logwood of Memphis. During the War, he equipped a company of Lancers who served with General Forrest’s regiments, “a devoted friend of Forrest’s and a man of great personal courage.” Moreover, Logwood was “a social, genial, liberal hearted man, full of the sunshine of life, with malice for none and good will for all.” Kate became the third wife of this well-regarded man in 1869. After some time in the north, they were called back to Florence where their child Henry, about 18 months old, was sick. He died at the Weakley home. Mr. Logwood became quite ill with consumption, and he was cared for at the Weakley home place in Florence. This left Kate to care for the one remaining of their three children. She, “her name synonymous with intelligence, refinement and gracious good humor” married again in 1887 to Col. William Moore, and moved to Nashville. Kate lived until 1915.³¹⁹

Samuella Jemina prepared for her future by graduating from the Female Synodical College in Florence, to which her father had contributed large amounts of money. Had she paid attention to the hazards of nuptials and married life her sisters experienced, Miss Jem might have been better served. On New Year’s Eve of 1878 “leaning on the arm of her distinguished father, dressed in a beautiful walking suit of wine-colored camels’ hair and velvet, with hat and gloves to match... sparkling with magnificent diamond ornaments,” at Trinity Episcopal Church in Florence,

³¹⁷ FLPL.

³¹⁸ Federal censuses; FLPL; Florence City Cemetery.

³¹⁹ John A Wyeth. *That Devil Forrest*. eBook, 1899, no page. John Hallum, *Diary of an Old Lawyer*. eBook, 1895, 16. Comp. Family Adventures. *Early Alabama Marriages*. (Shreveport, LA. J&W Enterprises, 1991), Vol. 9, 111; Gandrud, *Notices*, 592.

Jem married Charles Gayle Figures, nephew of newspaperman William Figures of Huntsville. That evening, the couple participated in the “Grand New Years Hop” in Tuscumbia and started for St. Louis the next day. It is not known what became of Charles; later census records reveal Jem living as single at her parents’ home under her maiden name. In 1889-1890 she served as enrolling clerk for the Alabama Senate. One of her nephews served as the mayor of Florence and another as an Alabama Supreme Court justice; she, however, was considered very eccentric. Wearing long black dresses and black hats, her matching pearl-handled umbrella struck more than one mischievous child who dared to approach too closely. Jem remained single and outlived her entire family, passing away at 96 in 1951.³²⁰

General Weakley, in poor health, collapsed with apparent heart issues while walking downtown on February 3, 1897, and died that same day. Eliza Weakley died one year later at the age of 83 on February 9, 1898. The first paragraph of her death notice in the local newspaper listed her Revolutionary War antecedents and her father, who settled before statehood in 1818. The next words recalled that Eliza:

all through life was noted for her unswerving friendship and straightforward honesty ... Her devotion to her friends was remarkable – her house was always a home to any friend in need ... Her love and devotion to her children was phenomenal and were fully reciprocated. Mrs. Weakley was a woman of decided individuality – not halfway in any thing – one could always tell where she stood.³²¹

The obituary described a woman who steadily tended to her duties as she saw them. She spoke frankly to her friends and family, and if her attitude seemed difficult to them at times, loyalty won out. Her voice was firm and resolute, reflecting bravery and perseverance in such remarkable times.

³²⁰ Florence-Lauderdale County Digital Archives, Who’s Who in Old Florence #31, (accessed 10/24/17).

³²¹ Weakley Papers, FLPL.

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Olivia Moore O'Neal (1819-1909)

I would give five worlds to see you.

Many women wrote letters to loved ones during the War years when their men were serving in the military far from home. Very few letters have been saved; this small set, however, survived to share the pleas of women in the Tennessee Valley. Olivia O'Neal in Florence, Alabama, wrote to her husband, Edward, about family activities, local actions that threatened to ruin their town of less than 1,400 people with each invasion, and her deep anguish of being parted from her "sweet, sweet husband."

Olivia Moore married Edward O'Neal in the "bloom of her early teens" in an elegant Huntsville setting. Edward was handsome and, even then, distinguished by his intellect. There were eight attendants at the wedding. Festivities lasted for three days with "infare" parties among the families.³²² The O'Neals later moved to Florence, where Edward maintained a law practice. They lived with their children on North Court Street in a house purchased in 1854.



O'Neal House

³²² *Confederate Veteran Magazine*, February 1910, 86.

Lauderdale County

In 1860, the O'Neal family consisted of Alfred, 18 a student at LaGrange College; Rebecca (called Puss), 16; Edward, Jr., 13; Julia, 10; Emmet, 6; and, daughter Georgie, age 4. (Two children, John and Mary, had not survived infancy.) At 41 years old, Mr. O'Neal valued his estate and property at over \$30,000, including the monetary value of the 19 people he kept enslaved. Olivia was 38 years old.

Shortly after the start of the War in June of 1861, Edward (with the rank of captain) and his two oldest sons, Allie about 20 years old and 17-year-old Eddie, left Florence with the Confederate army. (Florence proudly called the three "The Fighting O'Neals.")³²³ By the time Olivia began writing these letters, Edward had risen to the rank of Colonel in the 26th Alabama Infantry.

The early months of the Civil War were relatively quiet in Florence, Alabama. During this time (from January of 1862 until May of 1863), Gen. Sterling Wood, Commander of the Confederate District of North Alabama, made his headquarters there.³²⁴ In February, three Federal gunboats chased five supply-laden Confederate boats upriver. The supply boats remained unmolested and were said to be cheered on from both sides of the river.



Brig. Gen. Sterling Wood, CSA

³²³ Edward took three companies of recently recruited men, including his own son, Eddie, north, where they were involved in most of the Peninsula Campaigns, including the invasion of Pennsylvania under Gen. Rodes.

³²⁴ General Sterling A.M. Wood of Florence had organized Co. K, the Florence Guards, as part of the 7th Alabama Infantry. His leadership was not always firm, and he resigned October of 1863, one month after the Battle of Chickamauga.

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Although Union gunboats had been seen at least twice on the river, only 500 men (with two artillery pieces) were on duty to defend this crucial site of navigation on the Tennessee River. The War edged closer to Florence when hundreds of wounded Confederate soldiers were sent there to recover after losses at Forts Henry and Donelson of February of 1862. The few town hotels quickly filled with wounded men, overflowing into the factory buildings and outdoor tents scattered around town.



Firing on Gunboats

Active in most of General Lee's major campaigns, Olivia's husband Edward was severely wounded at the Battle of Seven Pines in June of 1862. He was sent to Aberdeen, Mississippi to recover, and Olivia travelled there to personally nurse him. She observed miserable conditions during this time, witnessing horrific deaths first-hand; she was justified in her worry for her husband and sons. Olivia returned to the relative calm of Florence, glad to be home with her children. This calm was only a lull. That June, soldiers of the Ohio 9th camped across the river at Tuscumbia for three weeks, guarding bridges and protecting the newly repaired railroad tracks. One, Constantin Grebner, commented on the arrest of Reverend Mitchell, a Presbyterian minister who led his congregation in a prayer for the president, Jefferson Davis while Federal troops were in attendance. That act did not go unnoticed or unpunished; Mitchell was sent to the workhouse at Nashville, then later transferred to prison in Alton,

Illinois.³²⁵ The Ohio soldier noted that occasionally, “fires broke out in Rebel houses. In our honest way we helped with rescue and salvage. We carried beds out-of-doors, for example and threw glasses and porcelain out of windows.” This Ohioan seemed not to comprehend the exacerbated hostility the Union faced as assaults on individual soldiers increased. He added, however, that, because so many local “arch-secessionists” had fled, the soldiers were sharing their “delectable” U.S. rations with hungry women and children.³²⁶

Olivia’s first letter to her husband is dated January 12, 1863.³²⁷ Edward O’Neal had been home on furlough only to leave the previous week. “It grieves me to give you up. I feel so perfectly lost and lonely” and “time hangs so heavily.” She had heard of his whereabouts through Judge Walker’s letter; he stopped first in Athens, then visited in Huntsville before continuing to Richmond.³²⁸ Seymour Irvine was also on his way to Richmond and would carry her letter with him. Alex, she wrote, was conducting business as usual at his law office, and she was up-to-date with the income from Mr. Foster and John Simpson. (Olivia mentions “Alex” several times without identifying him; he was most likely a trusted friend or neighbor. The income she discussed may have been rent from land leases).

Olivia anticipated facing complicated and important decisions soon in regards to the people her husband kept enslaved. The horrors of the

³²⁵ According to local commentators, Rev. Mitchell’s act was simply that of praying for President Davis. According to the Ohio soldier, Mitchell also asked for God’s wrath “on the heads of the Yankee hordes whose presence was polluting the South.” Grebner, *We Were the 9th*, 105. Born in Ireland, Reverend Mitchell’s second wife was the widow, Martha, daughter of Irish-born James and his wife Sarah (Moore) Jackson at Forks of Cypress.

³²⁶ Grebner, *We Were*, 104, 105.

³²⁷ Olivia O’Neal letters are from the collection of Edward Asbury O’Neal, Wilson Special Collections Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Not all of these few letters have exact dates; they are used here for the information in their contents., *passim*.

³²⁸ This was Richard Wilde Walker, son of John Williams Walker, and grandson of Huntsville’s LeRoy Pope. His brother Percy served in the Alabama congress, and brother Leroy Pope Walker had been the first Secretary of War for the Confederacy. Their later cousins would include authors Walker Percy and William Alexander Percy. These families are masterfully examined in William Wyatt-Brown’s books *Percys of Mississippi*, *House of Percy*, and *Honor and Violence in the Old South*.

African slave trade had been easy for White enslavers and traffickers to ignore (and inflict) since its advent, but its complexity would soon become an issue for everyone. Olivia wrote that Mother and Willie planned to leave for Arkansas, taking the people they kept enslaved with them. Brother George reassuringly told Olivia that the O'Neal slaves would never leave them. She hired-out one man as day laborer, but feared that hiring out Ben by the day might be a mistake. Mr. Grisham wanted to hire him for \$85, "if I can get him to go, I fear he will not go."

New Advertisements.

Negroes for Hire.

THE undersigned, administrator, with the Will annexed, of Elizabeth Childress, deceased, late of Lauderdale County, Ala., will on Monday the 2nd day of January, 1859, offer for hire, for the year 1860, at public outcry, at the Court House doors in the town of Florence, the following slaves, to-wit: Charles, 44 years old, a first rate bricklayer; Jim, 35 years old, also a first rate brick layer; Robert Lightfoot, 68 years old, a good shoe maker; John Brown, 42 years old; Beverly, 24 years old, Elisha, 11 years old; Jack, 8 years old, Caroline, 45 years old, a good cook; Sarah, 20 years old, a good cook; Amanda, 37 years old, Ellen, 12 years old; Susan, 9 years old; Emma, 14 years old; also Bob and John, 6 and 5 years old, to go with their mothers. The above mentioned slaves will be hired on a credit of 12 months, with two good and approved securities.

WM. H. PRICE, Jr.,
Adm'r of E. Childress, with the will annexed,
Dec. 21, 1859. 3w-mn

That evening Olivia paid calls on lady friends who all believed Edward could have stayed in Florence for at least a month longer before returning to duty in Virginia. They assured her that a promotion was imminent for Edward. Alfred O'Neal, their son who lived at home at the time, suggested that if his father became a brigadier general, he himself might rise to adjunct general. Son Allie thought the Yankees would soon be ruined in Virginia.³²⁹ Olivia closed, "Do take good care of your dear self my sweet husband, I sincerely pray you will be spared to return to me in safety."

The next letter of February 3, 1863 reported the winter days as gloomy and rainy, and Olivia had not attended church the previous Sunday. Now Tuesday, Puss and the children were gathered cozily around the fireplace in her room popping popcorn. Her dear husband should know

³²⁹ Alfred O'Neal spent the early years of the War with Ordinance off Mobile Bay. He later led a company of sharpshooters at the Battle of Wilderness in Virginia. As a major, he was captured and sent to Johnson Island.

they were enjoying “the quiet of their fireside,” a phrase so often used to express the ideal of family at home before the hearth. She had not heard from him since he’d departed from Huntsville one month or so before. Reports from others that he was in fine health did nothing to alleviate her worry. Local news included the usual activities of a small community. George Foster was now married to a Kennedy girl, and Mrs. Wash Foster gave a large reception for them. In that letter, Olivia commented on local citizens and their struggle with the idea of conscription – their *own* conscription, that is. There was no possibility of avoiding the draft, although the shoemaker informed the recruiting officers that he had “clinical lungs.” Their reply was that “nothing was the matter with his lungs, and all he needed was work and they intended to give him a-plenty of that to do.”³³⁰ Mr. Fant was conscripted and said there was “only one head needed to carry on at the factory.”³³¹

Olivia reported other news about their property in her letter. She hired Ben out at the foundry to Mr. Grisham, where he would have a first-rate home. Mr. Grisham gave \$75 and good clothing. Dan went out by the day, and Bettie was pleased with her new home (Betty’s identity is unknown; she may have been Dan’s wife or relative). Despite the hardship and complications involved, Olivia made plans to visit her husband and Eddie in Richmond by mid-April, assuming the armies were still in winter quarters.

Olivia’s plans changed. In a letter of April 23, 1863, Olivia reported rumors of many Yankees marching toward them. A state of alarm had been aroused by reports two days earlier of an alleged sighting of the 26th Ohio. Yankees were now rallying nearby, however, and Olivia could see their tents 500 yards away (the width of the river) in Tusculumbia. They turned women and children out of their homes, burning and destroying as they went. It was “outrageous to be shelling innocent women and children.” Shells had been fired into Florence. Nearly all the men had gone to the army by this time, save for a few elderly men. Six Yankees crossed

³³⁰ James Phelan, Olivia’s brother-in-law, wrote Jefferson Davis in 1862, “It seems as if nine tenths of the youngsters of the land whose relatives are conspicuous in society, wealthy or influential, obtain some safe perch where they can doze with their head under their wings.” Moreover, he offered, “Partiality, favoritism, perhaps bribery and corruption sustain this acknowledged evil.” Qtd. in Christopher Lyle McIlwain, *Civil War in Alabama*. (Tuscaloosa, AL: Univ. Press, 2016), 98.

³³¹ This was probably Charles Fant, one of the co-owners of the former Foster Woolen Mills. He married Louisa, daughter of George Washington Foster.

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under a flag of truce and were met by Mr. Irvine and Judge H_____, who were forced to admit there was no real civil or military authority there, and the city of Florence would surrender. Federals responded with a warning: if they encountered any resistance, the town would be burned. Everyone, including Olivia, expected this to happen and dreaded it.

Regarding Edward's promotion, Olivia wrote, "I fear justice will not be done you. If not, I think you should resign and come home. You have served your county faithfully well," followed her cry, "I can't stand as much now as you." The anguish in her letter was real, "I would give five worlds to see you. I am frightened nearly to death to see you and my sweet Eddie." Then Olivia, now about 45 years old, added she "has a sweet secret to tell you, sweet husband, guess what it is in your next letter."

Olivia wrote a letter on May 11 beginning with news they had heard of a great battle in Virginia with a glorious victory, "Oh, the agony of my heart." This was Chancellorsville and General Lee's greatest battle thus far, taking place the previous week in May. Mail from Huntsville was not running, and she was "sad and aching to hear from him." She would go to Virginia with Alex, if only she could. Everyone in Florence considered Edward long overdue for a promotion; had he not done more than his duty for two years? "I have seen men staying home here accumulating wealth even younger than yourself while you have sacrificed everything for your country." Olivia urged her husband to resign and return. "It seems to me if you can only return in safety with my two boys, I shall feel that I am a blessed mortal." Her letter continued with news that danger encroached upon those remaining at home when, on the Yankees' last raid, they burned the corn and wheat fields until they were run off by General Forrest. If the enemy came again, they would all certainly be ruined.

Olivia prepared this letter for Capt. Jim Crow to take with him along with a pair of pants she had sewed for Eddie. She shared the heartbreak of the community on the loss of Huntsville's Gen. Edward Tracy. He was killed on May 1 at the Battle of Fort Gibson, age 30.³³² Home life was quiet for a few days. The school year was ending and examinations would be heard. Julia prepared for recitations and Professor Rice declared Emmet a great scholar.³³³ Olivia was teaching Georgie at home. She shared news

³³² Some of his letters, along with those of his wife, Ellen Steele Tracy, are included in another chapter.

³³³ Septimus Primus Rice, according to Dr. Young, was a strict schoolmaster who "was acquainted with no macadamized roads to learning." Rice was a scholar who read Greek and Mathematics and possessed the always useful ability to be "a fine leader of congregational singing." Young, Robert A. *Reminiscences*. (Nashville:

that one of the Weakley girls, Ann America, was to marry William F. Mastin of Huntsville. It “would be a splendid chance for her.” The Weakley family was well-known, but the Mastin family in Huntsville was quite prominent. (Olivia included a comment about Sallie Weakley that remains unreadable. More information about Miss Sallie appears in the chapters detailing her journal and that of her mother, Mary Weakley.) Olivia continued this letter through the 15th, expressing affection for her new neighbors who occupied the former home of her brother, Judge John Moore. He and his wife Letitia had departed for Richmond.

Meanwhile, mounted soldiers dashed in under Federal General James Negley in mid-May, destroying the ferries at the river and boats moored along the banks. Factory owners were then assessed a “tax” by General Negley, which locals heatedly presumed to be extortion to keep their property from being destroyed. On May 28, their true vulnerability was exposed with the Federal raid by Col. Florence Cornyn. His mission was to destroy the cotton, woolen, and tannery works that supplied cloth and leather goods to the Confederate armies. Cornyn and his men of the “Destroying Angels” had, just the month before, devastated LaGrange College across the river, destroying the library of 4000 books and burning all the buildings. His current mission included destroying grist and flour mills, the iron foundry, and a gun factory – everything in the area that aided the Southern war effort. Colonel Jesse Phillips then ordered his men to search every house for contraband items and ammunition, then set fire to some of the older, empty houses. Everyone expected them to burn the entire town.

On the 29th, Olivia wrote an account of the terrifying events of the previous day. They were alarmed and shocked to realize that Yankees were within one or two miles, several regiments of them, “on us before we knew it. Saying a great deal for our pickets!” Shells flew across Olivia’s yard and through one end of the smoke house. The artillery stationed at Florence raced past the O’Neal house to meet the enemy. Martin and Henrietta [Aunt Retta] the cook, urged her to take the children to safety. Daughter Puss was in Huntsville, so Olivia ran with Emmet, Julia, and Georgie to Mr. Simpson’s cellar (now Colby Hall) because Edward had warned her never to stay in the house if shelling occurred. In her haste, Olivia tripped on the steps of the cellar and the children half-carried her inside. The shelling soon subsided, and enemy soldiers flooded into every

MEP Press, 1900), 78. eBook. Rice later served as president of the college; in 1872, under his leadership, it became State Normal School at Florence. There is currently a building named for Rice at the University of North Alabama.

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street breaking down fences, searching houses and trunks for arms, they said. She returned to her house, where two soldiers demanded to search inside. They made their way upstairs to the second floor, and, although she saw them go through the papers in her little desk, they seemed not to have taken anything.

This letter was filled with news. Olivia had heard from Aunt Matt that Edward had been slightly wounded in Virginia. There was no news of Eddie, but she was thankful for the care and protection sparing them. “No one can image the deep agony of my heart.” No news had come from Alfie since the fighting at Vicksburg. Olivia seemed not concerned for herself and the children as much as for her “dear husband, I suffer such anxiety all the time about my sweet noble boys.” If only “we may meet again to spend the balance of our lives together in peace and happiness.” “Come home,” was her message once again.

Olivia included other alarming events of that day. After the Yankees had departed, three White children and Black child were at the front gate when they saw a drunken Yankee soldier approaching on horseback. The children ran inside and shut the door behind them. The Yankee dismounted, knocked on the door, and demanded to know why they had shut the door on him. He threatened to burn the house down. Olivia was frightened out of her wits, but the “kind providence of God intervened in that hour of peril and terror” in the form of Dr. Robert Young. In a day when the average male was about five foot, seven inches tall, Robert A. Young, president of the college, all six feet, eight inches of him, spoke, then levied his gun at the soldier to persuade him that leaving might be the better part of valor.³³⁴

Mrs. Foster told Olivia to relay to Edward “that 2400 men permitted a Yankee force of 1000 men to come right into our town, pillage, rob, and burn our factories undisturbed.” Olivia reported more accurately that they were all taken by surprise until a half hour before the Federals arrived. “We could only muster up 150 men and two artillery and when their

³³⁴ Dr. Young had served the Methodist congregation in Huntsville for two years in the 1850s. Now he was president of Florence Wesleyan College. Young, who described General Sherman as “tall, hardy, homely” later received a letter of protection for the college from Dodges’ Brigade who was to come next. “He knew Dodge and his men.” Young, *Reminiscences*, 80, 81. Susan Mooney, who wrote her own memoirs later, named one of their daughters Roberta Young. Friendship remained among the families and, at Roberta’s death, Young wrote, “Heaven is richer today.” Young, 240.

artillery fired our men skedaddled,” while innocent women and children were shelled.

“A line of battle was formed at Judge Foster’s premises and endangered his entire family, shells of grape were thick in his yard.” He was robbed of a great deal of money. As the defenders fled, the invaders, “those fiends,” then began their mission: accosting citizens. Save two, all the shops in town were destroyed, including that of blacksmiths Thomas Ingram and John Portluck. Campbell’s (possibly Garret and Ann Campbell’s tavern and hotel) was spared. Every house was searched and every horse was taken. Olivia’s letter reported that \$150 was taken from Old Tom Crow and \$100 from Mr. Hawkins. While Olivia did not lose any meal, corn, or clothes, many other households lost valuable supplies.

Colonel Cornyn’s report to his commander offered the military scenario as they left Corinth at 10 am on the 26th. His men crossed the river on two gunboats throughout the night, continuing their march all the next day and through that night, as well. At daylight on the 28th, they encountered scouting parties but “sent them off.” As far as two miles outside of Florence, they drove pickets back into town and, after considerable skirmishing outside, sent dismounted squadrons within 800 yards of Florence. Two CSA artillery fired at them with considerable accuracy slightly wounding one man. Cornyn ordered up a howitzer battery. The Confederates withdrew after five or six rounds, and Cornyn’s men followed them into town. Cornyn’s men left after two hours. All 1,381 men left, unpursued, after two hours. One man was slightly wounded.³³⁵

That day in Florence, the 10th Missouri Cavalry located and destroyed 5,000 rounds of canister, 30,000 rounds of ammunition, and set fire to several buildings, including the newspaper office, the Elliot Hotel, wagon-making and blacksmith shops which produced wagon wheels for the Confederate war effort, and several old houses. The winds carried the flames, Masonic Lodge 14 burned down, and “town was sadly damaged.” They left as they came and were “last seen on the Waterloo Road destroying as they go.”³³⁶ All of this occurred within a few hours.

³³⁵ OR, Series 1, Vol. 23, part I, Reports, 349-351.

³³⁶ Ibid. 350. Cornyn additionally reported seven cotton factories destroyed, not one worth less than \$200,000, raw material, and finished goods. One factory maintained 300 looms and 2,000 workers. Cornyn was court-martialed three months later for “exceeding orders and looting.” Lt. Col. William Bowen, the

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On that very same day, Martha Johnson's nine-year-old son Frank ran along Cyprus Creek in the hamlet then called "Factory." He was eager to report to his mother that, when he put his ear to the ground, he heard the boom of big guns. Martha recalled seeing:

long columns of blue coats march down to the mill and watched the mounted cavalymen take ropes and pull the machinery from the buildings, scattering it all over the hillsides. Then they forced Bill Stevenson, an elderly mill worker, to soak rags in kerosene and run up and down the building to start fires in every corner. The old man went around for weeks afterwards with burned hands and arms. All three mills, on both sides of the creek, were burning as one, and the fires lasted way into the night. The terrible odor of burned cotton, yarn, rags, and smoking timbers, mixed with hot metal and bricks, covered the hills and hollows for days afterwards.³³⁷

"Our town is badly ruined in appearance..." The destroyed factories were a devastating loss to the Confederacy. The valley should have been defended, Olivia wrote, and the "town is down on Roddey today." They heard Roddey was skirmishing with the Yankees on the other side of the river, and Olivia wrote that a Yankee colonel mentioned he saw Roddey but did not catch him. He was "good at retreating," said the Yank. Roddey appeared not to "get in gunshot range of the Yankees."³³⁸

On the Saturday evening of May 30, Olivia wrote a full double-page letter, which was unusual; these, however, were unusual times. She had received the letter Edward and Eddie, such a sweet good boy, had written. Most likely they wrote of the recent battle at Chancellorsville and life at camp. Olivia heard Edward had been wounded at Chancellorsville, but she thanked God for sparing him and Eddie. Oh, if he would only resign, retire and come home and stay with your wife, but if he left, she would not be willing for Eddie to remain there. Everyone talked about Rodes' Brigade and "you deserve the credit."

"No one can imagine the deep agony of my heart until I heard you were safe." There was still no news from their oldest son, Allie, after

arresting officer, preferred the charges against him and, in a wild courtroom melee, shot and killed Cornyn.

³³⁷ Qtd. William L. McDonald, "The Day They Set Fire to the Mills," *Journal of Muscle Shoals History*, Vol. 7, (1979), 61-64.

³³⁸ Writing of the raid at Tuscumbia and Roddey, James Phelan reported, "The affair was discreditable to our cavalry. A great many scattered off taking care of their individual carcasses." Qtd. in McIlwain, *Civil War*, 99.

Vicksburg. She suffered “from anxiety all the time about you and my sweet noble boys.” Edward had told her in one of his letters he that dreamed about her, and Olivia responded that she dreamed of him, as well. You are “rarely ever absent from my mind.” The certainty of all-out war and occupation in Florence was not truly tangible – not yet.

Edward’s horse was apparently shot out from under him, injuring him in the fall. O’Neal had commanded the brigade that captured what he called “a considerable number of prisoners.” In actuality, it had been over 2,000 men, but Stonewall Jackson had been killed there. This was a cruel war, she knew. Olivia wanted her men to be in no more fighting. Her most ardent wish was for them to come home. When would it end? “I can’t stand it to be separated from those so necessary to my happiness, very existence.” She worried about their food supply, most likely hardtack, pork, and coffee, if they were lucky. Her home garden, meanwhile, offered Irish potatoes, snaps, green peas, squash and cucumbers, with ducks and chickens in their pens.

Jack Foster, she said, seemed afraid to show his face in town even though “his superiors were the ones to blamed” for the lack of discipline among the men, many of whom were home on furlough with no real leader. The newspapers gave the impression of admiring Roddey, but, “it was passing strange,” he appeared to run and do nothing because “the Yankees come on both sides [of the river] burn, rob, and go back,” unmolested except for General Forrest. Mrs. Foster reported a sighting of the Yankees at Iuka which turned out to be false, but “they will come soon.” She knew if (or rather *when*) the Yankees came again, she would have to submit with no means of escape. This presents a change in Olivia’s self-identity. She wrote, “I will lose all.” This was not a “we” moment. She was completely on her own; her men could not save her, the house, the children, the garden, or the animals in their pens. The next few letters continued in those simultaneous tones of loss and emerging inner strength.

On the 31st Olivia calmly added to the letter she had started. Out at widow Sarah Jackson’s home, Forks of Cypress, old Mrs. Jackson lost 300\$, all her corn, mules, horses, negroes and gold, as well as Confederate money. (Here Mrs. O’Neal used her own format for dollars.)



James Jackson's Forks of Cypress

The old lady told the enemy they might as well kill her than to burn her house, which they had threatened to do. "So, one of the fiends pointed a pistol at her head and cussed her," but the house was not set afire. Mrs. Polk, living there also, lost her fine carriage horses.³³⁹ Yankees took off a great many negroes in town, fortunately none of theirs went. They tried to take a man named Jack who she kept enslaved, but he got away. Green was taken, but he "would not go although they offered him 25\$ per month and good wages for his wife and daughter, and a wagon to ride in." Mr. Andrews (probably local merchant John Andrews) lost a Black man he enslaved and all his mules.

In the county, Yankees burned the corn fields of Mr. (Patrick) Hewet, (James) Holland, (Mitchell) Malone, and Mrs. Jackson. (J.V.) Rice, a merchant in town, lost almost everything when his store was robbed and looted. Olivia felt sympathy for Old Man Portlock (John, age 63) who had worked for 40 years to become a successful blacksmith only to lose everything.

³³⁹ James Jackson, who built Forks of Cypress, was considered to be the finest breeder of imported race horses in the country. Although the racers were sold after his death, the family kept fine horses on their property. Mrs. Jackson, his executrix posted bond for \$400,000 at the time of his death in 1840, which is over \$13,000,000 in 2023 dollars.

Dailey routines returned. Olivia filled the remaining page with home news. Olivia had her three youngest children, Emmet, Julia, and Georgie, with her. Oldest daughter Puss had gone to Huntsville to join a bridal party – that of Connie Weakley to William Mastin – in the Episcopal Church. Olivia included the “ticket” for the event in her letter. There are additional lines to read, but they are difficult to decipher and marked “confidential.” They appear to address the subject of one of the Weakley girls. She believed Sallie Weakley to be devoted to John serving in Virginia with O’Neal, she “a mighty sweet appreciative little girl.” Tell John, she said, “if he ever intends it now is the time. In my opinion she will not remain single for long, and Sallie was looking for a letter from John.”³⁴⁰

Olivia may have seemed unusually calm about her daughter residing away from home during such a tumultuous time, but Puss was most likely staying with her grandmother, Mary Watson Moore, a woman of wealth and position.³⁴¹ There were plans for Puss to accompany Aunt Matt on a trip to Virginia, and, as much as Olivia wanted to go with them, there was no chance now. She ended her letter as follows: “God bless you my precious sweet darling husband and boy and may you be spared to return in safety to your fond and devoted wife.”

Olivia expressed far less anxiety in her following letter, dated June 5, as she recalled events brought on by “those fiends.” “What would you have done,” she asked, “if you had witnessed that revolting scene?” She was over her fright and, looking back, she was “calm and determined” that the soldier, who talked in such an “impudent manner” would not set fire to “my house.” Did these words reveal the strengthening of a woman who had faced real danger and, with the help of a friend, bested the enemy? She hoped never to see a Yankee again. Olivia had walked downtown for the first time since the fires, heartbroken at the rubble. Among the remaining stores, one old merchant said he was entirely broken-up now after 50 years

³⁴⁰ The Weakley family days are covered later in Eliza Weakley’s day book.

³⁴¹ Her children found secure places in society and government. Ella married Sam Donegan in Huntsville; John was a judge; Sydenham was a U S congressman and Colonel in the Confederacy; George was a gentleman farmer; and Elizabeth married James Phelan, U.S. Senator, then CSA Congressman from Mississippi. According to James Saunders, George Richard Phelan, in particular, was a “brilliant, wayward and loveable genius.” Saunders, *Early Settlers*, 393. After the War, young Phelan joined an expedition to Ireland, fought in Brazil and finally settled in Memphis. He maintained his parents’ close ties to Jefferson and Varina Davis; Davis stood as god-parents to George Phelan’s first son. eBook, Papers of Jefferson Davis, 1871-1879, 167.

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of a lifetime's work. His house had been saved only through the efforts of his wife and daughter.

"And to think we had troops and a commander." Townspeople were divided about who was at fault – Roddey or Hannon[?]. It seemed Jesse Bradford had actually seen the Yankees and galloped to town to inform Hannon. His command, it was said, had been asleep in sight of the Yankees' campfires. Hannon avowed that, as a stranger, he did not know the roads, and Roddey was to blame. Furthermore, if Roddey did not clear his name, he would kill Roddey. The invasive pull of politics then entered the conversation as Ann Foster revealed that Olivia's Uncle Tom Foster was on his way to Richmond to facilitate a promotion to brigadier general for Phillip Roddey in order to use his influence in an upcoming election. Ann said she hoped her uncle would not succeed. Olivia discreetly added, "Ann would not want me to speak of this to you. This thing you call self interest."

Olivia was fully aware that Florence was in need of a new commander, or the Yankees would return frequently. Furthermore, if Colonel O'Neal had been there, she knew that none of the Yankees would have escaped. Her husband's praise was on everyone's mouth, Olivia shared, but she lamented because some ladies saw their husbands often. "It is too hard that I have to be separated from you." Alfie was at Jackson, Mississippi, but he wanted to be in an Alabama unit, perhaps with Edward in Virginia. The Yankee newspapers reported General Lee was advancing.

There was scant news from Puss in Huntsville other than her desire to accompany Cousin Hattie and Kate on a trip to Virginia. Olivia was distressed to hear of wounded friends and prayed for their recovery. A number of enslaved people had departed alongside the Yankees, Mrs. Fant "lost a likely woman. Margaret and her husband went." None who left were enslaved by the O'Neal family. Olivia's little cottage in Florence seemed quiet, although Alex was great company for her and the children. She was proud of Edward's military reputation, but she was constantly anxious and prayed for their safe return.

Just over one week later, Olivia wrote on June 11 to let her husband and son know she had received their letters. She reassured them she had not lost anything in the earlier raids, however, she feared the next invasion would involve the Yankees burning the wheat and corn crops in the countryside. Florence had a military force in place, if only they were sufficient to give protection. Many of the men shirked their duty, she believed. The full set of clothing she had sent Alfie had been lost, but she didn't care as long as he survived. The latest news was that General Lee was driving General Hooker back toward Alexandria.

In Huntsville, acquaintances kindly called on Olivia's daughter Puss, both the single and married ones. Cousin Hattie and Kate still planned to go to Virginia with, Olivia assumed, Puss, probably the next week. She had sent her \$100 by Judge Frank Foster towards her expenses. This was to be added to her first "\$100", making an expensive but very "improving trip." Puss did not want to leave Olivia, but Olivia said, "she was obliged to visit her Pa and brother."

Miss Harriet took three of the people she kept enslaved to Georgia with her. She had a cousin there at the hospital – a surgeon named Dr. Foster – and she would stay to perform nursing duties for him. Of herself, Olivia wrote, "I am nearly crazy to see you, I would go if I had the chance" to Virginia. The younger children were doing well, and the Foster girls called almost every day while Puss was away. But she was still lonely without her husband and boys.

Olivia reiterated to Edward, "your praises are on the mouth of every one," and every one knew he deserved to be promoted. Kennedy and Barbee "passed by and spoke in raptures of you" and the brigade's reputation. She was now handling finances that her husband had most likely dealt with in the past, but at this point, he had been away over for two years. Josiah Pollock, a shoemaker, who may have been leasing land or impressing of of the people the O'Neals kept enslaved, gave Olivia "858\$=25cts" that he had collected of the Rice funds and had given an equal amount to Mrs. Wood. A note from Old Jack Peters, bearing interest was now due. Olivia was almost out of funds; Brother George sent her \$100.

Olivia filled the rest of the page with news of the children. Julia stood well in her examinations, and Emmet and Georgie seemed to be quite as eager as Julia to do well in final recitations. Eddie was to know that she went with Nettie Collier to hear the examinations, and a musical concert was to take place that night. Otherwise, there was nothing new in town; all was dull with no gaiety since Edward left. She ended with the hope and prayers of all letter writers, "May you be spared to return."

Olivia's letter of June 17 mentioned that Judge William Wood was on his way to Richmond and would carry her letter. He had the same position as Brother John, but in Longstreet's Corps.³⁴² She would include

³⁴² William Basil Wood was a brother to Gen. Sterling Wood, temporary defender of Florence. Both men were sons of Alexander Wood, the first mayor of town. Colonel, judge, and preacher, William was admired by the men who served under him. In May, he was appointed to the Army of Northern Virginia as Presiding Judge of the 1st Army Corps.

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their son Alfie's letter with hers. Brother Jim [Phelan] and his wife Liz, Olivia's sister, had spent a few days with her, but they were soon leaving for Huntsville. If Edward O'Neal was not promoted to brigadier general yet, he would "make a personal matter of it." As Olivia wrote, the couple were having tea with the strong-willed Reverend Mitchell, who had been released from federal prison in October of 1862. After Edward O'Neal's horse had been shot out from under him at Chancellorsville, he had been gifted with a new one by his men. The event was written up in the *Advocate*, and Mr. Phelan showed her O'Neal's reply, a handsome piece, she thought.



Lt. Andrew Gould (Wikimedia Commons)

The town of Florence gave the appearance of calm, but residents fumed that troops were stationed there who had behaved badly during the last raid. One officer had been accused two times before of cowardice, and Olivia wanted those men replaced with new, efficient soldiers. News on a grander scale emerged that there had been an assassination attempt on General Forrest by Lt. Andrew Gould on June 13 in Columbia, Tennessee. She did not know that Gould would soon die from his wounds, but Olivia hoped if by chance they met, "Puss would deny his acquaintance."³⁴³ These were gay times in Huntsville with parties but if Puss did not go to

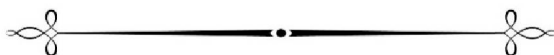
³⁴³ News spread quickly. In early June of 1863, Lt. Andrew Gould confronted Gen. N.B. Forrest in Columbia, Tennessee after an alleged insult to the young officer. "No man can accuse me of cowardice and both of us live," led to Gould's pistol shot through his pocket, wounding Forrest, who then opened his knife with his teeth, piercing Gould's rib cage. Gould died two weeks later at the age of 22.

Virginia, Olivia feared, “she would be deprived of the happiness of meeting or seeing a great deal of you.” The trip to Virginia was still planned; it would be expensive but “in real good company.” School was out for Julia, and Emmet had examinations. Like his older brother Eddie, he was a good orator and showed great ambition.

Olivia missed her husband most at meal times while enjoying the bounty of her garden. She worried that the food the men were eating would injure their stomachs forever, and daughter Julia hoped the peaches would be ripe when her pa came home. The garden was Olivia’s area: “my” peaches, “my” squash, “my” beans. A new, subtle transformation seemed to occur at this time, as well; the home had become “my” house. Olivia now made all decisions in her domain.

By scrounging, Olivia saved enough flour to last until the new flour arrived. It now cost an unbelievable \$50 a barrel. She reminded Edward of Mr. Pollock’s payment and assured him that she would take good care of it. She did little marketing now because everything had become so expensive.

A summer storm, complete with thunder and lightning, made the day gloomier. There was fighting in Athens, she heard, or at least it would be expected soon. Everyone expected the Yankees to return and burn Florence entirely. “I am nearly dead to see you. Oh, what I would give to have the happiness of having you all again under my little roof enjoying the happiness of sweet peace.” Olivia closed, “May a kind providence watch over and shield my sweet husband and boy from all danger and restore you safely to me. God bless my darling husband, your devoted Liv.”



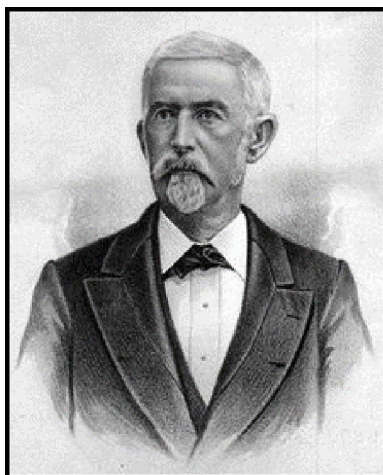
By that summer of 1863 the Federal forces of General Buell occupied Florence as they converged, heading ever so slowly it seemed, toward Chattanooga. Olivia gathered the children to take refuge in Russellville, some 25 miles to the south, during a time of constant military action along the railroad and river, but those dates remain unknown. Olivia’s “sweet secret” appeared later in 1864; she was named Sydenham for Olivia’s brother Sydenham Moore (who had served in Congress from 1857-1861, and then as a colonel in the 11th Alabama Infantry). He had died from wounds received at the Battle of Seven Pines on May 31, 1862. The three O’Neal men were still at war. Alfred O’Neal became a major in the 11th Alabama Cavalry, and Edward, Junior, was in Virginia with his father as an aide-de-camp on the staff of Gen. Robert Rodes. Edward O’Neal had been promoted to major when he arrived in Virginia, to full

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colonel in 1862, and received high praise, particularly for his actions at Chancellorsville. The remnants of his regiment, the 26th Alabama Infantry, later escorted federal prisoners south, and Edward remained as one of the first commanders of guards for the newly opened Andersonville camp in February of 1864. He served with the Army of Tennessee in May or June of that year before he was finally sent back to Florence. There, he worked on detached duty to recruit new enlistees. His duties also included arresting Confederate deserters, of which there were many. The paperwork for his much-deserved appointment as brigadier general had been filed on June 6, 1863 but was delayed by General Lee, then canceled by President Jefferson Davis.

Alfred O'Neal, the oldest son, had completed school at LaGrange College and as a cadet at West Point. He immediately resigned this position at the start of the War, serving with ordinance at Mobile Bay until 1864, when his unit of sharpshooters was sent north. At the Battle of the Wilderness in April of 1864, he was captured and sent to prison camp at Johnson Island. He married Annie Warren of Tuscumbia, and they lived next door to his parents at Court Street.

Sweet Eddie married Mary Coffee, a granddaughter of John Coffee, and they had a son, Edward O'Neal III. Eddie died far too young at the age of 31. Rebecca, or Puss, did not find a suitor in Huntsville or Florence as her family had hoped, but in 1866, she married Reuben Henley Shotwell, a merchant from Mobile. They later moved to Lowndes County, Mississippi where he operated a dry goods store and farmed. Later still they moved to St. Louis, Missouri. Their daughter, Madame Rebecca Shotwell-Piper, was a noted opera singer of her time. Georgie married Eugene F. Williams originally from Panola County, Mississippi. (Within the household of his father, W.L. Williams, a well-to-do farmer, 15-year-old Eugene was listed as a gentleman.) Georgie and Eugene also moved to St. Louis at some unknown time. Julia remained single and at the family home place on Court Street. Sydenham married George Dudley from Montgomery; they, too, made St. Louis their home.

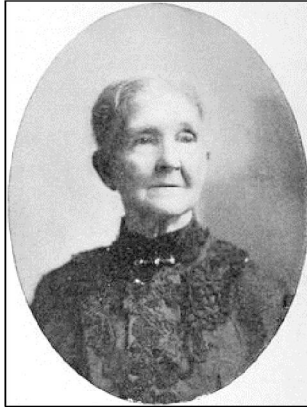


Edward A. O'Neal

In Florence, Edward reestablished his law practice and entered into Democratic party politics. With help from his son, Emmet, and a well-considered campaign, he became a candidate for the 1882 gubernatorial nomination. His status as a military hero and respected attorney easily won him the election to become the 26th governor of Alabama. Edward O'Neal died in 1890 at their home on Court Street. Emmet O'Neal graduated from Florence Wesleyan after the War and completed his education with a degree from the University of Alabama. He became a lawyer, and like his father, served as president of the Alabama State Bar, and entered politics. Emmet married Elizabeth Kirkman, daughter of another successful Irish merchant, and in 1900 they bought the mansion where Sallie Independence Foster wrote her journal during these years, Courtview, now known as Rogers Hall.³⁴⁴ His father, Edward, did not live to see him become the 36th governor of the state of Alabama, from 1911 until 1915.

³⁴⁴ *Encyclopedia of Alabama.*

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Olivia Moore O'Neal

The cottage on Court Street was the O'Neal home for the remainder of their lives. Edward and Olivia remained close friends and comrades, with Olivia often serving as confidential adviser. It was said that Edward O'Neil called Olivia his Queen of Love and Beauty, and she referred to him as her Knight in Armor. Like her husband Edward, Olivia did not live to see her son Emmet sworn in as governor. Surrounded by her grandchildren and daughters, Olivia Moore O'Neal passed away as “the end of the sweet life came,” to “one of Alabama’s most distinguished women” who easily measured to the highest standard of womanly excellence.”³⁴⁵



Forks of Cypress, after fire of 1966

³⁴⁵ *Confederate Veteran Magazine*, February 1910.

Sallie Independence Foster (1848-1897)

***Women and children are now the chief population,
and upon them will fall the fury of the enemy.***

This journal is extraordinary because its author, Sallie Foster, was barely a teen when she began to write on the morning of Saturday, July 26, 1862. She was the youngest child and only daughter still residing at home with her parents, George and Sarah Foster, at Courtview in Florence, Lauderdale County, Alabama. Her young life thus far may have seemed mundane and but she had so much yet to learn and experience.³⁴⁶

George Washington Foster began building his extravagant Greek Revival-style family home in 1854. The site he chose occupied the highest point of land in Florence, befitting a man who, by 1860, would have a combined wealth of over \$343,000. There was, however, a significant problem: his building site was already occupied by the main public road. For the sum of \$300, he obtained a variance through the Alabama Legislature with one caveat: "The beauty of the home [must] justify the inconvenience caused to the people of the city."³⁴⁷

³⁴⁶ Diary of Sallie Independence Foster, University of North Alabama Archives and Special Collections, University of North Alabama, Florence, Alabama., *passim*.

³⁴⁷ Foster had done well – this was more than four times the amount shown on the 1850 census of \$60,000. (His 1860 value was over ten million in 2023 dollars.) The properties included 6281 acres in Lauderdale County with 100 slaves, Woodland Plantation, and Oak Grove near Courtland in Lawrence County. His brothers Benjamin and Thomas ran plantations of their own, as well as manufacturing facilities. Woodland was burned during the War. *Encyclopedia of Alabama*; Federal Census 1850, 1860; Wikipedia.



Courtview (HABS)

Along with his brothers Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson Foster (Tom and George had married sisters Virginia and Sarah Watkins), George had interests in the prosperous Florence Cotton Factory and Woolen Mill. George Foster also maintained three plantations totaling 6,281 acres, one across the river near Courtland in Lawrence County called Oak Grove, one in Lauderdale County called Woodland, and a third in what was then called Colbert Reserve. (The 1860 census shows that, between them, the brothers kept at least 187 Black people enslaved.) There were countless aunts, uncles, cousins, and in-laws on the Foster side of the family; most of them lived nearby. Additionally, Sallie's mother, Sarah Independence (Watkins) Foster, brought a multitude of Madison, Marshall, and Lawrence County relatives. She was a daughter of Prudence and Robert Watkins, who enjoyed a shared background with the "Broad River Bunch" of Popes, Thompsons, and Walkers originally from Petersburg, Georgia who conducted many of the aristocratic land deals in their respective counties.

Three of Sallie's older siblings were still at home as the War began – Robert (Wat), age 24, who was studying medicine; George W. (Wash), 17; and A. J. (Jack), 15, also students. Her older married sisters were Mary Ann Simpson, Virginia Irvine, and Louisa Fant; their families lived nearby. Sallie found playmates in her cousins and nephew, nieces and the children of the house slaves. Although the War was well underway when she started her journal in July of 1862, her days consisted of normal

activities such as rising early, tatting, quilting, riding, practicing the piano, tending to her pet canary, reading her Testament, and saying nightly prayers. These activities were, of course, facilitated by nameless enslaved people who carried out the household duties.

Sallie wanted “to be a sweet amiable and loving girl, very accommodating and always cheerful and above all other things to be pious.” Except for one incident when she let her Sister Lou’s baby fall, she seemed to realize her aspirations. (The baby was not hurt, but Sallie’s feelings at being scolded were.) As the days progressed, she learned to iron and make starch by squeezing bran. She saved a recipe for ginger cakes, made citron from watermelon rind, and twisted thread on the spinning wheel. She executed these activities with her mother, grandmother, older sisters, and household servants. This served as training for her later position as custodian of her own household – a doting wife, mother and keeper of the home place. The War, already one year along, seemed remote to a 12-year-old girl.

News and events soon infiltrated even Sallie’s world. Grandma Watkins had received a dramatic letter from her daughter, Louisa Harris, in Huntsville in May of 1862 (one month after the northern invasion). “I don’t know when we shall meet again, as the Federal forces are here, probably for the rest of the war.” Mrs. Watkins continued with news that 40 Rebel prisoners were under arrest, held in the African Church, with 40 more from Jackson County held in the Court House. These prisoners were suspected of burning bridges, destroying rail tracks, and firing on Union pickets.³⁴⁸ Twelve town elders would be held in custody until they signed an official order condemning guerilla activity; her husband, Stephen Harris, was among them. Worse still, “we have not heard from my dear son in two months, but I trust in God that “all things shall work together for good to them that love him.”³⁴⁹ Nothing had prepared these women for the turmoil and upheaval now impacting every aspect of their lives.

When Union troops had been in north Alabama for three months, young Sallie wrote her first account of injustice. On July 27, 1862, Dr. William H. Mitchell was taken prisoner after prayers at the Presbyterian

³⁴⁸ Priscilla Larkin, who also kept a journal, knew many of the Jackson County men and was most likely related to some of them.

³⁴⁹ Qtd. in Saunders. *Early Settlers*, 497. Stephen Willis Harris survived the War and returned home.

Church in a distressing turn of events.³⁵⁰ From the Nashville *Union*, under Federal control, the headlines read “*TRAITOR CLERGYMAN ARRESTED*.” The article reported that the majority of church-goers in attendance at the Old School Presbyterian Church of Florence, including Union officers, heard Rev. Dr. Mitchell offer his prayer for “Jefferson Davis, for the success of the Confederate arms, and for the attainment of the independence of the Confederate people.” The indignant, affronted Union soldiers “remained standing until the prayer was concluded, when they all left the church.” Colonel Harlan arrested Reverend Mitchell at his pulpit and escorted him across the river to Tuscumbia.³⁵¹ It had been raining, Sallie reported, and they would not allow him to hoist his umbrella as he was escorted out of the Federal lines. Later that afternoon, two Yanks sat on the front porch of the Foster home, but under no circumstances would they be invited inside. Federals encroached as Lizzie, a woman Sister Lou kept enslaved, declared she was going to dress up as a man and go with the Yankees. She proceeded to do this and got caught. Lizzie was to be sent to the farm the next day, but ran away nonetheless.

Her daily activities and writings continued, but Sallie introduced writing in a “secret” code. Rather than eyebrow-raising family scandals or covert military episodes, she wrote about her day-to-day life – backwards. “I was gnilrad siht gnineve,” She reasoned that no one could possibly unravel her code. Sallie, after all, was entering her teen years, with new experiences to look forward to.

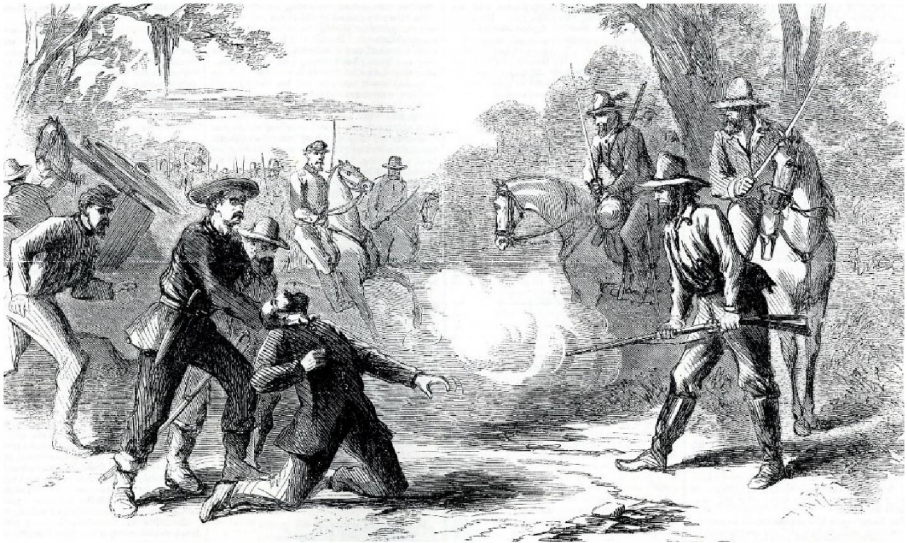
The War drew closer when Yanks raided nearby houses for clothing and killed chickens. Seemingly unaffected by those events, Sallie, Grandma and her sisters Jennie and Lou rode downtown, where Grandma bought her a sweet little breastpin to wear. Sallie later cut it out and sewed the breastpin on her sunbonnet, as was the current fashion.

Back at the farm, an enslaved man named Uncle Isaac had disappeared after going fishing; no one could be sure if he drowned or

³⁵⁰ Irish-born Dr. William Henry Mitchell was first educated in Belfast as an attorney, but came to America and earned a doctorate of divinity at Princeton. In Alabama he married his second wife, a daughter of James Jackson from the Forks of the Cypress, who also was of Irish birth. The couple lived at the mansion called Wakefield. <https://armyoftennessee.wordpress.com> (accessed 5/23/17).

³⁵¹ The arresting officer was Col. John Harlan, Provost Marshal, later an Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Qtd. in Jill Garret, *History of Florence, Alabama*. (Self-Publ., n.d.), 32.

went over to the Yankees.³⁵² News reached the Foster family on August 11 that General McCook had been killed by a scouting party in Madison County: a murder, denounced the northern press. Sallie probably did not understand the serious ramifications of these events. Trips to downtown Florence were still safe in mid-August and the ladies once again shopped; Ma purchased a dictionary, toothbrush and a bottle of perfume. At the very same time, 17 Southern cavalymen rode in looking for Yanks. Later, two Yankee officers came to the house, walking in without knocking, to search for Sallie's father. The next day Mr. Tom Weakley and Uncle Frank were taken away for questioning. The Yanks returned, this time seven in number, still looking for Pa. By August 22, Sallie's father and other men were imprisoned in an old tavern in Tuscumbia awaiting trial. He was allowed to write home for his overcoat and a blanket.



The Death of General Robert McCook, (Harper's Aug. 23, 1862)

On the following Sunday, Yankee troops camped in their lot. Sallie continued to write about enslaved people who “went over” and of the loss of farm stock stolen by soldiers. A week later, now a “fattened up” pa was allowed to return in exchange for brother Wat. One of the conditions of release was that the captives must hoist a Union flag over their factories. Sallie's brothers and father, in order to oversee the plantations, began

³⁵² “Aunt” and “Uncle” were commonly added to the names of enslaved Black people who served White families in the main house.

taking turns to manage and minimize losses. Six women and several males slaves had already fled.

In the midst of the chaos, the Foster women attempted to continue visits with friends and relations, sharing their apprehensions with one another. Mrs. Foster entertained several neighbors (sisters Mrs. Burtwell and Mrs. Weakley, Miss Todd, Cousin Nora McAlister, and the Weakley girls, Kate and Nora) one afternoon with tea cakes.³⁵³ The unfortunate but customary summer typhoid fever outbreak took Baylor Hawkins, “such a good boy,” age 13, lovingly attended by his family; Emma Cassidy sang “Happy Day” for him. The danger remained – the boy’s father, Wiley Hawkins, also contracted the fever. He never recovered. Drucilla Hawkins, 80, also died within two months. Although she heard the rumors and must have felt tensions and fears rising, Sallie’s pet canary continued to sing sweetly, and “The Lord has not let anything disturb us.” Yet.

The Yanks had moved out of Huntsville and, shortly after, a portion of Roddey’s Confederate brigade safely entered Florence. During this interlude, Grandma and Mattie L. Patton visited Huntsville, making the trip in a hack. Sallie started classes again to study “History of England, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Familiar Science, Natural Philosophy, Dictionary” and to complete the curriculum. Milton’s *Paradise Lost* was taught by newly-released minister-principal Dr. Mitchell. Many of her friends such as Lizzie and Laura Burtwell and their cousins Kate and Nora, also attended. Sallie was very fond of school. Near the end of the month, however a day quickly turned distressing when almost all the young men, nearly 80 in number, left town to form Sloss’ Company, “John and Robert Martin, Jim Andrews and the other Jim Andrews, Parson Andrews son, Dr. Conner the dentist, Hunt Kirkham, Ned Stewart, Alex and John Karsner, Jim Weems, Bill Willett, Bill Campbell among them.” Her brother-in-law, Jim Irvine, and three of her own brothers volunteered soon after. Captain Oliver Kennedy took supper with them one evening. Captured at Tupelo, he had written from a Chattanooga prison to his sweetheart, Georgie Foster, that he hoped to be home for Christmas. Happily, he made it back.³⁵⁴

During this time, Sallie’s family enjoyed an outing across the river to Courtland to visit their Saunders relatives at Rocky Hill. Grandma

³⁵³ Eliza Weakley also wrote a small day book for many years. Her husband was involved in the manufacturing enterprises of the area.

³⁵⁴ Kennedy’s few letters to Georgie Foster are in Oliver S. Kennedy Papers, Box 0S620, f. 1, Special Collections, Univ. of Texas, Arlington.

Lauderdale County

Watkins remained in Huntsville while her sister, Aunt Lou Harris, had gone to see her son Watkins Harris in Virginia. As it turned out, this would be her last time to see him. The social event for young people was a “candy stew” and now, at 14 years old, Sallie wrote more in her secret code, not surprisingly, about the boys attending and one “os teews.” Ma and Pa attended a party given by Colonel Goode at the Irvine house, where there were two rooms for dancing and four rooms for receiving what would be 150 guests.



Irvine House, Florence

Sallie did not dance, but her brothers Jack and Wash danced all night. This would be everyone’s last gala for a long time.

Laurence Saunders returned from Corinth on October 6, and, to the family’s joy, lingered for two days. On the same day, his sister Ellen wrote in her own journal from Rocky Hill in Courtland that he was expected home at any minute. Ellen wrote that news from Corinth was good, as did Sallie, but the most recent updates had not been received. The Second Battle at Corinth, October 3-4, 1862, was once again a loss for the Rebels. Still, there was calm enough for Ma and Pa Foster, two of the Harris girls and Sallie to spend a week at their plantation in Courtland. As always, the family gathering included Aunt Mary Saunders, Cousin Kate, and

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Dudley's wife and her sister, newcomer Mary Wheatley – “a pretty girl” – at their home.³⁵⁵

By the evening of October 27, Sallie experienced the last hours of her 13th birthday. She studied late at school until 5 pm. A guest, General Bartley M. Lowe, was staying with the family at Courtland for a few days.³⁵⁶ After supper she and her schoolmates Margaret Walker, Madgie and Lettie Warren played Book-binder, Blind-folk, and Beast, Bird or Fish. She stayed out so late that her mother scolded her for being overdue. “I hope to do better, the older I grow. Good-bye my dear and last thirteenth night I am sorry to give you up.”

The next day, Logan Kennedy, about 15 years old, arrived. In the special code she believed no one else could possibly read, “tub eh seod ton evol em won, but I evol mih tey I tonnac pleh ti.” The first day of her 14th year was even more excruciating than the previous one, when she had been only thirteen.

That afternoon, Sallie accompanied the family of Col. Edward O'Neal, who was home on furlough after sustaining a severe wound at the Battle of Seven Pines.³⁵⁷ At the drill field and camp for the soldiers of the Sloss Company, Captain Roddey was elected Colonel. The family stayed much of the day, enjoyed a nice dinner, and Sallie visited with John Martin, a young man of about seventeen. The unit was excited because they heard the Yankees were at Waterloo to the west; Sloss and one other company planned to attack the enemy there. Fortunately for the young men, many still ill, the report was merely a rumor. At church the next Sunday, Sallie and ma had to sit in the Amen corner because all the front pews were reserved for the soldiers. Little did that matter; she noted that both John and Logan attended services that morning.

The Yankees approached Tuscumbia, just across the river. Around 15 of Roddey's men were killed, but the enemy got no closer.³⁵⁸ In

³⁵⁵ For more information about activities in the Courtland area, consult the chapter on “the Littlest Rebel,” Ellen Virginia Saunders. Mary Wheatley would become the second wife of Col. Dudley Saunders.

³⁵⁶ General Lowe's granddaughter, Sophia Lowe, also kept a journal and her material is included later.

³⁵⁷ Olivia O'Neal, his wife, also kept a journal.

³⁵⁸ Union scouts watched as Confederate Colonel Roddey stayed with his men at Florence during much of the winter. Union information reported that he had two good flatboats and two small steamers fitted out. They considered his force to be

Huntsville, old Mrs. Patton died, as she had been “very sick and went to sleep and never awoke again.” She was 80.³⁵⁹ Brother Wash and Jack passed through in mid-December on their way to Tennessee.

Sallie saw her first Christmas tree at the home of Doctor Prior; it touched the ceiling and was lighted with small candles. The doctor played “Saint Nicholas” in a red gown with a flapping old hat and furs wrapped around his neck. She saw John Martin, who gave her a nice bow and smiled. Yankees, they heard, had taken Franklin, Tennessee, “but it does not make much difference about that... It is just a small town.” Cousins came for dinner, including Mr. Tucker, who stayed with Aunt Agnes, “he hasn’t but one arm, I feel sorry for him.” Sallie was pleased with her modest Christmas gifts.

In the new year of 1863, the ladies gave a supper for the Sloss Company men. Sallie continued writing copiously of John Martin in her secret code. Now, at the advanced age of 14, she had attended two parties with dancing. Ma gave Sloss Company, now camped nearby on the river, a

over 2,000; when the water rose, he planned to raid down the river. (Garrett, *History*, 33.)

³⁵⁹ Martha Hays Patton did not have a direct kinship to young Sallie Foster. This, however, is an appropriate time to examine the abundant connections to wealth and prestige Sallie’s mother, Sarah Watkins Foster, had through familial connections. Martha Patton was newly deceased and her husband William, who was enormously successful in the mercantile business and the primary owner of Bell Factory, had several children. Of the more notable ones, these included Dr. Charles Patton who married (as his second wife) Mattie, the widow of David Moore, who may have been the richest man in Madison County at the end of his life. Dr. Patton lived at Poplar Grove during the War. Robert Patton, with only a basic education from Greene Academy, established himself as a merchant in Florence and married Jane Locke Brahan, daughter of Gen. John Brahan who lived at Sweet Water, “a synonym for all that was refined and hospitable.” (Never mind that that Brahan had left Huntsville in disgrace, unable to pay back a “borrowed” \$60,000 to the federal government.) Robert Patton had long participated in politics and became governor of Alabama after the Civil War. Jane Patton married William Pope, a son of LeRoy Pope. Martha Patton married the very successful merchant Joseph Bradford. While attending Huntsville Female College, Priscilla Larkin boarded with Mrs. Bradford, and began her 1862 journal there. Eliza Patton married Lawrence Watkins and, during this time, lived on McClung Street. Mary Ann was twice widowed at the death of her husband Mr. N.M. Gooch. She lived in the cottage destroyed by the Union troops to build Fort Taylor on Patton’s Hill overlooking Huntsville. These led to new connections with successful families such as the Facklers, Harrises, Spotswoods, Bibbs and Acklens. Martha Hays Patton died on November 29, 1862. (Spragins, *Beirne*, 307, 313, 318.)

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lovely supper of plenty of cakes, good peas, pig's meat, turkeys, biscuits, light bread, etc. Johnny stayed with Sallie for the entire evening, until 2 am.

Aunt Hannah, their cook for many years, passed away. She was "a consistent Christian;" this was a hard loss for Sallie, who loved her dearly. She reported that Captain Kennedy married his Georgie Foster, who looked so sweet and pretty in white satin, at Aunt Agnes and Uncle Benjamin's house ceremony, conducted by an Episcopal "preacher." Only the kindred were invited, and "the waiters were Miss Kennedy, Cousin Berta, Missie Palmer and Emma Cassity; the gentlemen were Brother Wash, Messrs McAlexander, Lieut. Taylor and Billie Hamer." Ma gave a lively bridal party afterwards at the crowded house Among the gathering was her long-time beau, "Picknick," who looked "as cute as a Junebug."

The entry for February 12 brought news that Aunt Margaret Watkins, wife of Robert Watkins in Huntsville, had died. She'd gotten a rising in her throat and a chill, "leaving nine children." It was most likely seven children. "... one six-days old, a little boy. The one next to the baby and the baby both suck bottle, poor children, the oldest child is Mary," only a miss of sixteen years.³⁶⁰



Robert Watkins Home, 603 Adams Ave., Huntsville

³⁶⁰ Mary Margaret, age 36, consort of Robert H. Watkins "was snatched from devoted husband and now motherless children," January 31, 1863. (Gandrud, *Notices*, 441.)

The Rebel Troopers, Roddey's command with the Sloss Company, left for Murfreesboro to join General Bragg. "I do not know when they will return; it may be forever (some of them.)" Sallie described the soldiers' dreary, rainy day, eating a mess of "cush" or cornmeal hash. They put their tents up as the rain continued. Tom Sloss, Joe Heship, Young Grey and Ben Lambert were all wounded and taken prisoner with the exception of Grey.

Near the end of February, five Union boats were seen on the Tennessee River, but, fortunately, the Rebel steamer Dunbar escaped over the shoals. Across the river in Tuscumbia, buildings were burned. Sallie reported that citizens were made to pay money to prevent their homes from being set ablaze. General Florence F. Cornyn assessed from \$500 to \$5,000 on the property of the well-to-do. Concerned civic leaders wrote to the Confederate Secretary of War pleading for relief.³⁶¹ The Federal army, they declared, had "wantonly and vindictively" invaded the privacy of their homes during the last year, destroyed property, falsely imprisoning people, and taking away their slaves in large numbers, preventing them from returning to their owners, had they chosen. The once prosperous landscape was now poor, and citizens were regularly intimidated by Federal officers and soldiers who took every liberty. Furthermore, "The late conscription has left us without men, except the infirm and the aged. Women and children are now the chief population, and upon them will fall the fury of the enemy." Had she known of the letter, Sallie would have recognized each and every signature. Some were her brothers-in-law and one was her Uncle B.F. Foster.³⁶²

Brother-in-law Jim Irvine and two others were taken prisoner in early March but made a clever escape and ended up capturing their captors. Confederate officers came to take tea. Federals were spotted twice in April but did not molest Florence or its citizens. Sallie's brothers came home on sick leave or furloughs with wounds and stories of fighting. Brother Wash's horse was shot in three places, so he was forced to return home to get another one. None were available in Florence but he went to Courtland where he bought "a splendid horse and gave a splendid price," \$500. Sallie did not record the return of General Cornyn from May 26th – 31st to Florence to attack this essential source of Confederate cloth and

³⁶¹ Garrett, *History*, 35. Cornyn and his cavalry crossed the river and on April 28, 1863 and burned LaGrange College and Military Academy in Colbert County. The school was founded in 1830 by Turner Saunders whose granddaughter would also leave a journal of experiences at Rocky Hill.

³⁶² Garrett, *History*, 33, 34.

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leather goods. Nonetheless, Cornyn reported to his superiors that he had burned seven cotton mills, many wool mills, tanneries, and gun factories. The Globe Cotton Factory was the largest, employing 800 workers at the edge of town. As his men then attacked Florence, Lt. Col. Jesse Phillips' cavalymen followed the retreating Rebel soldiers, and Florence was captured. Phillips had every house searched for contraband weapons and supplies. By the end of the month, Cornyn reported 200,000 bushels of corn taken, 200 head of horses and mules, 300 enslaved people, and some soldiers taken prisoner. As an added insult to the defeated citizenry, one entire block of the town was burned. The importance of these actions was reported in the *New York Times* on June 3, 1863. (Mary Weakley and Olivia O'Neal shared their accounts of the losses in their journals. Mrs. Weakley also wrote about Col. Jesse Phillips and the wedding party he almost intercepted.)³⁶³

Sallie did not write for almost two months. She took up her pen once again in July to report home-front illness. Little Frank, about 11, "a little colored boy that ma kept around the house" died from typhoid fever. Sister Lou, originally thought to be at the brink of death, fortunately recovered from her case of the fever. Julia O'Neal had the fever, as well as Lizzie and Laura Burtwell. They recovered, but their older sister died of brain fever.

Classes began again in September with Rhetoric, Familiar Science, Bullions' Grammar, Arithmetic, Algebra, Well's Philosophy. Sallie's favorite teacher, Dr. Mitchell, would hear all her classes. Sallie "discarded" one young man who her brother said was not a suitable boy. She "did not love him anyhow much" she wrote. Her disappointment was great upon returning home from a visit to Courtland to find that many of the Sloss Company boys had departed from town. With great relief, at least, rumors of their capture had been mistaken. Including two brothers-in-law, five of Sallie's brothers were preparing to go to Chattanooga at that time as members of the Sloss Company.

General Sherman's army, consisting of thousands of Federal troops, slowly marched through town. Sherman made his headquarters in the college while some Union officers requisitioned rooms at the Foster home.

³⁶⁴ Among their "house guests" were officers who included Colonel

³⁶³ General Cornyn was shot and killed in August of 1863 by one of his subordinates at a court trial regarding his excessive use of force during these military actions.

³⁶⁴ Among the local stories, Confederate guerillas were said to have captured two of Sherman's clerks and took their hats and coats. The two guerillas were tied to

Cocknall and Captain Meeks, who Sallie described as a particularly polite gentleman. The house overflowed, and tents were raised in the back yard. Still more soldiers camped on College Hill and in the college buildings. Along with Cousin Frank Foster, Joe Heslip, Captain Cheatum, Sallie's brother Jack was among the many captured. The Federals took their horses, "Brother Jack loved his horse so much. He would not have taken money for him." Now both were gone. Sherman allowed relatives to visit before they were sent away. "Ma is so distressed, she did not go down to see," and as they brought him by, he was too far away "to tell goodbye and she just could see him ... Oh! Lord, please watch over my brother, Guide him in thy way. May the enemy not molest him... and may he soon come to see us." Sallie was now 15 years old. She seemed unable to write about the possible finality of his departure, but it must have been in her ma and pa's hearts. The Yankees took over Aunt Agnes's quarters downstairs, and she was forced to cook and eat upstairs. Amer, Sister Lou's girl, went to the Yankees one morning, and one of the men her father kept enslaved named Monroe ran away. Enslaved Black people were now simply disappearing. Many followed behind Sherman's massive army as it continued to march toward Huntsville, Chattanooga, Atlanta, and eventually to the sea. Almost as an afterthought, "I was fifteen the twenty-eight of last month."

Christmas of 1863 passed and, like her birthday, Sallie had no gifts to compare to previous years' treasures. Brother Jack wrote to the family from prison camp at Alton, Illinois. Everyone fervently hoped he would be paroled soon. At the grand old age of 15, Sallie offered, "Old '63 will soon be sunk into oblivion. I am sorry the years pass away so quickly. Soon I will be grown; I never wanted to be grown, I always loved childhood the best." Later they heard of a battle at Chattanooga, and because, she said, some Confederate troops retreated, the battle was lost.³⁶⁵ Skirmishes, however, were closer at hand. At what would be called the First Battle of Four Mile Branch, Confederates who were killed or captured included Capt. (Thomas) Ingram, Mr. (Thomas) Rhodes, Mr. Short and two others;

the tailboard of a wagon and were last seen heading north. Sherman summoned four leading citizens and asked about his clerks. Of course, locals said they did not consort with guerillas and had no clue where his clerks were. General Sherman let it be known if the two men were not returned in 24 hours, the four local officials would be treated likewise. The two clerks reappeared the next day. (Florence-Lauderdale Public Library Digital Archives, posted 11/4/15.)

³⁶⁵ This followed the Union bombardment of Chattanooga in August of 1863 and was likely news of the Chattanooga Campaign, Nov. 23-25, 1863. General Grant defeated General Bragg at that conflict.

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Sallie knew their grieving families well. Bob Key, Mr. Duncan and other friends had been wounded. The Yanks left in the night but returned the next day to take as contraband every one of their “darkies from the plantation in wagons and some walking. They had every one of the little children even little babies a few months old.” Seventy-five of George Foster’s slaves had fled, and the grandfather of Sallie’s little waiting-maid, Francis, came to Courtview to take her, as well. Factories and mills were set on fire. A blacksmith shop, a shed, all the ploughs, cotton, and supplies were burned or simply carried away. The only good news arrived with a letter from Jack that he was well and safe at the prison camp in Alton, Illinois.

Yankees now travelled in and out of town every couple of days. A letter arrived from brother Wash. News from Jack was highly anticipated, but none came. Wat had been in and left to join Wash and General Roddey on their way to Georgia. Bad news quickly followed from Mary Jane Chadick in Huntsville: Mrs. Foster’s younger brother, Robert Watkins, had died. Before he could even be buried, Yankees had commandeered his house. Aunt Lou and Uncle Willis Harris, Grandma and Uncle Robert’s orphaned children would mostly likely be at Uncle Lawrence Watkins’ house., moved from the now deceased Robert’s home.



Lawrence Watkins Home, 416 McClung Ave., Huntsville

On March 26, 1864, Sallie and her friend Nonnie Whitten found themselves on the roof of Courtview. This was the most secluded place they could think of to get away and write – Sallie in her diary and Nonnie

letters to family. Federal Major Stabrook occupied Courtland as his headquarters, taking Sallie's own bedroom. Sallie found Captain Sawyer to be the only gentleman present at her home. Yanks passed by every day, but she just knew Confederates were "whipping them nearly everywhere."

Brother Jack, Jack Kirkman, and Jack Foster resided in the same prison, hoping for a parole, and her brother Wat and brother-in-law Jim were well, encamped near Dalton, Georgia. Colonel Richard Rowett, of the 7th Illinois noted "Everything has left the Valley of Tuscumbia" but one cavalry battalion, patrolling the river with help from "a great many citizens." There was no news of Forrest.³⁶⁶ Joe McMurray received a letter from home while fighting in Virginia and learned "Federals" snatched rings and earrings from his sister, cursed and abused her." Bushwhackers were suspected of these deeds, however.³⁶⁷ Guerrilla bands, one led by Hays and Davis, were particularly dangerous in rural areas.

In late June of 1864, the family circle was broken; Sallie prayed, as everyone on both sides must have been praying, "Lord may our beloved fireside meet again on earth, and if not Thy will that we should meet on earth, may we all meet in that blissful abode above...." On June 21, "The Yankees were all over town, galloping in every direction." It was the 9th Illinois, with Col. Jackson commanding. "They did not interrupt anything, only took four hats off the little town boys' heads." Sallie also declared, "The Yankees have not whipped us in a single battle this year" and then wistfully, "The Confederacy is shining brighter now than it ever was."

Sallie Foster was one of the few diarists to mention activities with and genuine feelings about her parents. She recalled youthful visits to Bailey Springs when her mother was ill, "my grief could not be expressed if the Lord was to take my beloved parents from me." Now in July, "we have the Yanks to visit us every two or three days. The Secess run the Yanks out of town, then the Yanks run the Secess out." During one such lull, soldiers surrounded the house looking for Brother Wat who was asleep upstairs. A clever servant went upstairs in the pretense of looking for matches managed to warn him to hide. The Yankees took his horse, bridle and saddle and captured Bob Martin, Jesse Brooks, Dred Smith, Eddie Irvine, and several others.

Brother Wat stood for his medical examination, passed, then awaited assignment. Last the family had heard, Brother Wash was in

³⁶⁶ Garrett, *History*, 43.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

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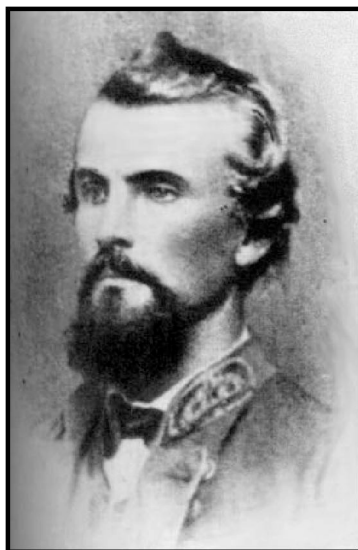
Montgomery. News of Jack appeared in other soldier's letters, but at this point it seemed unlikely that there would be any more exchanges of prisoners until the War ended. She continued to read her Bible daily and aspired to be obedient and never to offend anyone as her life's responsibility. She wrote, "Oh! My God may this dreadful war soon come to a close, nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt. O, Lord."

August 28 was a beautiful day, but Sallie was woebegone. Ma and Sister Jennie had gone to Courtland, where Pa was very sick. Two doctors attended there. His pulse was up to 140; it is possibly that he suffered from typhoid fever. Sallie now resided at Courtview with Sis Lou, her children, and Jennie's children. Unless any "servants" remained, the women were alone there. Brother Wash relieved some of their anxiety when he arrived on a scout. The regiment with Brothers Jim, Charlie and Wash were expected in the following days. Sallie remained anxious about Pa, "Lord, please do not take my dear, dear father from me." She closed her entry quickly, "The Federals are in town."

In the following month, Sister Jennie returned from Oak Grove and Sallie went to Courtland for two weeks. Pa was improving. During this time, she spent four or five days at Aunt Mary Saunders and enjoyed a pleasant visit with her cousin Ella, who was her age and also kept a journal. She returned to Florence, noting that things had been dull at the plantation with only her parents there for company. She reported the deaths of Lt. John Moore, S. Jones, Capt. Jim Kirkman and other brave and gallant young men. Sis Lou delivered a baby boy named Charles, her two brothers were scattered, and Jack had now resided at the northern prison for 11 months. School started back again, which Sallie enjoyed attending. She took courses in English Literature, Ancient History, Rhetoric, Bullion's Grammar, Well's Philosophy, Entomology and Hemans Reader.

By October "the old Yanks" had been in town for two weeks and appeared to have settled there for the winter. Brother Wat, now a medical doctor, had 96 patients in his ward at Macon, and Brother Wash came across the river under a flag of truce to visit. Sis Lou's second-youngest child, Mary, just one-year-old, died of consumption. Sallie turned 16, and was given a breastpin with Pa's image on it. "Oh, would that I was as good as I am old!" In November Jack returned home on parole, and Brother Wash came across to see him. With great emotion, the two brothers kissed one another. Good news continued as the Rebel infantry recaptured Florence, "The poor old dirty rebs came running up the hills from the river and met with a very warm reception from the ladies ... The band of the rebels played very sweetly nearly all night." On the 14th General Forrest arrived, giving a cheering speech after being serenaded by the

Tennesseans.³⁶⁸ During this three-week stay, balls, parties, concerts, and theatre performances were given nearly every night at the college. Sallie wrote casually of meeting Generals Beauregard, Forrest, and Lee – General Edwin G. Lee, that is. General Forrest stayed at Courtview, along with his wife and son Willie. Sallie liked them very much.



Nathan Bedford Forrest (Wikimedia Commons)

North Alabama had recently become the staging area of General Hood's push into Tennessee. General Forrest's command continued to camp in Florence, which did not go well for the Southern troops. The river flooded, submerging pontoon bridges and making roads impassable, and, critically, delaying the arrival of key supplies on the rails. On November 13, General Hood managed to cross, but more rains delayed his troops. W.J. Worsham of the 19th Tennessee Infantry wrote in his diary on November 21 that they plodded forward "in rain, sleet, and snow. The wind blew almost a hurricane in our faces and, with the snow, was almost blinding."³⁶⁹ One week later, Hood's invading army finally left Florence, heading north. With their departure, the quiet must have been deafening.

Within one month, Sallie reported, "I have sad news to tell. The poor rebels went up into Tennessee and were defeated... They had infested

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 47.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

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Nashville and would have soon been in it; but Hood's army had been taught to retreat and fight and would not fight without running. It was the worse defeat our army ever experienced and I hope the last." She named some of the wounded and dead, including old friends. Colonel Hunter's entire regiment was captured. Brother Jack made it to Macon, Mississippi, Wash was in the retreat from Huntsville, unharmed and Charley was unharmed, as well. There was no news about her brother-in-law Jim, which made the family uneasy. Captain Williams was killed, "one of the nicest young men of our little town." The news spread across the countryside by the end of December that Hood's army was defeated at the Battles of Franklin and Nashville with great loss and suffering. General Forrest's cavalry tried to protect the Confederate's now retreating army. The soldiers who could dragged themselves out of Tennessee; some lingered in Florence on their way home. They were no longer were interested in fighting.

In January "we had the old Yankee General Wilson and his staff to come and order rooms" and stayed one night with his staff at Courtview.³⁷⁰ (He offered supplies of coffee and sugar from the wagons to follow, but these provisions never appeared – another of those Yankee tricks.) Sallie heard Brother Jack and cousin Tommy Foster, both now paroled, had entered the army again in February. They had not seen Grandma Watkins in Huntsville for over two years, but heard of the death of her grandson, Watkins Harris (Sallie's cousin), who joined in the first volunteer rush. "He died a most glorious death; telling his relatives to meet him in Heaven." His father, Stephen Harris, wrote his sister Mary Frances Saunders, "My precious boy is gone where he shall hear of wars no more."³⁷¹ Several homes were burned, including that of her Uncle Benjamin F. Foster, perhaps made easier because the men were away. Aunt Agnes was confined to her bed there with pneumonia, and Cousin

³⁷⁰ "Old" General James H. Wilson was approximately 37 years old at that time, and on his way through the heartland of Alabama.

³⁷¹ "It was a great consolation to loved ones that the deceased was tended to by family and had made peace with this world," wrote Stephen Harris. "My precious boy is gone where he shall hear of wars no more. He died in great triumph at 1 o'clock Tuesday morning." As he showed signs of weakness, "his conversations from thence on abounded in the precious promises of the Bible and snatches from the beautiful hymns of Zion." His breathing became labored and he kissed the hand of all about him and "I am going now; good-bye mother; meet me in heaven!" To Allen, a man he'd kept enslaved and had attended him during all these years of war-worn duty, "He stretched out his hands and said 'Good-bye, my good and faithful friend; meet me in heaven.'" Saunders, *Settlers*, 497, 498.

Ann ran down the street in her “nocturnal garments” calling for help. Throughout the entire unprotected South, bushwhackers now had their way. Wanton robberies and murders were not uncommon. Newton Scott was “murdered by a stragglng gang of guerrillas at him home” in January. Had not the Scott family suffered enough already? James Scott died in 1861 and his youngest son, Martin Van Buren Scott, died in November of 1862. Levi Scott died in a prison camp in June of 1862 and John Scott was killed in battle in February of 1863.³⁷² General Roddey attempted to keep order and protect the local population, but he and his troops were hunted by Federal troops. Sallie’s cousin, son of Judge Foster, witnessed the torture and death of elderly Harvey Wilson and his son for Wilson’s hidden money. Young Foster was also shot, but only pretended to be dead. It was now time for the Federal troops under Captain Riggs and Colonel Buck (200 men) to assume safety for the area and capture criminals. After a military examination, members of the gang were escorted about a mile out of town and “they were caused to kneel down, when the fatal command was given, ‘make ready,’ ‘take aim,’ ‘fire,’ and their souls were ushered into eternity.”³⁷³

In April, Ma had been quite ill, but kind Providence allowed her to recover. Family members, including her brothers, wandered in and out. A new social life sprung up again with cousins and townspeople. New routines were established. School started. Sallie’s last entry for the year 1865 was in April, when she considered growing older (she was now almost 17), “It seems too hard that I am growing to be a young lady, when I do not want to be one. My sincere wish and prayer is that I may be as good as I am old.”



Sallie picked up her journal and her social life again in January of 1866, writing copiously in her special language. There was a party at the rebel boat *Burnes* with a splendid dinner and everyone stayed until after the dancing, although Sallie did not dance. The family returned quite late to town in an old ambulance, all 13 of them, afraid the springs might break. She concluded that evening with a prayer for “mercy upon my dear

³⁷² Garrett, *History*, 50. Many of those deaths, caused by bushwhackers, were men known by name and recognized in their communities.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 51, 52.

brother that is fond of drink, and may he not drink any more.³⁷⁴ Sallie was on her way to adulthood. There would be no finishing school in Nashville as previously planned, “the war has broken Pa up so, that he did not have the means to send us.” She would not be homesick, at least, and there was school here to attend with her friends and Doctor Mitchell.

On February 17, 1870, the *Florence Journal* announced under the heading of Marriages: Sallie I. Foster to Sterling P. McDonald, “Another precious gem has been taken from the coronet of Lauderdale. It has been enclustered [sic] in the diadem of Limestone, and Lauderdale is content at the transfer, so that her sister Limestone [County] avouches for fidelity in such a safe keeping, as to protect and defend the glittering jewel.” The couple moved to property McDonald owned in Arkansas and had five children. They returned to Courtview in 1886 to live with and nurse Sallie’s mother, she who would “long be remembered by the poor.” Sallie wrote only occasionally in her journal through her marriage, until November of 1887. She included the sad deaths of her mother and her own daughter, Sallie, “how powerless we mortals are.” Sallie Independence Foster McDonald died within a few months of her husband on December 2, 1897. Her journal was one of innocence and earnestness, but she recorded the days exactly as she lived them – a child thrust into and surrounded by chaos and war.

³⁷⁴ This was not to be. Dr. Watkins F. Foster “commenced life with promise, but was wrecked on the rock of intemperance” and died in 1885. (Saunders, *Settlers*, 241.)

LAWRENCE COUNTY

The Little Rebel: Ellen Virginia Saunders (1848-1900)

Her journal an intimate loving friend who never betrays...

From the family home at Rocky Hill, Ellen Saunders, age 14 – the youngest of the Saunders children – began keeping a journal in 1862, during times of unprecedented chaos. Upon her severely-wounded father's July 13 returned to Lawrence County following the Battle of Murfreesboro, she shared moments spent with many well-known Confederate leaders.



Ellen Virginia Saunders (“The Little Rebel”)

The Saunders were a distinguished family. Ellen’s grandfather, Rev. Turner Saunders, built his fine brick palladium-style home near Courtland, half-way between Florence and Decatur in 1824. Ellen’s parents, Mary Frances (Watkins) and James Edmonds Saunders began construction of their “castle,” Rocky Hill, four miles away in 1858; in 1861, construction

was finally completed.³⁷⁵ From the perspective of early Alabama history, James Saunders' genealogy is fascinating. In his book *Early Settlers of Alabama*, Saunders expressed deep pride in his family and his memories of them. Ellen's Watkins connections were impeccable; she was raised in a background of near-royalty in their rural countryside.³⁷⁶ The Federal Census of 1860 reported James and his wife, Mary, five of their eleven children still at home, and his worth over \$365,000 (almost \$13.5M in 2023).

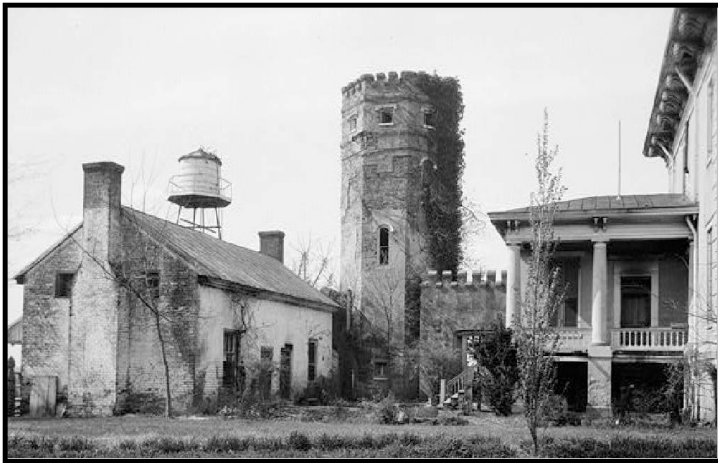
³⁷⁵ The first property owner claimed there were large rocks on the hill "so thickly strewn, his horse could scarce pick his way." As a result, there were miles of rock walls. For his comments, see James Edmonds Saunders, *Early Settlers of Alabama*, 11. According to local lore, the five-story tower enabled Mr. Saunders to watch the work of the people he kept enslaved. Other tales involved jewels hidden under the floorboards and its use as a shot tower, with lead dropped and molded at the bottom into bullets. Wounded Civil War soldiers were cared for at the house, with at least two buried in the family cemetery. For more stories see Marc R. Matrana, *Lost Plantations of the South* (Jackson, Miss.: Univ. Mississippi, 2009), 113. Dr. Dudley Saunders, son of Dr. D. Saunders, lived at Rocky Hill until 1920 when alleged supernatural occurrences took place. At its best, the house was unusual-looking and attracted several ghost stories. Neighbors reported tales of misty images on the stairwell, pianos playing, clanking soldiers' swords, and mysterious sounds from the wine cellar. The house was demolished in 1961. Catherine Tucker Windham and Margaret Gillis Figh included these stories in their book *Thirteen Alabama Ghosts and Jeffery* written in 1969.

³⁷⁶ The Watkins offered new familial relationships with the Foster and Irvine families across the river in Florence. Robert and Lawrence Watkins resided in Huntsville, along with Stephen Willis Harris and future governor Robert Patton. They socialized in Huntsville with descendants of Thompsons, LeRoy Pope, and John Williams Walker, all originally from Petersburg, Georgia.

Lawrence County



Rocky Hill, Courtland (HABS)



Slave Quarters, Rocky Hill, Courtland (HABS)

Ellen began her journal with descriptions of life at the family home, but by September of 1862, the big house most likely echoed with empty rooms.³⁷⁷ Ellen wrote that Robert, her oldest brother, served on the staff of Gen. Phillip Cook in Virginia. Her brother Dudley served at Chattanooga as an army surgeon, and brother Lawrence, who was not yet seventeen,

³⁷⁷ Ellen Saunders "War-Time Journal of a 'Little Rebel,'" *Confederate Veteran*. Dec. 1919, XXVII, #12, 451-452.

was a scout.³⁷⁸ (Earlier, Ellen Saunders' sister Elizabeth wed Bruno Poellnitz and died in 1852. Daughter Mary Louisa married Henry Blair, but died in 1859 leaving behind a daughter of her own, Elizabeth Blair, to be raised by the child's grandparents, Mary and James.³⁷⁹) Thus Elizabeth Blair, Sarah Jane Saunders (now Mrs. John Hayes), and sister Prudence, who would die in 1864, resided with Ellen and her mother. Those days of tremendous upheaval and uncertainty may have instigated Ellen's journal writing. It provided a safe place to share events and her feelings about them.



“Sister Prudie” Prudence Saunders

³⁷⁸ An unidentified person may have enhanced Ellen's original material. For instance, the first entry of Sept. 26, 1862 identifies the whereabouts of two of her brothers almost identically to page 17 of her father James Saunders' book, *Early Settlers of Alabama*. His granddaughter (Ellen's niece), Elizabeth Saunders (Blair) Stubbs, was immersed in the family drama and their role in the Lost Cause, compiling Saunders' material with her vast pages of genealogy. She may have made insertions in the *The Little Rebel*.

³⁷⁹ Dr. Poellnitz hailed from a noble Prussian family; he attended medical college in Philadelphia before settling in the South. When the Saunders family traveled back and forth to Mobile for the winters in their private train, Elizabeth, then 15, had become ill in Marengo County and stayed with friends. During her recovery she was tended there by the doctor. She enjoyed “a short and brilliant social career in Mobile” for two years before marrying him in 1852. Mary Louisa married Henry Blair in Mobile and, at his death in 1855, returned home with their daughter, Elizabeth, only to die four years later herself. It is possibly this daughter who wrote the additional genealogies for Saunders' book. Sarah Jane Saunders married Dr. John Moore Hayes of Athens and was “spared to comfort her parents in their old age.” Her husband saved the 26th Alabama battle flag by wrapping it around his personal body slave as they returned to Alabama from their surrender at Greensboro, North Carolina. It hung on the wall at Rocky Hill, “faded and riddled with bullets” for years until donated to the state archives. (Saunders, *Settlers*, 355, 356, 358, 129)

Ellen's father James sustained war injuries requiring a long recovery. While leading his men on a charge of the Murfreesboro courthouse, he was shot through the chest; the ball shot through his right lung, tearing through his body. Saunders managed to ride to a nearby cottage. Dismounting his horse, he fell onto his rifle and shattered a rib. A fellow officer came to his aid. Saunders gave him messages and his watch to send home; death seemed eminent. The unfortunate officer stepped out onto the road and was immediately shot and killed by Yankees, who also robbed his pockets. Saunders was very fortunate to be tended to by a doctor and nursed by local citizens before returning to Rocky Hill.³⁸⁰

As the War slowly made its way into the Tennessee Valley, young adolescent men began enlisting. Ellen's cousin Washington Foster, about 18 years old, came to visit, along with his friend Edward O'Neal. Wash was a high-minded boy who she said, enlisted "not to come home unless brought there wounded or dead." (His brother Jack, about 16, also joined.) She described Edward O'Neal as "pleasant, handsome, and considered bright by everyone."³⁸¹ Mary Wheatley also stayed at Rocky Hill. The two girls were given their lessons by brother Dudley's wife, sister-in-law Catherine (Wheatley) Saunders.³⁸²

Unable to attend church in those chaotic days, the family improvised their own Sunday school with Bible readings, hymns, and poems. Ellen was thankful that her father had been spared, "I Think I love him more than anything on earth. What would life be to me without him,

³⁸⁰ Ellen Virginia Saunders, "The Little Rebel," *Confederate Veteran*, Dec. 1919, XXVIII, #1, 11-12, *passim*. While Ellen famously kept a journal and/or memoir, she did not write the novel *The Little Rebel*, nor was she the source for Edward Peple's play, *The Littlest Rebel* that was adapted into a 1935 movie with Shirley Temple, or Annie Johnston's 1895 book, *The Little Colonel*.

³⁸¹ The cousins were George Washington and Andrew Jackson Foster, sons of wealthy factory owner George Washington Foster. The O'Neals lived in a modest house on North Court Street in Florence, and Edward O'Neal, the senior, later served two terms as governor of the state of Alabama. The father immediately joined the Confederate army, and the son who visited (19-year-old Edward, Jr.) enlisted with Phillip Roddey's 4th Alabama. The oldest son, Alfred, also immediately joined and the three were known locally as "The Fighting O'Neals." A third, much younger son, Emmett, also later became governor of Alabama.

³⁸² Catherine (Wheatley) Saunders died in 1864 while giving birth to her second child. Dr. Dudley later married her sister, Ellen's friend Mary Wheatley, in 1867. Mrs. Olivia O'Neal wrote letters to her husband; they have been included in a different section.

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so refined and intellectual and so gentle?”³⁸³ For her own personal well-being, she acknowledged, wishing she sought to “read my Bible, for it is certainly my duty.” War activity surrounded the family. Lawrence left with military dispatches for Iuka, Mississippi. Her uncle, Col. Thomas Foster (a Congressman), was expected the next day with news about the Confederate Congress in Richmond.

On October 6, she wrote, “Heigh-ho! I have the blues.” Lawrie and Uncle Tom Foster had not arrived. Encouraging news reached them of a great victory at Corinth, however. Word was that General Bragg had taken Louisville, and Stonewall Jackson was now in Maryland. “Mobile Cadets were the first to cross the Potomac, and when they were all over, General Jackson ... prayed ‘that the chains of Maryland might soon be riven and the Confederate flag shield her evermore from the touch of the despot,’ and the soldiers knelt and kissed the soil of Maryland.”³⁸⁴

The young ladies had no difficulty entertaining themselves. Ellen and Mary Wheatley put on disguises as poor women on their way to Chattanooga as a trick on a neighbor. The joke was not quite as funny to the adults when the girls returned home on the back of the neighbor’s old horse in the rain. In November, Freeman Goode, an old (62) neighbor and grass widower planned a party, but the only beaux expected were those not in the army. During War time, these were not the young men whose attention well-appointed ladies wanted to catch. The young ladies gave a “candy stew”, but again, few men were in attendance because of the War. Seemingly safe, on the south side of the Tennessee River, Ellen copied into her journal the very dramatic poem “All Quiet on the Potomac Tonight.”

Mr. Goode invited the family for dinner and included Kate Armistead, Captain McFarland, and Willie Irvine. A dance was unexpectedly arranged and several men from the 1st Kentucky were present (most likely officers). Ellen’s brother Robert was on leave from Tennessee, and Dudley arrived to recover from his case of “camp fever” (probably typhoid fever). Dudley later left for Chattanooga with his wife, their baby, and her sister Mary Wheatley (Ellen’s young friend and

³⁸³ Ellen never mentioned her mother in this journal.

³⁸⁴ During the early October campaigns, General Price was lucky to escape destruction from General Rosecrans; General Bragg fell back from the superior forces of General Buell; and, although the Mobile Cadets were the first to cross the Potomac River, it has been difficult to verify that the men actually kissed the soil.

companion). News came of a Confederate victory at Murfreesboro. Accurate information arrived slowly. A wounded Rebel soldier seeking shelter on the night of January 14, 1863 may have told the family what he'd witnessed. Ellen did not say it, but the Confederates were repulsed and withdrew from the 2nd Battle of Murfreesboro. The soldier had arrived on foot and her father, who was still recovering from his own wounds, sent the young soldier home in a bed made up in their carriage. She wrote that her dearest friend Loulie (probably Lucy Redus, age 15, from Mobile) wrote from Tuscaloosa where she attended school at Mrs. Saunders' Female Academy. Ellen reported that the nearby military cadets were a glorious lot of boys; she hoped to be there soon.

3rd Lt. Sullivan, nephew of General Earl Van Dorn, spent several days with the Saunders family as a guest at Rocky Hill. "His is very well read, always likes bright people," Ellen wrote. On February 13, Van Dorn departed. According to Ellen, the plan was for Generals Van Dorn and Bragg to fight Rosecrans before Murfreesboro. General Roddy's corps left Tuscumbia to join Bragg.³⁸⁵

On February 23, Ellen heard Yankee gunboats had passed Tuscumbia, and a skirmish had possibly followed. Federals might reach Courtland within the hour. Her still-recovering father, James Saunders, returned to the army. "God protect his patriotic heart! O, the moon shines so bright and calm tonight, as if in mockery of our woes." She wrote with relief in March that the enemy came as close as four miles to nearby Town Creek, but had been unable to ford the creek after its destruction by Confederate soldiers. Meanwhile, citizens on the north side of the river were made to pay taxes, then see their property destroyed by the Federals. Ladies were insulted and searched by men "running their hands into their pockets." Her father returned briefly with news that General Bragg would be sending troops for the defense of the valley, and the 16th Alabama was quartered at Huntsville.

Ellen proudly remained a "notorious Rebel" but prayed the horrible war would soon be over, with the Yankees in "Davy Jones's locker." In the meantime, she wrote of the young soldiers who spent the morning at Rocky Hill: Lt. Madding, Lt. Davis, and Dr. Ed Ashford. Dinner company included Cousin Joe Parrish and Capt. Montgomery of Van Dorn's staff. Captain Grant of Forrest's brigade was also there for a few days. The previous year, Ellen had thrown a bouquet to a soldier passing in the ranks

³⁸⁵ 15-year-old Ellen Saunders showed no amazement at writing of military actions involving thousands of soldiers.

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while riding her pony, and Captain Grant revealed he was that very soldier!

Colonel Hannon of Montgomery, Lieutenant Moncrief and eight soldiers stayed overnight in April, with four of the men badly wounded. She recalled the year before when Federal soldiers surrounded the house for the first time and demanded her father – 79 of them. “So many to capture just one man!” She remembered an earlier time when two companies of soldiers passed the big gate and she held a beautiful Confederate flag, officers and privates calling for it. She gave a little impromptu speech and handed it to a nice private who made a beautiful response. “A member of his company told me last night that he pinned that flag to his horse’s head in the battle of Shiloh and hurraed for me in the charge, and his name is Lieut. John Smith.” This was heady stuff for a young girl. During this exciting time, she tried to keep up her studies, her course of reading, and daily horseback rides.

Ellen wrote that General Roddey rode to Tuscumbia with as many as 1200 men and one cannon to meet Yankees on their way to Big Bear Creek, perhaps 15,000 to 20,000 strong. The Federals were expected to enter the valley once again. Fortunately for their cause, this was the beginning of Federal Col. Abel Streight’s poorly planned and executed trek through northern Alabama, beginning April 19, 1863. In an attempt to disrupt Confederate supply lines, about 1,700 Union men rode mules, many of which were old and decrepit, ending in a humiliating defeat and surrender to General Forrest with a little help from 16-year-old Emma Sanson. The story boosted morale throughout the South as the stories spread.

Ellen next wrote from Huntsville on April 26, refugeeing with her sisters at Aunt Louisa (Watkins) Harris’s home.³⁸⁶ This was not at all pleasing to the young lady. There was plenty of company to be had, but Sister declared “mother would not approve of my having beaux, so I do not have as nice a time as I might.” There was a rumor that Rocky Hill had burned, and that Lawrie had escorted their mother and the servants to Athens for safety. General Nathan Bedford Forrest and her father arrived in Huntsville to confer with General Bragg on May 13 amid cheers from admiring patriots. Two days later, while walking on the pike, she threw

³⁸⁶ Louisa (Mrs. Stephen Willis Harris) was also an aunt to Sallie Independence Foster of Florence who spent time with her in Huntsville during the War. Cassie Fennell from Guntersville was related to the Harris family, as were the Foster and Saunders families. The house was located across the street from another journalist, Mary Jane Chadick, and is still prominent at 420 Randolph Street.

roses to General Forrest as he drove by. Apparently, her glove flew off, “unintentionally on my part,” and “he laughed and stopped to ask me if I had ‘challenged him.’ No indeed I would rather appoint so brave a man my champion. Whereupon he thanked me quite gallantly.” That night, Mrs. Forrest and the general attended a party at the home of Mrs. Robinson, followed the next day by a reception given by grateful citizens. At the gala, Forrest was presented with “an elegant war steed.”³⁸⁷

The valley seemed protected and peaceful once again, and by the end of May 1863, Ellen traveled by barouche with General Forrest and his staff to Decatur and then finally to Rocky Hill, “Home again!” Life in her own surroundings offered continued excitement. According to her account, Gen. Bill Johnson, camped nearby, “accompanied by a guard of 200 men and his flag floated proudly in the breeze spent the morning with us ... I never talked to so many officers at one time before.”³⁸⁸

By late May, however, the Federals were again in Florence. In June, Ellen wrote, “Our struggle for independence is hourly becoming more bloody” with the “sad, sad news” of an attack on noble General Forrest. “How gladly would I substitute myself rather than the South should lose so able and chivalrous a defender! ... Were I a man, I could fight for the South, but I could not love her more.” Had Miss Ellen seen a picture of Forrest’ youthful assailant, Lt. Andrew W. Gould, CSA, who was killed in the exchange, she may have felt sympathy for him. After being shot himself in the hip, Forrest killed the young man with his knife which he had opened with his teeth. As mentioned in the previous account of Olivia O’Neal, Lt. Andrew Gould, young and unprepared for the experience of an older and more experienced officer succumbed to his own foolishness and reckless actions.

During this time, General Forrest’s younger brother, Capt. William Forrest, recovered from his wounds at Rocky Hill. Unfortunately, as he departed to Bailey Springs, he was thrown from a buggy and fractured his already injured leg.

The Yankees were expected again within a matter of days. Reality settled over the family. According to Ellen, this was the “darkest hour of the Confederacy ... It makes me angry to think the Yankees can drive me

³⁸⁷ By many accounts, this was King Phillip, the horse considered to be Forrest’s favorite and the only one of 29 he rode that survived the War. Many groups have attempted to claim this notable gift to the general.

³⁸⁸ She may have written or remembered incorrectly; this editor has not been able to identify General Johnson and his 200-man guard.

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from my home.” The family planned for Ellen to go to Columbus, Mississippi and, from there, the Alabama Female College in Tuscaloosa. Not all was hopeless, however; 250 cadets drilled at the military college there. President Davis declared August 21, 1863 a day of humiliation, fasting and prayer, and her devotions posed, “Ah, how many prayers are wafted to the throne of Light this day for fathers, husbands, brothers, sons, and lovers! May God on high hear us?”³⁸⁹

Ellen’s entry for August 22, 1863 ruminated on sadness. A dear friend, Col. Fred A. Ashford of the 16th Alabama “fell nobly on the altar of liberty.”³⁹⁰ He would miss the returning “happy tramp from war” as other soldiers returned victoriously. Back at home, the dangers for unprotected civilians had increased as bands of Tories (Jayhawkers, as Ellen called them) grew more active and violent. Refugees and travelers were regularly robbed along the roadways, and Ellen feared for her safety on the intended trip to Tuscaloosa. In September, General Roddey used their house as his headquarters and “many agreeable officers came and went.” Shortly after, however, Roddey was ordered to Gadsden. Ellen’s brother Lawrie accompanied him as an escort, leaving the local farmland and small communities open once again to roaming bands of outlaws.

Noble Gen. Benjamin Helm was killed at the battle of Chickamauga on Sept. 21, 1863, “one of Kentucky’s bravest sons. O, how we mourn him! He was here with us and we knew him well.” It is possible that Ellen met General Helm, but would her high opinion of him have changed if she knew that Helm, who commanded the 1st Kentucky Brigade, was married to Emilie Todd, half-sister to Mary Todd Lincoln? By October, Generals Joe Wheeler, Stephen D. Lee, and Wharton were in the valley. General Wheeler planned to stay at Rocky Hill. On October 11, General Wheeler and staff arrived along with generals Stephen D. Lee and Sam Ferguson. Ellen thought them young to be generals; Wheeler’s staff consisted of “elegant gentlemen” – Burford, Wailes, Pointer, and others.³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ While many days of fasting and prayer were declared by President Davis this was likely March 27, 1863.

³⁹⁰ Fred Augustus Ashford, born in 1830, was killed at the Battle of Franklin on Nov. 30, 1864, according to records. Again, Ellen’s entry in 1863 makes one consider that this diary, published almost 20 years after her death in 1900, was assembled second-hand, and the sequence of events may be misplaced.

³⁹¹ All the officers associated with Gen. Joe Wheeler were young. Gen. Stephen Lee, born in 1833 was the youngest lieutenant general in the CSA at the time of his appointment. Wharton became a brigadier general. Sam Ferguson had been one of the officers to receive the formal surrender of Major Anderson at the fall of

Major Pointer gifted her with a “five shooter,” Captain Nichols presented her with a beautiful crimson army sash captured at McMinnville, and General Wheeler displayed a Federal flag he had captured there. Rocky Hill was lively with dispatches, plans, and soldiers. Other activities included a delightful performance in Courtland for the 35th Alabama. Ellen’s sister Prue went with Captain Wade while Ellen went with Lieutenant Pointer, who was about 22 at that time. Ellen, dressed in Confederate colors, played “Whispering Winds” and “Wheeler’s Polka.” At the large concert in town, Ellen noted, “brass buttons have been very attractive of late.”

By late October of 1863, the Confederate military departed with Generals Lee and Ferguson planning to engage a large, advancing enemy force below Tusculumbia. Apparently 2,500 Yankees were in Mount Hope, just 25 miles away. Ellen heard cannons all day and felt artillery shake the house. The enemy was expected to be upon them by the end of the week. “It is terrible,” she lamented. Now seemed the best time to find a sanctuary, not with relatives in Huntsville, but to the south.

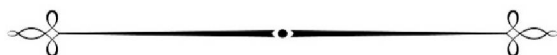
Ellen picked up six months later from the Female College in Tuscaloosa. She wrote in April 1864 that she treasured her journal as “an intimate and loving friend who never betrays.” Her family was scattered at this time; some were safe within Confederate lines, some were within Federal lines, and one was often out of the country.³⁹² A maturing Ellen quoted from *Les Miserables*, “And still the baying of the dismal dogs of war answer each other.” In May of 1864, Generals Lee and Ferguson, already known to Ellen, paid her a visit while in town. Tuscaloosa streets were filled with soldiers, and there was a review of the Missouri troops, as well. Generals French, Ed Johnson, George D. Johnston, General McCann, Captain James Scanlan, and Capt. Ed Terger presided over this grand

Fort Sumter and raise the new flag. He later married Catherine Lee, connecting him to the Percy family of Mississippi and Robert E. Lee. During his time on the Mississippi Levy Board (as secretary and treasurer), \$20,000 to \$40,000 went missing, and he suddenly moved to Charleston, South Carolina. Elisha Spruille Burford was born in Kentucky, a lawyer and Episcopal priest. General Wheeler commended him and Lt. William E. Wailes, ADC, for gallantry. Colonel Marcellus Pointer, with the 12th Alabama Cavalry, was from Holly Springs. Captain Jonathan W. Nichol, from Tennessee, was wounded in actions four times. (Wikipedia)

³⁹² Robert Saunders, a cotton broker with Saunders & Son in Mobile, became a blockade runner to England and France during the War. Afterwards, he made his way to California to search for gold and later became a member of the state legislature there. (Saunders, *Settlers*, 355)

event. She saw Generals S.D. Lee, Jackson, French and Hodge with their staffs.³⁹³ As if that were not enough, she and Jennie Mellon, walking on campus, encountered General Jackson, whose horse ran away as he dismounted! He returned with the horse and she said, “I had just accomplished more than ever a Yankee had, for I had unhorsed him.” She was now drawn to his courtly manner all the more. A large party was given for General Lee, “and he kindly sent to know if I would go with him,” Apparently the schoolmistress, Mrs. Saunders “preferred not.”³⁹⁴ Likewise they did not accept an invitation to Mrs. Fidget’s event on Saturday night. Other citizens might be troubled about the social scene and apparent gaiety, but Ellen added sensitive lines written in 1825 by Rev. John Home from the English tragedy *Douglas*:

Free is his heart who for his country fights,
He on the eve of the battle may resign
Himself to social pleasures; sweetest then
When danger to the soldier’s soul endears
The human joy that never may return.



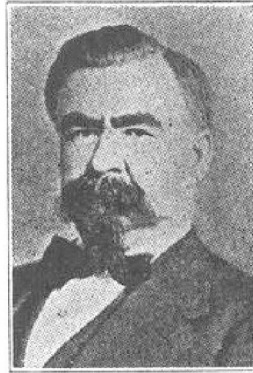
This was Ellen Saunders’ last journal entry during the years of the War. She wrote one additional paragraph after the War regarding her father and brother, Lawrie, both captured on August 11, 1864. Her father, most likely still recovering from his earlier wounds, was released a week later, but her brother was sent to Camp Chase. After his release and return home, she wrote, he succumbed to illness contracted during his time in prison and died in 1867.

Ellen may have not been able to continue at school for the remainder of May of 1864, but in January of 1865, Rocky Hill was given a “safe guard” to protect property and family. She was most likely home by then. An Indiana private wrote to Colonel Saunders, “I found your family to be Ladeies [sic]. Our soldiers behaved very ungentlymanly on your premises, but it was not the falt [sic] of our officers. I was treated very

³⁹³ Those not already noted were probably the wealthy author and planter Samuel G. Gibbs; Edward “Allegheny Ed” Johnson who in a surprise attack captured 2300 prisoners near Winchester; and George D. Johnson who was in every battle of the Army of Tennessee. (Wikipedia) William H. Jackson, Samuel G. French, George B. Hodge, McCann and Terger were not identified.

³⁹⁴ After all, Lee was a 31-year-old and Ellen was only 16.

kindly by your family.”³⁹⁵ Only a few years earlier, according to Ellen, the Saunders had joined this “Happy Valley” with other planters, “an easy-going courteous class. Content was theirs. The morning and evening songs of their slaves, nature’s merriest children (for where is the negro not a child?) echoed thousands of happy hearts.”³⁹⁶ Saunders returned after the War and offered, he said, a “patriarchal protectorate” for the people he’d formerly enslaved, “these children of nature,” establishing a church building, and organizing a court to preserve law and order, though he was derisive of the results.³⁹⁷ Although Mary Saunders had taken a fall from her horse the previous year and was confined to a wheelchair, Ellen’s parents celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 1874. They were “two old people dreaming of their past. Mrs. Saunders died in 1889 “always cheerful and making cheer for others” and James Saunders lived until 1896.³⁹⁸



Dr. Dudley D. Saunders

³⁹⁵ Saunders, *Settlers*, 30.

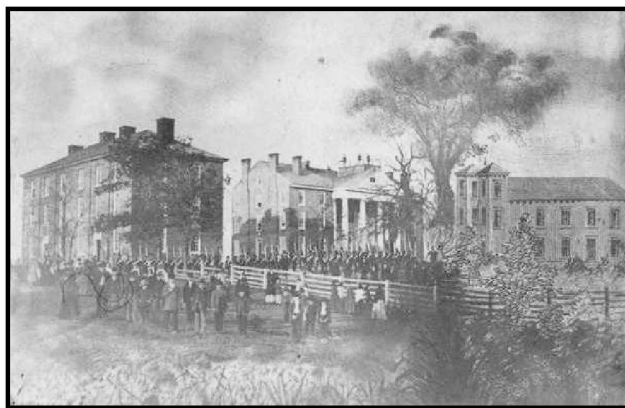
³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁹⁷ Saunders tried to avoid the “tyranny of King Cotton” and introduced other crops. For a time, the family experimented with cultivating grapes in the European manner with help from a young Austrian, Peter Pujo. (Saunders, 31) Recovery was slow and the 1870 census showed assets in the name of Mary Watkins Saunders at \$18,000 in real estate and \$2500 personal estate.

³⁹⁸ Saunders, *Settlers*, 31, 32. The couple had outlived all their children except three: Dudley, Sarah, and Ellen.

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Ellen's brother, Dr. Dudley, re-established his residence in Memphis with his second wife, Mary Wheatley (Ellen's friend during the War). He was President of the Board of Health at the start of the yellow fever epidemic there in 1878. While he would later be honored at Martyr Park for his service, it was Dudley who refused to call for a quarantine of the city; the death toll was enormous.³⁹⁹ Among his many friends was Louis B. McFarland who, in the fall of 1864, had been detailed to Auburn where he met and formed a friendship with Dr. Saunders, then Commander of the Post. It is likely that he was the one Ellen mentioned earlier as a guest at their home. McFarland may have met one or both of the Saunders brothers while attending LaGrange College in Florence. McFarland a student there on the day of the firing on Fort Sumter. He recalled that night, "the town was wild, bonfires blazed on every street. The student volunteers paraded and tossed ready caps in the air, and made the welkin ring with shouts of rejoicing." He remembered the scene "as one with feelings of intense sorrow." He returned home to Tennessee and enlisted.⁴⁰⁰



Confederate Military College at LaGrange

³⁹⁹ More lives were taken during this epidemic than the combined Chicago Fire, San Francisco Earthquake and the Johnstown Flood. Molly Caldwell Crosby, *American Plague* (New York: Berkley, 2007), 49, 83. Dr. Saunders died in 1908. As an aside, it was long believed that Dr. Dudley Saunders built the noted Pink Palace in Memphis; the family was known to have an affinity for expansive buildings. This is not true, however; the Pink Palace was begun by Clarence Saunders, originally from Virginia, who founded the innovative Piggly Wiggly grocery chain.

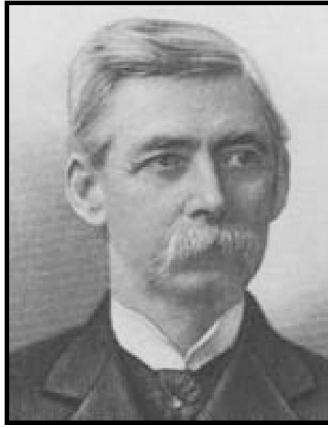
⁴⁰⁰ *Memoirs and Addresses by Louis B. McFarland*. 1922, 10. www.dancyville.net/macbook (accessed 12/12/17).

After the War, Dudley invited McFarland (soon to become a successful railroad lawyer) to visit and spent time with his parents and family at Rocky Hill. Colonel Saunders offered “the best type of Southern gentleman, manly in form, courtly in manner, cultured and learned, one of the distinguished men of the South for many years.”⁴⁰¹ His wife Mary “was the embodiment of all the higher virtues of a wife, mother, hostess, and Christian.” Included in the social circle there were Mary (Wheatley) and Doctor Dudley Saunders, their daughter Kate, and Mary’s stepmother. Brother Robert occasionally was there as well as Sarah (Saunders) Hays and Elizabeth Blair, the Saunders granddaughter. He recalled “days of sunshine and evenings of table talk especially a constant scintillation of fun and frolic, wisdom and wit and quick repartee.” By now, McFarland had become acquainted with Ellen Virginia Saunders, “the little rebel.” Ellen, in turn, visited Memphis, “She came, I saw, and she conquered, and a lengthy courtship followed” in 1871. Apparently “She loved me for the dangers I had passed! And I loved her that she did not pity them.” They married April 4, 1872. Ella, as he called her, and Louis McFarland moved to Jackson where he served on the state supreme court. “My young wife gifted by nature, entertaining by culture and quick of wit and charming manner, entertained with ease, and her parlor was rightfully filled with judges of the court and my brother members of the bar.” They enjoyed outdoor activities and organized sporting clubs for racing, hunting, and fishing. Their Ellemac Farm maintained thoroughbred horses that established many notable records.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰¹ In his memoirs, Colonel Saunders spoke of deep friendship with Gen. Nathan B. Forrest and that the generals spent several weeks visiting at Rocky Hill before his death. (Saunders, *Settlers*, 77.) Forrest famously spent two weeks at nearby Bailey Spring in an attempt to regain his health, but this editor could find no reference to a stay with Saunders.

⁴⁰² McFarland, *Memiors*, 19, 20, 21.

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Judge Louis B. McFarland

Ellen (Saunders) McFarland did not enjoy good health in the final years of her life and died July 1, 1900 after almost 30 years of marriage. The Memphis *Commercial Appeal* included her obituary that she was, “one of the best-known matrons in Memphis – a brilliant woman by culture and a gifted one by nature.” Judge McFarland had inscribed on her tombstone marker, “A steadfast friend, a dutiful daughter, a loyal and loving wife, awakening appreciation of the poetic and beautiful in life, and inspiring to noble thoughts.”

MARSHALL COUNTY

Catherine Margaret Fennell (1842-1884)

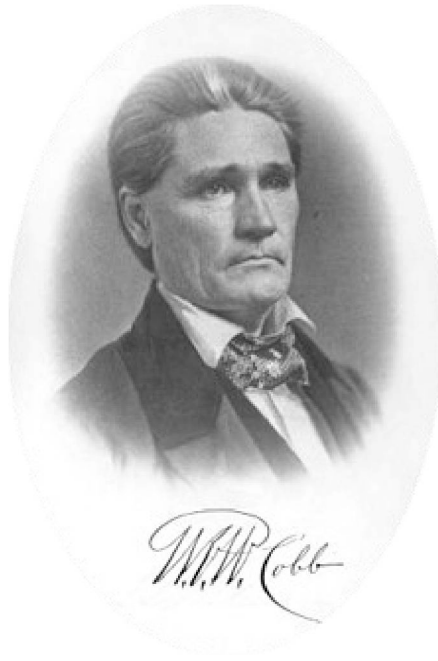
Yonder Come the Yankees

Catherine Margaret Fennell may have been raised in a rural county hamlet of north Alabama, but she was no stranger to the worlds of polished education, ready cash, flamboyant politics, and genteel manners. Cassie was also fortunate to have a loving family. With the War, formal schooling ended, wealth vanished, privilege shattered, politics raged, and genteel manners would be tested. The Fennell family was diminished in number during the War, but the women endured to reclaim their lives.

Just across the Tennessee River in “Dixie,” near Fort Deposit in Marshall County lived the family of Catherine Fennell. Her well-known father was James Watkins Fennell, a doctor with two medical degrees. He was also a Methodist minister and a planter whose real estate and personal property totaled almost \$65,000 in 1860. He and his wife, Matilda, a native of Londonderry, Ireland, had 10 children and relatives in Jackson, Madison, Lauderdale and Lawrence Counties, who were all well-to-do. Fennell had first settled at the western foot of Green Mountain in Madison County, but by 1860, the family resided on a plantation approximately five miles west of Guntersville. The household contained a substantial library and a great appreciation of education. Two of the brothers, James William (Willie) and Isham Watkins (Wattie) were studying to be physicians. Cassie, as she was called, continued her journal she had begun keeping in earlier days when she and her younger sister, Mary Jane, and Cousin Kate Allison studied at Norton’s Boarding School in Washington, D.C. Their uncle, Representative W.R.W. Cobb, lived nearby when Congress was in session.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰³ William Robert Winfield Cobb, a clock peddler from Jackson County, called W.R.W. by his later-day followers, represented the plain hill-folk when he bested his betters, such as Clement C. Clay, to win a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives (and was re-elected six times). Cobb strongly opposed Secession and withdrew unwillingly from the U.S. Congress. He ran for the Confederate House of Representatives, lost the first time, then was elected to the second

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W.R.W. Cobb (Wikimedia Commons)

The girls had studied writing, history, literature, music, art, physiology, and chemistry. They also enthusiastically socialized in the political scene.⁴⁰⁴

When the young ladies returned home, Cassie and her sister settled in with Ma and Doctor Fennell, who among his other duties, managed the plantation and kept 26 people enslaved. In the years to come, Catherine's writing revealed an awareness of the bigger political scene; it was particularly concerned with her neighborhood and the role of women on

Congress, but never took his seat. He died from an apparent gunshot while mending his fence lines. The shot was fired by his own pistol. A Confederate legislative committee was appointed to investigate him and voted 75-0 to expel him, even though he was already deceased. Enhancing the story, in 2004 at the Jackson County Courthouse a pay voucher dated January 1863, signed by Abraham Lincoln, was found appointing Cobb provisional governor of Alabama. It is possible that his life was an influence for Clemens' book *Tobias Wilson* which described the violence and complexity of rural life at the time.

⁴⁰⁴ Carmen Russell Hurff. *Within the Great Bend: Our Families of the Tennessee River Valley*. (Guntersville, AL: Lakeshore Press, 2000), 14-16.

Marshall County

the home front.⁴⁰⁵ After the election of Lincoln in 1860, Catherine Fennell probably realized the idea of secession was more than just talk when she saw local gentlemen flaunting brightly colored secession cockades on their lapels or hats.



Secession Cockade (Wikimedia Commons)

She recognized the mounting fervor within her small, close-knit community, and the popularity of her secession song at a friend's party. She commented that many people blamed Mr. Yancey for the political situation, while many thought him "the greatest person that ever trod this free soil." Men left to join one of the Huntsville companies, and the "Marshall Boys" quickly organized.⁴⁰⁶

The love that for the Union,
Once in our bosoms beat;
From insult and from injury,
Has turned to scorn and hate.

⁴⁰⁵ Catherine Margaret Fennell's *Journals with Memories Written by Her Brother Caius Gratten Fennell*. Unpub. n.d.

⁴⁰⁶ Larry Joe Smith. *Guntersville Remembered*. (Albertville, AL: Creative Printers, 1989), 184. The "Marshall Boys" became Company F of the Eighth Alabama Cavalry. The "Railroad Guards" were Irishmen who had come to the area to construct the railroad.

ENDURING VOICES

And the banner of Secession
Today we lift on high,
Resolved beneath that glorious flag,
To conquer or to die.

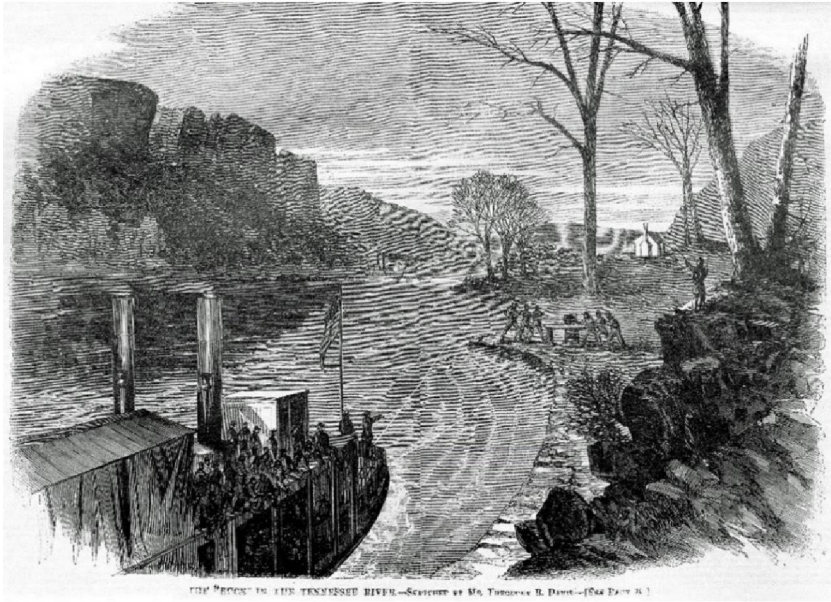
The first Guntersville volunteers left by boat; their departure was an event the size of which Cassie had never witnessed. “There were several thousand persons there and all were bathed in tears while some of the ladies shrieks rent the air at intervals as they bid farewell to their husbands, brothers, and sons... The ladies were not alone in shedding tears for I believe there was not a man present who did not weep. If God is with us, who can be against us?” By September, a second military company prepared to leave. Cassie presented the men with a beautiful silk flag in the name of all the neighborhood ladies.⁴⁰⁷

News of battles won and lost fill the pages of Cassie’s journal, the majority of which were rumors she had heard. Other rumors included that of the hoped-for recognition by Britain and France. The announcements of death of family members, edged in black, were true. Sadly, Cassie never ceased writing these notices throughout the pages of her journal. Her brothers, cousins, and neighbors were wounded, captured, imprisoned and furloughed home, only to return to action once again. “Northern Vandals” occupied Tennessee and drama came closer as the Federals sent gunboats up the river as far as Florence.

In April of 1862, three gentlemen from Huntsville took tea with the family, sharing news that the Union army now occupied that town, and they “could hear the cannonading very plainly.” The refugees, who were now arriving regularly, were safe once across the river. As Yankees closed in on Guntersville and Warrenton, citizens were afraid to resist lest the soldiers destroy their property. Cassie wrote of 46 well-armed men going to private houses and demanding supper. Within a few days it became common for soldiers to steal money, tear up cloths, and take food supplies, mules and horses. The county was full of troops, and the Negroes were badly frightened. Horrifying for everyone was the alarm YONDER COME THE YANKEES.

Cassie heard of destruction at Bellefonte, Larkinsville, Stephenson, and Woodville; even part of the destroyed bridge from Bridgeport had reportedly floated down the river.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid. Thomas J. Eubanks accepted the flag and later died in action.



(Harper's, January 16, 1864)

Stories abounded of horrors that might follow. Cassie heard Yankees made war on women and children, as well as men, when several ladies were required to take the Oath of Allegiance to the Union. She expected shells to be fired at their house, and that it would be burnt just for the soldiers' amusement; a great many homes across the river had already been destroyed that way. The Confederates had burned poor Aunty Charity Lea's cotton near Whitesburg because she'd sold it to the Yankees. The Federals, in turn, took her prisoner, "as if an old lady of 60 could keep a body of troops from burning it if they wanted to."⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁸ "Poor Aunt Charity," twice-widowed, had an estate valued at \$78,000 in the 1860 census. She lived in the Lea Mansion in Pond Beat, one mile north of the river near Whitesburg (on the present-day Redstone Arsenal). Her first husband, James Cooper, built the brick mansion. He ended his life in 1834. Six years later, she married Col. Houston Lea only to be widowed again 1853. By 1870, she was truly poor, living in the household of her former overseer.



Lea Mansion

Local men not officially in the Confederate army who resisted were killed as bushwhackers. Cassie was shocked at July 12 news that her brother Willie, only recently released from prison, was wounded. He had been shot in both legs at a battle near Richmond. Pa made preparations to go north and returned home by wagon on August 9 with Willie and wounded cousin John Allison. Brother Wattie, a captain in the CSA, was captured twice. The first time he was paroled, but the second time, while being shipped north to the prison camp, he jumped overboard and swam ashore near Memphis, eventually rejoining his unit.

Good news arrived regarding the Union withdrawal from Huntsville, although a great deal of corn, bacon, guns, tents, and other supplies were destroyed as soldiers left in September of 1862. The withdrawal also, according to Cassie's journal, took away 600 enslaved Black people. "No one was sorry but glad to get rid of them; a great many want to come back to their masters but they will not let them so the Yankees have to take them." She also heard that 100 Confederate men led by Hambrick and Gurley attacked 4000 Yankees; among those killed was General McCook.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁹ This event may have meant little to Cassie, but the killing of Brig. Gen. Robert McCook (one of the seven popular and prominent "fighting McCook brothers") in a skirmish with men under CSA Captains James Hambrick and Frank Gurley, led to the August 5 killing of livestock and burning of every house in the area near New Market. Even the house of Mrs. Word, who tended the dying general, was burned. Cassie's account of 4,000 men was exaggerated.

Writing on action far away in Virginia, she reported, “both sides speak of hoisting the black flag (that is, to take no more prisoners but to kill all) but I hope they will not have to do that.” On the subject of Tennessee, she wrote, “General Buell stole ten or twelve thousand negroes for work in fortifications of Nashville. There, the negroes are starving and many of them have escaped to their owners and negro women are selling their children to buy bread.”

In late October of 1862, she wrote what she’d heard about General Van Dorn’s loss at the Second Battle of Corinth. Rumor accused Van Dorn of drunkenness, and, according to Cassie, Gen. Sterling Price saved the day. Furthermore, “Drunkenness has been the cause of every disaster during this war.” Her cousin returned from cavalry action in the Sequatchie Valley where they had captured a wagon train of Federals and their valuable assortment of supplies. Cousin Tom Fennell shared a bottle of perfume with Sister Mary,⁴¹⁰ and Cassie was delighted to be given some writing paper, which now cost \$3 or \$4 a quire. She had seen many letters written on brown paper of late. The price of calico rose to \$1.50 per yard, and her mother and Sister Charity wore homespun cloth; she and Sister Mary soon had some made. “Nearly all of the ladies wear homespun now.” Cassie knew that many Southern citizens were unable to purchase salt, an absolutely essential item for winter survival.⁴¹¹

By Independence Day of 1863, Cassie and the neighbors were aware that this year’s fireworks would arrive courtesy of the Yanks. “Army wagons, etc. have been passing for about two days. It makes me sad, very sad to think about them overrunning our country, burning our

⁴¹⁰ Using the affectionate title, so common in the South, Cassie refers to her sisters and even sisters-in-law as Sister Mary or Sister Charity.

⁴¹¹ The need for salt and other essentials had grown desperate, even as early as 1862. In Cassie’s rural county, authorities established funds for destitute wives and children of Confederate soldiers in the early years of the War. For instance, Marget, wife of soldier Jacob Young, about 31 years old with four young children at home, received 60 cents for “sault” from a \$5 allocation. Frances Simons, age 18, wife of Robert, who had a one-year-old baby, received money for a “pare” of shoes, four pounds of sault and 20 pounds of “baken.” How could Cindia Gaddis, age 69, wife of Emoley (with one son still at home) find the means to pay for her sault, meale and beef? These were hill people, and, according to the census, were uneducated and of less than modest means. Dr. M.A. Verser, Missionary Baptist minister and 2nd Lt. in Law’s Brigade, kept records until October 1862. (Frances Cabaniss Roberts Collection, Department of Archives and Special Collections. M. Louis Salmon Library, Univ. of Alabama in Huntsville, AL, Series 1, Subseries C, Box 15, f 1.)

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houses and stealing everything else.” Ten days later, there was news that Yanks had returned to Huntsville, and refugees again crowded Cassie’s side of the Tennessee River. The next day she heard firing nearly all day from Whitesburg, where Cousin John Allison reported Union soldiers had shelled their breastworks the entire time.

Union troops departed from Huntsville as quickly as they’d arrived. This was followed by worse reports that some citizens of Huntsville considered the Cause lost, and that the South should stop fighting:

The Yanks took all their horses, pulled down their fences and turned the cattle into crops. They also took all of their provisions as they left. Of course, the Yanks returned, bushwhackers were everywhere, and, refugees crossed over “thick and fast.” In mid-August, Captain Grayson crossed the river to share news that Union soldiers were in Vienna, just nine miles from their home. They expected to see the soldiers at the river any day, knowing full well they can shell us out.

Around noon on August 24, several guns could be heard firing at the river. It continued for two hours.

Until that time several companies from the 3rd and 8th Confederate Regiments were stationed nearby. Officers stayed at the Fennell house, and some were “very nice gentlemen,” Cassie wrote. Her cousin Matilda Fennell, staying with the family as a refugee from Madison County, was noticed and given particular attention by Captain Field, a fine young man from Mississippi. Union troops approached Wills Valley, now, and Rebel soldiers were left to face that threat. The officers came by to give their farewells to the family.

By mid-October of 1863, Cassie heard and reported that Wheeler’s command was at Warrenton five miles away, “pouring in thick and fast ... Ma has kept several women cooking for them all day.” The next day (October 27), Cassie observed what would become a predicament throughout the countryside for the next 18 months: “The cavalry all left here this morning and everybody is glad of it for they are nearly as bad as the Yankees, stealing everything they got a chance at... They killed up a good many cows, hogs, etc. for the people who lived near the camp. They dug the potatoes and caught the turkeys and chickens.” As an aside she mentioned the Yankees were again at Vienna.

At Christmas, Cassie attended a party at the Taylors’ home in Warrenton. It was a gay crowd considering that most of the gentlemen there were soldiers. Cassie was now considering giving up her journal – times were incredibly difficult, as she recalled the previous two months: eight or ten men had been taken from their homes and shot “down like so

many hogs.” These acts were real; she knew the men’s names: Mr. Mot Riche, four Rhodens, Mr. Hodge, and Mr. Lemly.⁴¹² Skirmishes continued nearby as the Yankees discovered a way to fire down from the high bluff onto the small breastworks on the southern shore. Other Yankee actions were reprehensible:

Yanks tried to hang Uncle John Allison and Dr. Sullivan for their gold, which they supposed was hidden... Uncle John told them they might shoot him but hang him, they never would. I hear of them hanging a great many until they are almost dead. They treat the women worse than they do the men. They take everything from them, search their persons and insult them in every way.

Women hid in the mountains, three having fled from bed at midnight wearing only their bedclothes on that bitterly cold night.

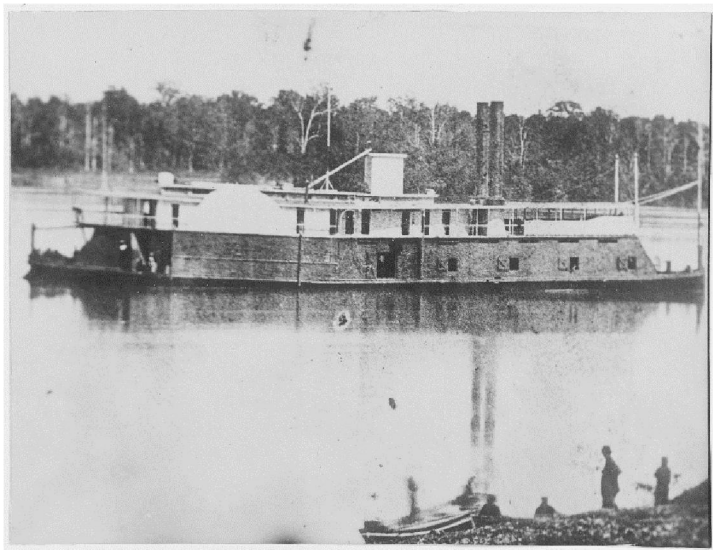
Not surprisingly, enslaved people also ran, but to the Federals. The men were sent to the army and the women and children, she said, “to Nashville where they die as fast as anyone could wish them... I can hardly blame them for going, for the Yanks tell them they will be free but in reality, they have to work harder... Well I wish the Yanks had them all, really, I am very tired of them.” Tories likewise complained that the people they kept enslaved would not work and were glad when they left with the Federal troops.

On January 19, 1864 Cassie’s beloved father died, “with no fears of death,” but her anguish was deep, borne with meekness. There was little time to mourn when she recorded her thoughts one month later. She visited her Grandpa for a short time because she heard “several ladies had been taken up as spies and I did not care to spend the spring and summer and perhaps the whole war in prison.” Reports were heard of 2,000-3,000 Yanks above Guntersville.

⁴¹² According to Charles Rice’s *Hard Times*, Union Capt. Ben Harris and his men killed four Roden men, all civilians, at the Massacre of Buck Island: Benjamin; James M.; Felix M.; and Porter Roden. (Three of these men were brothers.) The lone survivor of the attack, Charles L. Hardcastle, was also shot, but survived when thrown into the Tennessee River with the others. His tale quickly spread, to be followed with news of the shootings of Mat. V. Rich, David Lemly, Mr. Hodge, and William McCay near Paint Rock. Many appalling stories were told about Ben Harris, officially in the Union army (or not, as many suggested), throughout Jackson, Marshall and Madison Counties, and many writers left comments about his activities. More can be learned about the troubles of his wife, Catherine Vann Harris, in the chapter about Mary Johnston.

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Five months later, Cassie again picked up her journal, which she now kept hidden. Recalling the previous events, there was much to share, and none of it was good. The Yanks were now constantly on the far side of the river; she could see the gunboat, and sometimes even ran upstairs to get a better look.



USS General Sherman, 1864

One Union soldier lifted his rifle to aim at her brother, the bars on his coat collar an obvious target, but the man did not fire. General Roddey's command was nearby at Warrenton and Beard's Bluff but could not get their artillery close enough to fire in time. "I never felt so badly about anything hardly as to let one little boat pass unmolested through the very heart of the Confederacy." Soon there would be four boats on the river, running regularly until the water became too low.

In mid-May, one boat came ashore at Deposit to cut down large trees on the riverbank. They left a chilling note on the empty Confederate breastworks reading, "If the gunboat GENERAL SHERMAN is fired upon, I will burn Dr. Fennell's place." Mr. Hollowell's place had already been burned, and Cassie perhaps understated, "We were all pretty well frightened." The family had no power over the Confederate soldiers to prevent their firing at the Union boats; it was now time to move supplies and clothes north to Sister Charity's place, two miles from Warrenton. They remained there as 30,000 Union soldiers, it was said, came closer. Southern soldiers went into the mountains for safety, retreating "before the mighty foe."

Marshall County

One Federal soldier passed by to ask Sister about her officer husband, Col. Samuel Henry, whom she had seen that very day. This soldier was not a bushwhacker, she discovered, but a three-year volunteer! The soldier lingered and talked through the day, after which the women took turns sitting up through the night on alert. The next morning, a squad of infantry rushed in. "They ran into the yard like they were going to tear up everything but the officer held them back." Although they did not stay long at first, soldiers kept coming. They searched the house for arms and ammunition, and the women wisely offered no resistance. The only items taken was fruit for the wounded which the soldiers offered to pay for, but the sisters would not accept money for items for wounded men.

The day continued, "About dinner time, two officers dressed as fine as they could be came up to Mrs. Tyler's to get dinner... they came over to talk with us." The women did not believe all their news, much of which was new information. Colonel Henry was captured (a rumor only) along with many other soldiers. Supplies like hams, half the flour, and a few knives and forks had been stolen from the Fennell home. The property was full of soldiers with just the two ladies present. All of the enslaved people ran to the mountains to hide. Cassie scorned some of Sister's neighbors for pretending to be Tories so that Federals would protect their property. She acknowledged there were Unionists on the mountain, "but they were the very lowest class. The Federal officer said he knew that but they did not want them. I told him we did not care to have them either, so the poor Unionists were thrown over by both parties."

At sunset, they were told not to leave the house after dark or they would be shot at, and the soldiers remained in the yard all night. The next morning the Yanks departed the property to continue to Georgia. Cassie's sister Mary Jane reported that soldiers had been everywhere when she arrived the next day.

Another raid was expected by an even larger force; fortunately, soldiers bypassed the women to take the road to Summit. The Fennell women returned to their homeplace on the south side of the river. In June, soldiers came to the house almost daily. Ma's horses were taken, leaving them with two mules – good enough to pull her carriage, the soldiers said. They took corn, hogs, and forage. In mid-July, Federals attempted to capture Captain Griffin's company but were unsuccessful and actually fired upon at Mr. Atkins' place. In retaliation, they set fire to the home of

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the harmless man who was nearly 80 years old.⁴¹³ Mrs. Atkins was able to save little. “Some of the Yanks would take things out for her and some would throw them back into the fire... they were drunk and very mad.” The tension was exacerbated when 30 men came to take dinner at the Fennell house. Behaving badly, they pocketed knives, forks and spoons. They paid the women 10 dollars – in Confederate money. Many more local enslaved Black people left that night – 27 from Mr. Harris, nine from Dr. Smith, seven from Mr. A.G. Henry, and all from Mr. Atkins save for five. Two people who Ma Fennell kept enslaved fled, and she expected to hear of them running across the river to the Union side soon.

General James Clanton’s Southern cavalry defended the countryside in August 1864, and the community breathed a temporary sigh of relief as men raided the Tory stronghold at Town Creek. Reports were heard of battles up north, desperate fighting with many wounded and dead. Stories circulated about victorious battles from Virginia to the Mississippi River, but later that month, the Confederate forces left the Guntersville area. Cassie feared it would be the last Confederates they would see. She continued to live away from the plantation except for brief visits. In September, Cassie and three of her four brothers were home and one, Willie, took the remaining people the Fennell family enslaved south. “Seven of them had gone to the Yanks and we knew the remainder were going. Willie said he had enough to fight without fighting the negroes.”

On November 22, Yankees filled the yard and surrounded the house. The two brothers at the house attempted to flee, only to be captured immediately, “two unarmed ‘Ragged Rebels,’ surrounded by 150 Yankees armed to the teeth.” It was a harsh, cold night and the men’s request for their overcoats was denied. The next morning, Federals returned and “plundered about” the house, searching for arms. They took the baled cotton and turned the molasses out, saying the Fennells might give it to Rebels. “He was mistaken if he thought the Confederates lived on molasses,” Cassie defiantly wrote. She asked the officer to give her Willie’s pistol and she promised “never to give it to a Rebel nor shoot it at a Yankee.”

He would not return the weapon, replying, “Yes, you will shoot Yankees, you would shoot them any time you had a chance.” All the while she thought “he little knew how glad I would have been to shoot him.” He did give her the belt Willie wore when carrying the pistol, and she

⁴¹³ Worth about \$30,000 in 1860, including the 15 people he kept enslaved, Thomas Atkins was approximately 71 years of age at the time, and his wife was 66. Rice, *Hard Times*, 158-165; 1860 Federal Census.

intended to keep it as long as she lived.⁴¹⁴ As the brothers were carried off, the women shed no tears nor made any noise. "I would not have had them see me shed a tear to save the whole Yankee nation." When one officer expressed surprise at their stoicism, she "told him the ones that suffered most did not always make the most noise."

Christmas and New Years' Day of 1864 brought no pleasure. A Tory, they heard, had shot Willie. Doubting the story and praying it was untrue, Sister Charity rode horseback on Christmas Day through the rain for 28 miles to get news from sympathetic soldiers who might know the truth. Happily, it was only a rumor. The Yanks had put a guard around Willie for fear that he might be shot by a Tory. If that happened, they reasoned, "Southern soldiers would retaliate for it, ten to one." Guntersville was again fired upon and the Fennell home was shelled four or five times with 24-pounders, but none hit the house. The family hid in the cellar with the knowledge that it would be safe to come out only when the shells could be heard at Colonel Beard's house, about a mile and a half away. The echoes could be heard from bluff to bluff, across the river.

By January of 1865, Union forces overpowered Confederate troops and burned Guntersville. Five hundred Yanks and their 100 prisoners fed their horses on Ma's corn and took most of the remaining meat. Among the men, Cassie recognized noted Tories Old Ben Harris and John Dickey, men whose reputations were now sullied, never to recover or be forgotten. Black soldiers began to take dresses and bed clothing at will from the house. When Sister Mary entered the room, "she took a stick and lay it to them right and left and drove them out."

Suffering was great, Cassie wrote, but "we can suffer more, 10 times more, to be in the end an independent nation." Her brothers Willie and Wattie were both prisoners at this time, and Wattie was held in the same camp he'd previously been sent to. John was home on parole, and there were reports that Sam Henry was recovering from his wounds. In May, news arrived of the surrender of Generals Lee, Johnston and Dick Taylor – all the Confederate armies east of the Mississippi River. Peace was made and the South became part of the Union nation again. "There is very little rejoicing, the people know that they must submit, but it is hard after all the blood has been spilled." The old flag was raised in Guntersville. Reconstruction had begun, and the African slave trade was officially abolished. Cassie said, "I am not sorry for that, for they were so much trouble and now we will not feel the responsibility for their comfort.

⁴¹⁴ It was Willie who proclaimed, "The Confederate Army was not whipped, it simply wore itself out whipping Yankees." Smith, *Guntersville*, 184.

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I have been opposed to slavery for a long time but the poor negro will have to work harder than ever.” The future looked more than grim as reports quickly emerged of vengeance among neighbors. Cassie resolved that she would “try to be a good unionist henceforth but it is hard, hard to submit with a good grace.... I can’t write what I feel, the heart-sickness which oppresses me when ever I think of our being subjugated but alas – it is too true.”



Catherine Fennell married Andrew Jackson Esslinger in December of 1866. Jack, as he was called, had joined the Confederate army at the age of 17, but seldom saw action. His first enemy was measles, followed by a case of pneumonia made worse by chills, fever and a body rash.⁴¹⁵ Jack Esslinger’s letter to Cassie sharing his affection asked for a reply, “You may discard me or bury me in the vortex of past recollections, but you will never marry one that would treat you with more sincere love and affection, with more tenderness and attention....let me know with a happy heart that I live in the sunshine of your affections.”⁴¹⁶ Their early years together were spent at the Lea Plantation near Whitesburg, however Cassie returned to her mother at the Fennell household for the birth of their first two sons. She wrote him from there, “Oh, darling, it makes me sad to think how long it will be until I get to see you again. You feel nearer, dearer now to me than ever.”⁴¹⁷ After a third son was born, they farmed near Berkley, Madison County, not far from many of the scenes of violence at Vienna, now called New Hope. They had seven children. Cassie developed pneumonia and died in 1884, at the age of 42. She was buried in the Beason-Esslinger cemetery nearby, “a kind and affectionate wife, a fond mother and a friend to all.”⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁵ Hurff, *Within the Great Bend*, 62

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴¹⁸ Fennell, *Journals*, i-iv, Book Two. *passim*.

JACKSON COUNTY

Priscilla Larkin (1839-1868)

The God of Battles Is with Us

Priscilla Larkin's journal is of particular interest because she began writing at the age of 22 in the new year of 1862 while a student at the Huntsville Female College. She returned to her home in Larkinsville, Jackson County, Alabama at the Federal invasion, where the War encroached even further on her life.

In the land along the Tennessee River Valley of north Alabama, “there are leagues of very fine land ... It is an angelic land.”⁴¹⁹ This description from the mid-16th century set the scene for American pioneers who eventually settled there. Little remains to denote Priscilla Larkin's family in Larkinsville, but this was not always true. Elizabeth (Rutledge) and David Larkin, were the first settlers in an area inhabited only seasonally by a few White men. These men survived by annually selling droves of hogs in cities and to large bands of Cherokee and Chickasaw Indians. The Larkins settled where a town would be named for them; four other Jackson County locations bear the Larkin name, as well. (The first recorded Indian massacre in north Alabama was of two young girls killed at the head of Larkin's Fork.) David Larkin probably arrived with cash in hand or excellent credit because, in 1822, he and a brother-in-law named Richard Clayton purchased 640 acres of reservation land from a half-Cherokee named Richard Riley for \$6,000.⁴²⁰ The site included a large early-Indian trading location. With new settlers arriving almost daily at this time, business with Indians also quickly increased.⁴²¹ Fifteen years

⁴¹⁹ Qtd. in Kay Wrage Gunn, “Gunter Family History,” in *Jackson County Chronicles*. Vol. 3, #11 (April 1991), 7-12. “Journals of Juan Pardo Expedition, 1556-1567.” (Hereafter cited as JCC).

⁴²⁰ David Larkin, Sr. had died in Tennessee at the age of 70 in 1822. This may account for David Larkin's ability to pay for the land purchase with his brother-in-law.

⁴²¹ Ann Chambless, “Early Cherokee Village of Sauta.” JCC Vol. 20, #4 (Oct. 2008). The 1846 contract between Larkin and his son-in-law, Ed Dillard,

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later, at the time of the 1837 Cherokee removal, Larkin had already positioned himself to provide services essential to pioneer life in and around Larkinsville. By 1850, Larkin had accumulated 32,000 acres of land, kept 45 people enslaved, and had farm implements valued at \$1,700, livestock at \$3,600, a mercantile business – the first cotton mill in the county at the time (with 120 spindles that produced \$3,000 worth of thread), and he also owned a grist mill. Additionally, Larkin served as Postmaster from 1835 to 1855. He campaigned to have the county seat moved from Sauta to Larkinsville, but Bellefonte won that distinction.⁴²² He built his home, the finest in the county, at the foot of Cumberland Mountain. In 1850 their household also included Ellen and George Clayton (possibly children of Mrs. Larkin's sister who had died in 1828) and two male school teachers, most likely tutors for the growing family. The Larkin family of five daughters and four sons lived in a close-knit, interrelated community as many wealthy Southerners did. For instance, one daughter, Ann, and her brother, George, married Edward Dillard and Mary Dillard, brother and sister from nearby Woodville. Daughter Annis married Ed Cotten, a business partner of her father's. By the time Priscilla began her journal in 1862, one brother, named for his father, had died, both of Priscilla's parents had died within a year of one another, and the youngest girl, Louisiana, died in 1860.⁴²³ Priscilla and her sister, Mary, lived at the home of another sister, Ann, until Priscilla returned to school.

stipulated that Larkin would provide 50 head of cattle, 50 hogs, 30 sheep, two good work horses, one wagon, and one yoke steer. Dillard would tend the store, the stock and farming free of charge while Larkin's cotton would be stored for free, and his wagon team was to stay at the river for free, as well. At the end of this five-year contract, the profits would be divided equally between the two men and Dillard would return to Larkin his original stock and Negroes. (Ann Chambless, "Store Account Books of David Larkin and Edward H. Dillard," JCC, Vol. 21, #1 (Jan. 2009), 7-12.

⁴²² Details of his enterprises (spinning mill, water power, blacksmith, and tannery) and monthly costs, production, employees and sales are in the Jackson County, Alabama Products of Industry, Schedule 5, 1850 census. Larkin also owned 448 shares of M&C RR at \$25 per share. With his brother-in-law R.B. Clayton, Larkin bought the reservation of the Cherokee Richard Riley in 1822. The White population was initially so small that this combine dealt almost exclusively with Cherokee Indians. It was crucial for the partners to make profit early in the endeavor because they would be adversely affected by the forced Indian removal 15 years later.

⁴²³ Rev. W.W. Thompson, "History of Paint Rock Valley," JCC, #43 (Jan. 9, 1986), 5-11. David Larkin served as an Ensign (one rank below lieutenant) in the state militia 1822-1824. His name could be found on the Committee of Vigilance

The year began in Huntsville with a tasteful entry in the journal of Priscilla Larkin on the first of January: “Oh! Nature’s noblest gift – my grey goose quill; Slave of my thoughts, obedient to my will, torn from thy parent bird to form a pen, that might instrument of little men!” This was from the poet Horace who continued, “On gray quills sublime I’ll soar.” Priscilla clearly intended to record the beginning of a new year with fine and useful resolutions.⁴²⁴ No longer considered a “young” miss, she attended the College as a day student and boarded at the home of the widow Martha Bradford on Randolph Street.⁴²⁵ The War seemed distant. School was filled with enough students that President John Wilson and his wife, who also taught, employed 10 teachers to instruct classes and two matrons to accompany students off school property when and where necessary. (Single women were not permitted to go anywhere unaccompanied.) The weather felt spring-like, which was an advantage for “our poor soldiers. Let us not forget those, who are suffering for bare necessities of life.”

At school, Priscilla practiced 15 pages of “La Parisienne March” or the “Marche Nationale,” and Lizzie, her sister-in-law in Larkinsville, shared vocal pieces like “Only Waiting.” “Mister Here’s Your Mule” was one of the only other pieces of sheet music in that town, and being a Confederate camp song, it was something she would otherwise never have

in 1835, on the roster of attendees of the Democrat meeting in 1840, and he served as Postmaster from 1835 to 1855. He left no will; his sons William, George, and son-in-law Ed Cotten were appointed administrators. The brothers were also the guardians of the three girls – all single. (1850 Census; 1850 Agricultural and Industrial Censuses; Jackson County Probate Minutes Book B-Part Two, 1856-1865, 414-430.) Among those who served in the militia was John B. Stephens of Bolivar. Stephen’s son would play an important part in Priscilla’s story.

⁴²⁴ Journal of Miss Priscilla Larkin, Larkinsville, Ala., Unpub. Ed., and Annot. by David Malbuff, 2002, *passim*. This journal appears to be a class assignment for young ladies of the college; there are other examples in this collection of Southern voices.

⁴²⁵ Martha Bradford was the widow of commission merchant Joseph Bradford and, in 1860, was worth over \$160,000; two sons resided with her at home. She did not have boarders that year. At the start of the War, Martha organized the ladies to establish hospitals for the young army trainees near the Big Spring. Henry Figures wrote home in May 5, 1861 from Montgomery mentioning to his family that their neighbor, Mrs. Bradford, was in town, hoping to get a lieutenantcy for her son Fielding; he doubted she would succeed. Mrs. Bradford made her way to Pensacola to visit the boy before returning home. Fielding Bradford was wounded on July 21 at the battle of First Manassas and died 15 days later from these wounds.

played. The current revival of an 1852 song, however, was now quite timely, “Do They Miss Me?” An education at this college allowed Priscilla to know the classics and quote Horace and Shakespeare, but did matron know or approve of the other book she read entitled *The Mother of Pearl*? It was a ghoulish novel about a mother who ate green-paste called Hadagish, became deranged, attempted to murder her husband, and succeeded in murdering her daughter.

Wealthy Samuel Cruse fondly remembered Priscilla’s father and brother, both now deceased. She and James J. Donegan, a neighbor on Randolph Street, had quite a “confab” together, she wrote, and Donegan modeled the “helmits” she was knitting for the soldiers. Many of the young ladies, including Hattie Figures, who lived across the street, were contributing to the War effort with homemade caps and socks. That same week, the Presbyterian Church sponsored a wool-picking, which was quite a novelty. The next week Priscilla declared it “quite an amusement for the young.” Priscilla, older than many of the girls, seemed not to enjoy what she considered adolescent activities. Her dear friend from Jackson County, Rebecca Morris, characterized Priscilla as in a bit of melancholy.⁴²⁶ “Much Ado about Nothing” spoke for her, “I cannot hide what I am; I must be Sad when I have cause and smile at no man’s Jests.” The “old” lady, Martha Patton, now about 77, dined with them on Sunday, and Priscilla admired her patriotism, especially in these “squally times.” “Would that the ‘Lords of Creation’ in this country possessed half of her zeal and patriotism.”⁴²⁷ Dr. Ross of First Presbyterian Church planned a Wednesday night lecture which daringly suggested “this world was not made in six days - that is - our days - [of] twenty-four hours.” After an evening of quilting with Mrs. Figures and Mrs. Chadick (also a neighbor from across the street), they enjoyed refreshments of fruit-cake and cordial. The card game Euchre became popular, and candy pulls attracted the girls. Mrs. Bradford attended a dinner with the Patton family, and her boarders ate a snack of ham and bread “with the rest of the darkies.”

Brother William sent a check for \$160, which she put to good use (almost \$5,500 in 2023 dollars). In the accompanying letter, William spoke poorly about Murray’s Company K of the Larkinsville Guards,

⁴²⁶ Rebecca Morris was age 28 in 1860; she lived with her older brother Absalom, 32 and widowed mother, Martha. Becky may have come to town to meet appropriate suitors; few could be found in Larkinsville.

⁴²⁷ Priscilla (or possibly Mrs. Patton) was ahead of her time with this phrase that, post-War, referred to those men of economic dominance like the Rockefellers and Vanderbilts.

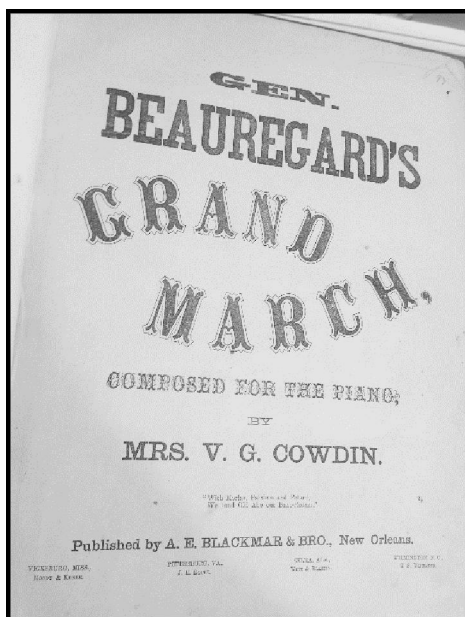
“well nigh defunct – died out on the account of superabundance of Lieutens and Captains.”⁴²⁸ News arrived of the loss at a battle she called Cumberland Gap, along with the death of General Felix Zollicoffer who was killed on January 1 at the Battle of Mill Springs. There was a delicious supper with guests Judge Ferdinand Hammonds and Robert Brickell, both prominent lawyers. Another day, Mrs. Weaver suggested she go out into the yard to watch Mr. G ____ train fighting roosters. He “bore the palm,” (received payment for his work) and only received two wounds.

At the end of January, gas lights replaced their tallow candles, although they weren’t turned on until eight o’clock in the evening. The weather remained nice, so Priscilla and her friend Ella enjoyed walking in the evenings to the graveyard, the reservoir, and her favorite place, the Big Spring. Later many of the girls shared a “rich note” from Nannie Ellis to Millie. Poor Nannie, so unhappy, wanted to run away to the object of her love. Priscilla found it all amusing, “notwithstanding Nannie’s feelings were wounded – because we read it.” Priscilla experienced a period of depression herself, however, writing sorrowful poetry. The uncertainty of the times and the departure of her dear friend Ella, who had returned home, may have taken its toll. Mr. Donegan took supper at the Bradford house later and talked of “Spiritual Rappings” with a visitor named Miss Rhodes, who just happened to be a medium. Everyone gathered at the table; if any were clairvoyant, they did not predict the catastrophic news which arrived two days later.

The Federals landed at Florence to the west; Huntsville was in an uproar at this, the first incursion into Alabama. Three Federal gunboats, “black ugly things wrapped as they were in the habiliments of death and destruction” approached the wharf at Florence. The locals quickly set fire to their own boats and scuttled two others on Cypress Creek to keep them out of the hands of the Yankees. Shots were fired, but no one was injured,

⁴²⁸ Brother William served in the state legislature in 1855, but he did not run for office again. Murray’s Company, Company K of the Larkinsville Guards, initially maintained a high number of elected officers compared to the number of enlisted men. Southern men, especially mountain men, did not readily accept discipline. Although Southern soldiers elected their superior officers, not everyone was considered “superior.” Rather than subject themselves to this, it was often easier to make a personal statement by deserting. One soldier who refused to participate in the vote swore, “God damn it, I’m ag’in all officers.” (Qtd. in Harry Caudill, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1962), 39. Company K gradually became a solid unit and served in the Army of Northern Virginia through Appomattox.

and the Yankees left with all they could salvage from the burning ships.⁴²⁹ In Huntsville, “Mr. J. has been molding bullets – notwithstanding ‘tis Sabbath.” She and Rebecca made a knapsack for him and felt no “compunction for doing so under the present circumstances.” Another dispatch arrived with news of the defeat at Roanoke Island on the North Carolina coast by General Burnside. She hoped reports of the capture of General Wise and 3,000 men was incorrect because she felt “confident that the ‘God of battles is with us.’” In the spirit of the times, a young man from the Fourth Alabama sent her a piece of music entitled “Beauregard’s Grand Marche.” Priscilla would almost certainly have written to him acknowledging the gift and expressing her appreciation.



The next Sunday, Dr. Ross sermonized politically, “True patriotism is to sacrifice life, property and sacred honor.” If this were so “how few true patriots we would have then.” Fort Donelson fell, but on Randolph Street, routine and afternoon tea continued with Mr. Hobson, Mr. Weakley, Col. Toney and his Lady, Mr. Robinson and Lady, Figures and

⁴²⁹ The Federal ships Conestoga, Lexington, and Tyler arrived on February 8, but did not stay. Their officers were met by a delegation of citizens who begged the soldiers not to harm their wives and daughters or set fire to the railroad bridge. After loading salvaged cargo, the Union boats turned back downstream, however briefly. (Buildingthepride.com/tvhs/the-history-corner (accessed 4/13/18).

wife, and Dr. Algernon Wilkinson and his wife, Laura. Considering her place of origin and the current national circumstances, Mrs. Mary C. Ruckman, the matron at the school, returned home to Pennsylvania with her six-year-old daughter, Carrie. Priscilla, now 23, celebrated her birthday on February 20, “another year; another leaf, is turned within life’s volume brief.”

A Company of men left from Huntsville to defend the bridge at Decatur. At the same time, refugees from Clarksville, Tennessee arrived to board with Mrs. Bradford – a Mr. and Mrs. Haws. He was quite good looking, she rather unnoticeable except for the beautiful diamond ring she wore. On the 22nd, citizens may have been so caught up in the events of President Davis’ birthday that they seemed to forget to acknowledge Washington’s birthday; not one gun was fired. Two gentlemen came to call on Priscilla: Mr. Moore and Mr. Stephens, Priscilla had a pleasant visit.⁴³⁰ The next day she was working on a new piece of music, “Ever of Thee,” she intended for the benefit of one special person. Another boarder was perceptive enough to note that, when Mr. Stephens came to call the next evening, he seemed to receive a cold reception. Priscilla did not have the parlor fire lighted, perhaps thinking he would not linger if the room was cold. The students were distressed to hear that Caroline, daughter of Milus Johnston and his first wife, Susan Ray Johnston, from New Hope, had died; school was dismissed for the day.⁴³¹ Refugees continued to arrive, including Colonel and Mrs. Cox, good-looking, sociable, and a “Lord of the Creation.”

On March 10 the fire bell woke everyone within hearing distance. Leroy Pope Walker’s residence burned, “a great loss for a poor man – but I presume he could afford to lose it.” Still more exciting was the arrival of General Breckenridge’s brigade, CSA. Priscilla did not hear his speech but she “had the honor of seeing him mount. He is very fine looking – splendid form, riding a grand looking horse.” Applause rang out when he mounted. Huntsville next was honored with the arrival of cavalryman John Hunt Morgan, brave and noble, the very man the Federals had a “perfect horror of.”⁴³² More refugees arrived in the form of Mr. and Mrs. Lamb and

⁴³⁰ This may be Absalom Stephens, a merchant from Bolivar, Jackson County whom she later married.

⁴³¹ Sallie’s father, Rev. Milus Johnston, was known during the Civil War as “Bushwhacker Johnston” for his activities against the Federal soldiers. His wife’s story is in the chapter about Mary Hamer Johnston.

⁴³² John Hunt Morgan was born in Huntsville, but his family left for Kentucky when his father lost property in the economic downturn of 1831. The Morgan

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Mrs. Neal and Fanny Bonner from Fayetteville, just 30 miles away. Regrettably Mr. Johnson, a friend from the boarding house, was ill in Decatur, “He must fair badly at that miserable little place, though I hope he is not seriously ill,” wrote Priscilla. Early spring brought an overabundance of rain, and she acknowledged the disturbing possibility that the Federals might be able to bring their gun boats upriver towards Huntsville if the water level rose. On March 29, she wrote what many must have already considered but ignored, “Looking for the Federals, at any time, they are so desperate, & guilty of committing such outrageous acts – that I sincerely hope I may never see one of the rascals.”

April arrived, cheerful and refreshing. Priscilla received a sweet note from the soldier in Virginia who wore her knitted helmet. Money seemed of little consequence as she purchased two beautiful silks for herself and her younger sister, Mary, still living at home. She also bought flounces embossed with velvet, cheap enough, at \$60 for the two. On that same day, however, Priscilla received instructions to return home immediately; she planned to leave her boarding residence and school as soon as her trunk arrived. It came the next week, but like many college students, she wrote, “What a cloud darkened the sunshine of my heart in not receiving the money I wrote for. My not receiving it is something I can’t comprehend.” She received \$300 two days later, and like many women departing from Huntsville, immediately went shopping. She also paid off some accounts. She was packed and ready to return home on the following morning.

That day (Friday, April 11), she awoke to hear, “Get up – the town is full of Yankees. Devils are more appropriate names, I do detest the name. They captured the train that was bringing our wounded soldiers from Corinth, but the Ladies of the Humane Society” have been allowed by “that detestable old Mitchel” to tend the wounded. “They have arrested several of our citizens – parade the streets with as much grandeur as if they were Lords of all they surveyed.” Some Confederate officers on leave in town were captured, but many were able to flee. Federals searched for other Rebels as well, including two men, the Honorable John Bell of Nashville, who had just campaigned on the Constitutional Union Compromise Party for President of the United States and former Secretary of War, CSA, Leroy Pope Walker, the man who had ordered the firing on Fort Sumter.⁴³³ School was, of course, closed on Monday. Priscilla

uncles were early settlers known to indulge in fisticuffs on the town square; they were arrested more than once.

⁴³³ *Incidents*, 32, 33.

reported arrests and, although she undoubtedly recognized the names of such a small community, she may have not been aware that these were true civic leaders. Mr. Wilson, president of the college was arrested at day-light with those men. Wilson refused to cooperate and Priscilla admired his patriotism, "He is not worthy of the honeycomb, that shuns the hive because the bees have stings."⁴³⁴

On the 18th a man walked into town from Larkinsville bring news and rumors. It was hard to determine which was which. Confidentially, he said Gen. Kirby Smith, so very successful in February at Richmond, Kentucky, was now at Chattanooga with 5,000 men, and that there were 4,000 more between Chattanooga and Bridgeport. When the bridges were rebuilt, Smith would have 36 locomotive engines ready to retake Murfreesboro and Nashville. As soon as that was accomplished, it was said that Smith would turn south and whip the Yankees at Huntsville. Priscilla fervently hoped this information was reliable. Federal soldiers who tried to secure Jackson County, "came flying back this morning" with three men who felt buckshot. Three cheers for "old Jackson." Apparently, the bridges between Stevenson and Bellefonte were burned, and soldiers were fired upon along the way by bushwhackers. Compounding the unpleasant news from home, Priscilla heard of the arrest of 17-year-old Henry Dillard and 19-year-old Frank Cotton, relatives by marriage. The boys were held for three days, took the Oath of Allegiance, and went "a glimmering," most likely because of their age.⁴³⁵

Mrs. Bradford would not allow Priscilla to return home without a gentleman escorting her, but finally, after almost two weeks, Mr. Shooter arrived and obtained "a passport" for her. She gave her goodbyes, ignoring the fawning soldiers at the depot. At home with her sisters, she almost immediately regretted leaving Huntsville, which received far more War news. At home, however, Priscilla was at least among close friends and relatives who had been raised with her.⁴³⁶ This included her sister Annis, Annis' husband Edward Cotton, and their seven children. There was sister Sarah Ann Dillard, widowed since her husband died at the age of 32 in 1856, with four children; Lizzie (Frances Elizabeth Higgins), wife of her

⁴³⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Locrine*, 111, 11. 39.

⁴³⁵ The Oath of Allegiance or "Loyalty Oath to the Union" allowed political and military prisoners to be freed if they signed.

⁴³⁶ "Priscilla Larkin's Diary" Ed. Ann B. Chambless in JCC, Vol. 17, #3, (July 2005), 2-14. Ms. Chambless identified many of the local names mentioned in the diary.

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brother and guardian Bill; George W. and his wife called Mary-George so as not to be confused with sister Mary, age about 21 who lived with Priscilla, and, John, still single.⁴³⁷ Brothers George and John were in Company K, of the Larkinsville Guards. When their one-year term of enlistment ended, they returned home.

She continued to practice the piano, but the days at home seemed to pass slowly; she was lonely and restless. Priscilla was disconcerted about “those men shooting in the trains who have caused a great deal of mischief that perhaps they should not have done,” but she was livid about “those dirty degraded scamps,” Federals, who plundered and pilfered in Larkinsville. At her Brother Bill’s house, they broke open her trunks, took a breastpin, bracelet, and money (only \$3 fortunately). Worse still the “Yanks” had chased her brother George and abducted brother Bill and four others – (John) Murray, (Cary) Staples, Keeble, and (Samson) Bradford – as prisoners to Huntsville. None of them were in the Larkinsville. They burned Camden (Paint Rock) and she knew her small, deserted town would be next. She and sister Mary vowed to stay abreast of the news – “good, bad, or indifferent.”⁴³⁸

The full impact of recent events had probably not yet reached Priscilla. Quite a bit more was involved in the destruction of that small town when on May 2, Federal Col. John Beatty and his troops left Bridgeport for Huntsville by open railcars. They were fired on at Paint Rock where six or eight of his men were wounded. Beatty had the train stopped, and found the telegraph wire cut and lying in the street. He rounded up any citizens who could be found and announced that bushwhacking must stop – now:

Hereafter every time the telegraph wire was cut, we would burn a house; every time a train was fired upon, we would hang a man; and

⁴³⁷ In the 1860 census, Ed Cotten, husband of Annis, was valued at \$37,000; Ann Dillard, widowed in 1856, was appraised at \$16,000, George had \$57,000, John had \$24,000, and Bill had \$57,000. This suggested an enormous inheritance from their father. Bill and John listed themselves as farmers, and George, simply “gentleman.” In an additional listing, the Agriculture Census of 1,860 showed George to have 1,750 total acres valued at \$25,000; Ann Dillard 520 acres at \$5,000; Ed Cotten and Annis 940 acres worth \$5000; William, the oldest son, had 1,850 acres valued at \$26,000. He also held the grist mill, the blacksmith shop, and a lumber operation in the 1860 Manufacturing Census. Bill almost certainly held the reins of his father’s industry.

⁴³⁸ Larkinsville suffered occupation, encampment by thousands of Federal soldiers, and some looting, but was never burned.

we would continue to do this until every house was burned and every man hanged between Decatur and Bridgeport. I then set fire to the town, took three citizens with me, returned to the train, and proceeded to Huntsville.”

Three days later, Captain Cunard returned “to arrest certain parties suspected of burning bridges, tearing up the railroad track, and bushwhacking soldiers,” Cunard departed back to Paint Rock with 26 prisoners.⁴³⁹ The Larkin men most likely knew the names of everyone involved, and what had happened to them. Priscilla and Mary would also have recognized the names of their long-time neighbors.

May offered beautiful sky-blue days, but “how many poor hearts have been made to ache, and the sunshine of our happiness darkened, by those contemptible Yanks.” At least she knew the prisoners in Huntsville would be tended to and not “suffer for anything” by the kind and patriotic women of town, led by Martha Bradford. No one seemed to understand why brother Bill had been arrested again. All the other “alleged” bushwhackers had been allowed to return. Sundays were difficult; many of the women felt uncomfortable visiting on the Sabbath, remorseful of conscience, but fellowship with one another was such a consolation.

They continued to worry over imprisoned Bill, and George as well, lest the Yanks take him, too. The people Bill enslaved were apparently afraid to go to Huntsville to ask about him, so his wife, Lizzie, asked Priscilla to accompany her, who “offered her services, no sooner proposed than accepted.” Their overnight was spent with Mrs. Dillard at Woodville, followed by a fearful encounter when the Federal captain gave the impression that he might refuse their passing.⁴⁴⁰ Finally, he gave them a permit to Camden, and then a second pass to Huntsville. There they found Bill, released on a parole of honor. Priscilla spent the next two nights, delighted, in her old room at Mrs. Bradford’s and visited friends the next day. They departed Huntsville with a gift of verbena from Mrs. Lizzie and Priscilla again stopped overnight at Mrs. Dillard’s on their return home. The two-day return trip took longer because each passerby asked for news; the sisters-in-law were stopped at every house for the latest reports. Once home, they learned Brother George had been taken the previous Sunday, and his wife Mary-George was “mortified.” The two men reached home

⁴³⁹ Qtd. in Ann B. Chambless, Comp. “Jackson County, Alabama, Seen Through the Vision of Intruders,” in JCC, Vol. 3, #13 (Oct. 1991), 4-12.

⁴⁴⁰ Elizabeth Dillard was mother-in-law to both Priscilla’s sister Ann Dillard and to her brother, George W.R. Larkin.

later after stopping at Brother John's, and they "look like birds out of a cage."

The constant uncertainty and excitement left Priscilla with little spirit for her usual home duties. She promised herself each day to practice more and better the next day. She finished a pair of gloves for herself to keep sunburn off her hands, so noticeable when she played the piano. While Mr. Young⁴⁴¹ had just returned from Chattanooga with reports of grand battles at Richmond and Corinth, everyone in the community yearned for reliable news updates. Feelings of great anxiety hovered about the women as they visited one another. Daily activities were fraught with unresolved difficulties and suspicious motives about old friends and strangers alike. Two men dressed in plain clothes came to question Annis, "I feel confident they were Yankees." One of their queries concerned who might have cotton for sale. This had become a very sensitive topic as some northerners and high-ranking Federal officers were purchasing and making high profits from Southern cotton. In Huntsville, General Mitchel was forced to defend himself against charges of selling confiscated cotton to northern buyers.⁴⁴²

On June 3, Priscilla noted "Kelly-troopers" had shot into the open Federal train cars filled with soldiers." It could be very difficult to distinguish the actions of official military groups from bushwhackers, and Priscilla herself may not have known the difference at the time. The Federals responded by burning the houses of Mrs. Dillard and Elizabeth Ledbetter; these Woodville ladies were accused of harboring the instigators, "it is hard to submit to such as that."⁴⁴³ These men, Priscilla believed, were led by a military officer named Reverend Capt. David C. Kelly, a well-loved Huntsville Methodist minister and officer soon to join Gen. Nathan B. Forrest's elite cavalry.⁴⁴⁴ Mary Jane Chadick wrote in her journal about the destruction, "The yoke is very galling." She had heard of

⁴⁴¹ This was most likely James H. Young, who later supervised the men working the saltpeter mine at Sauta Cave.

⁴⁴² For an in-depth survey see Brian Hogan, "Norton Versus Mitchel," in *Huntsville Historical Review*, Vol. 28, #2 (S-S 2003), 23-53.

⁴⁴³ Mrs. Dillard felt wronged, with reason. As a Loyalist, she filed for reimbursement with the Southern Claims Commission in 1871, both for herself and for the heirs of Francis Dillard.

⁴⁴⁴ Susan Mooney, Laura Plummer, and Mary Jane Chadick mentioned Rev. David Kelly in their journals also. A recent book by Michael R. Bradley, *Forrest's Fighting Preacher* (Charleston: History Press, 2011) discusses his career.

a far more serious incident at Mrs. Dillard's. Elizabeth Dillard, widow of Dr. Francis Dillard (early settlers at Woodville), was now about 59 years old and still had young Henry, age 17, at home with her. Later in August, Mrs. Dillard made her way into Huntsville from Woodville and stayed with Mary Jane Chadick. She sought some kind of compensation from Generals Buell and Rousseau for the burning of her home in June. The authorities were none too sympathetic; it seemed that there was more to the events of the day than she may have shared with these officers.

She and Henry had been home when Federal soldiers entered by force and, at gunpoint, made Henry take them to the smokehouse for meat. According to the account, one soldier grew impatient, set down his pistol, and took up the knife the boy was using to cut the meat. Henry immediately attacked the feckless thief who shouted for help and, in the struggle, the soldier was killed. In some versions, a second soldier was also killed. Henry was arrested and taken by train to Stevenson. The story only became more sensational as friends slipped laudanum into whiskey the soldiers "just happened to find" on the train, and the Yankees soon passed out. Meanwhile, Sheriff Stephen Kennamer and James Skelton led a group of friends to block the tracks with crossties and forced the train to stop near Scottsboro, where Dillard escaped. He was, of course, now unwelcome in Federal-occupied north Alabama, and soon joined the Confederate army. General Mitchel, still in command at Huntsville, arrested 30 citizens as punishment.⁴⁴⁵ Mrs. Dillard returned to Woodville having received no compensation for damages.

The Larkin sisters visited Cousin Cary Staples⁴⁴⁶ and saw Jim Austin, a member of the Larkinsville Guards, who had been County Sheriff at Bellefonte before the War. He didn't look as bad as Priscilla had expected, considering that his arms and hands were paralyzed and he had not fed himself in 60 days. He seemed almost cheerful, she thought, considering his condition. They also heard that Mrs. Warren and her four children had been murdered by one of Cato [Caleb] Tipton's negro men.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁵ John Robert Kennamer, Sr. *History of Jackson County, Alabama*. (Scottsboro, AL: Jackson County Historical Assoc., 1993), 52, 87; *Incidents*, 51.

⁴⁴⁶ The mother of Cary Staples was Jane Larkin, a sister of David Larkin.

⁴⁴⁷ This was most likely the family of Thomas Warren, already in the CSA. His wife, Elizabeth, was 32 in 1862, and there were five children, the oldest of whom was a boy, now 20, probably fighting in the War. This left four children at home: L.M., Allison, L.A., and Mary. None were to be found in the 1870 Jackson County census. Mr. Warren was injured in June 1864 with a broken jaw. Caleb Tipton enslaved seven Black people in 1860, one a 23-year-old male. Priscilla, as

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The enslaved man may have believed he would receive praise from the Yankees, but this was outrageous. The women stayed with one another, and shared recollections of their peaceful childhood, gathering great reassurance in being together. To remain at home alone was a rarity now. Although Priscilla did not mention it, the extended family grew at least by one. According to the 1870 census, baby Manassa Larkin was born in the summer of 1862 to George and Mary-George Larkin. One would not have to speculate long about naming this baby girl after the results of the 1st Battle of Manassas. (A second child was born to them during the War; Bill and Lizzie had two children during these years, and Annis and Ed Cotten had two or three babies.)

A much-handled *Cincinnati Inquirer* somehow reached Priscilla; she was disgusted with its “lies.” There were constant reports of fighting in the area between Stevenson and Bridgeport; these two former villages had become extraordinarily important to both sides. Stevenson was a major railroad junction for both the Memphis & Charleston and the Nashville & Chattanooga Railways. The retreating Confederates had destroyed the earlier railroad bridge across the Tennessee River in 1861, and Federals were now rebuilding it, adding a ship-building yard.

As Federals headed for Chattanooga, it became essential to keep the rail lines open for much needed supplies from the west and for troop movements eastward. The local fighting, including a great number of casualties, may have been a few of the many actions between Gen. Ormsby Mitchel’s men from Huntsville and the Confederate cavalry that Mary Jane Chadick described.⁴⁴⁸ Priscilla felt that, through these nearby activities, the Confederates had gained a great victory.

In mid-June she and her sisters Annis and Ann spent the day with Mrs. Brown.⁴⁴⁹ “The day was pleasantly spent considering the darkies had run away.” A man her brother George kept enslaved named Ned had apparently run to the Yankees, and it bothered George a great deal. Bill did not seem particularly upset about losing a man he enslaved named Louis. General Mitchel at least printed in “their” newspaper, *The Reveille* for “owners” to come in and the people they enslaved would be returned to them. Priscilla was more concerned, it seemed, that the local citizens must be humiliated by this lying Yankee newspaper and that they, too, would

most of the writers did, chose not to capitalize the word “Negro,” and it has been left that way by this editor.

⁴⁴⁸ *Incidents* 50, 51.

⁴⁴⁹ This was probably Mary Ann Brown, wife of Jer Brown.

have to submit. The Federals printed only four issues of this publication, using the printing press of the *Huntsville Democrat* after its owner, John Withers Clay, fled in April.⁴⁵⁰

The Larkins enjoyed a “birthnight” supper for Annis with George and Bill joining in. The next day, brother John passed by on his way to go fishing. This may indicate that the ground was too dry for plowing – not a good sign of things to come. Crops would soon suffer if this weather continued. Priscilla commenced awkwardly sewing again, but her mind was always occupied with thoughts of the Yankees. Trains were still shot into which “aggravated the Yanks very much, great ‘rumpus’ among them.” By June 24, it was obvious that an immense number of troops were moving north toward Chattanooga. With this constant stress, little definite information, the inability to settle down for daily tasks, and the constant need to be with others, Priscilla found it “very disagreeable to live in this way, I am perfectly disgusted with ‘Yankeedom.’” There was more misery to come. Regiments of Halleck’s division camped now along the railroad tracks – in essence, her backyard. “I sincerely hope from the depth of my heart they will meet with quite a hearty & warm reception at the point of the bayonet.” After inspecting the round house and looking for water, Yankees planned to station a regiment (the 10th Wisconsin) in their village, “they will soon eat Larkinsville out and drink her dry.”⁴⁵¹ In this era soldiers carried rations for themselves and cooked in groups, but hardtack, a thick, unbreakable cracker, remained their staple food. Soldiers now appeared at local homes, all of which had small gardens, orchards, a milch cow, and a hen house. Three Yanks asked for milk at Mary-George’s one evening, “but they didn’t have the pleasure of getting any.” Chickens were highly desirable and, at first, the soldiers were willing to purchase them. With so many local men gone and so few left to protect the homeplace, farm animals and seasonal vegetables and fruits simply disappeared, as did personal items, when houses were searched (supposedly for Rebel soldiers). When eleven soldiers rummaged around her house, her “passions were considerably irritated as they went upstairs to search, [the officer] made so many apologies, [it] rather cooled me down when I saw they were not searching thoroughly. Annis looked as if she could ‘bite a ten-penny nail.’” Adding to the stress, the Yankee soldiers were seen passing the time of day with the slaves, clearly planting ideas in their heads about running away.

⁴⁵⁰ Shapiro, “Invasion,” 1-24.

⁴⁵¹ Only skirmishes, mostly with bushwhackers, were fought by the 10th Wisconsin at Larkinsville.

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Independence Day passed as just another day; there were no traditional celebrations. Priscilla causally mentioned the following day, “Bushwhackers have knocked under seven Yanks.” Forty Yankee Imps raided Ira E. Brown’s place before dawn hoping to catch him. Apparently, he was too “old” for them and “they returned as they went.” Ira, age 57, a well-to-do farmer, was a member of the Larkinsville Guards as were her brothers George and John.⁴⁵² The military presence continued as men from Buell’s Army were stationed at Larkinsville for several days on their way northeast. Two men came to her place who Priscilla declared better behaved than General Mitchel’s soldiers. The family received exciting news of a victory near Richmond, “ought we not to thank with overwhelming hearts of gratitude acknowledge, the bountiful smiles and blessings of the Almighty God.” Unfortunately, it was reported that five of the Guards were killed: Bob Hodge, Mr. Blake, two Robinsons, and Murray. There is no doubt about her feelings. “What sad afflictions upon the families, still, how consoling to know they fell in a noble & glorious cause, fighting for a countryes [sic] freedom and liberties.” Twelve more men, according to the report, were wounded, among them Alexander C. Murray. He was lucky enough to receive only a slight wound, but poor Captain Robinson’s leg was shot off after his recent loss of a brother to the Cause. Priscilla understood that death knew no seasons, but she would be forced to learn this lesson many times over. She heard a shocking rumor that Billie Robinson had died from his injury, “Gone to that bourne from whence no traveler returns.” Five days later, cheering news came: Robinson had not died and was improving.⁴⁵³ Locals stayed close to home at this time, as still more Yankees passed through. Priscilla stayed busy picking silk from her dresses. Eventually, with aching fingers from her efforts, there was enough to have it weighted for three pounds, sufficient for 15 yards of cloth. Time passed quickly; “every moment which flies is irrecoverable lost.”

If Priscilla was distressed at the unjust wounds and deaths of her acquaintances, she was outraged at Brown, Smith & Cotton, and other cotton sellers who readily made their crop available to Yankee cotton buyers. She could give a few the benefit of the doubt; it may have been

⁴⁵² According to records, John was shot in the shoulder on Sept. 20, 1863. (“Civil War Rolls” in JCC #12, (October 16, 1977, n. p.)

⁴⁵³ Bob Hodge was likely Robert Hodges. Captain William Robinson’s leg was amputated, and he was discharged from service. He applied for an artificial limb in 1872. (files.usgwararchives.net) This was the bloody First Battle of Cold Harbor at two crossroads in rural Virginia, May 31-June 12, 1862; Hamlet, Act 3, Scene 1.

simple ignorance on their part. For others, those who knew exactly what they were doing, “It is treason, and those that sell to them will be dealt with as traitors to their country.” Within one week, she observed that these cotton sellers were fleeing in fear of arrest. At the end of July, Priscilla left little doubt of what the future would hold for certain citizens. She did not use the word “retaliation,” but made it clear that the money-grabbers were known and would be remembered later. “They would suffer” for their misdeeds, dealing with the Yanks. “Shame, shame on the cotton sellers, pie, milk and chicken sellers, but ten-fold more on her, who has been receiving presents from those Imps, such as pickle pork, candy drops and such like.” Neighbors and friends she had known all her life shocked her sensibilities. “There were one hundred Alabamians joined the Yanks today, shame, shame on them. Traitors to their country, how I detest them.” She referred to Lt. Ephraim’s Regiment, 1st Independent Company Alabama Volunteer Cavalry.⁴⁵⁴ Yankees hoisted the Stars and Stripes in Larkinsville again on Saturday the 26th; they were clearly planning to remain for some time. Sundays recalled to her their stress because all the Larkin women were deprived of church services. “We as a Christian people are not living as we ought; neglecting our first and all-important duty serving God.”

While she did not mention practicing her music often,⁴⁵⁵ Priscilla continued to sew and finished two garments. She made a pair of pants for Anderson, unidentified, but most likely a son of Kate, a woman her family enslaved, “He will feel himself highly honored, when he gets on his velvet pants.”⁴⁵⁶ The Yanks remained into August, but Priscilla claimed that they could be whipped out in ten days. Soon after, she bitterly reported, “I never was so perfectly disgusted, harassed, and annoyed as I was this morning when Wily told someone, ‘twas rumored over the river, that I and a Yanky Capt. were married.”

⁴⁵⁴ Jackson County, particularly the mountainous region, contained many men who had not voted for Secession and supported the Union. This seemed to be a good time for men to speak out and back up their beliefs by officially joining the fight as Loyalists. They became part of the First Alabama Vidette Cavalry formed in Stevenson and Bridgeport. John Withers Clay labeled them “a band of traitors,” as many did, “levying war, adhering to the enemy and giving them aid and comfort in sundry ways.” (Joseph W. Danielson, *War’s Desolating Scourge*. (Lawrence, KS: Univ. Press, 2012), 126).

⁴⁵⁵ The family of David Malbuff has two large bound sheet-music books, priceless to the family, bought in Huntsville from the jewelry and music store of Logeman & Hollenberg.

⁴⁵⁶ Using the 1870 census, Anderson Larkin, a mulatto, was listed as age 13.

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A spot less than 20 miles away across the river served as a haven for several groups – enslaved people hidden by their traffickers, enslaved people who had fled, deserters, men avoiding conscription, small Rebel military units waiting for their chance to strike, Unionist sympathizers, bushwhackers, criminal gangs, and ordinary refugees looking for day or two to reorganize or perhaps savor a moment of peace.

“Poor darkies have been dodging from the Yanks as they are out pressing negroes to build breast-works at Stevenson ... If they were condemned to be hung, they would have not looked worse.” The men were trying to avoid working on what would become Fort Harker, located on a hill about one quarter mile east of Stevenson, overlooking Crow Creek.



Union Soldiers Rebuilding Bridge at Bridgeport

This would allow access to the Tennessee River and protection for the two strategic railroad lines. Priscilla was given a receipt for the slaves taken, “It wouldn’t amount to anything at any rate.” She and the lieutenant in charge had a confrontation when she said some “tough” things, and “he pretended to take it all good humouredly – and acted the gentleman, if I could do them enough Justice to think for one moment, that there is one gentleman among them, but I said nothing to provoke him, made use of no abusive language, as that is something beneath the dignity of a woman.” If nothing else, she still felt she had held onto her dignity. At the same time Patsy “picked up and left,” perhaps to join Henry, one of the men taken by impressments. Surely there was no other motive for Patsy to leave,

Priscilla thought. Four days later, Patsy was located in town and returned. Henry had a pass and, along with it, permission to come home.

After an arduous day-long trip, the four sisters gathered at Ann's house in mid-August. The opportunity to spend time together was a happiness for them all. Later, with friends, Priscilla and Mary "beat cider" at Cousin Cary's place and enjoyed themselves as they did at such gatherings in times past. On the way home, Dr. Wood relayed news confirming that all of the Black people Priscilla's family kept enslaved had gone to the Yankees. She wrote nothing additional in her journal for the reader today, no comment of opinion, frustration, or anger.⁴⁵⁷ On August 14, she heard more accurate reports about Kate's leaving; the next day, she went to Bellefonte to collect Kate and her children, who, she wrote, were now anxious to come home.⁴⁵⁸

At this time, Priscilla and her sister Mary had lived in the same house for several years. According to the 1860 Federal Census, Priscilla enslaved one Black woman, about 27 years old with four children under the age of seven. Mary enslaved four people – two women, aged 22 and 17 – and two small children. On the return trip, Priscilla stayed overnight with the family of Mr. [Beverly] Keeble, sending the others ahead. She was pleased to know that the enslaved people had reached home safely. Kate's children were ill; Priscilla tended to them for a full week before their symptoms began to improve.⁴⁵⁹ As the others recovered, Kate became very sick, remaining in bed all day. Priscilla sent for the doctor that night as Kate worsened, but the Federal picket would not let him pass. "God grant they will be justly rewarded." Kate ailed through the end of the

⁴⁵⁷ Data from the 1860 Federal census showed that Priscilla enslaved four people. Her sister Mary kept four enslaved, Ann Dillard nine, Ed Cotten (who was married to sister Annis) 27 (some Annis had probably inherited from her father); brothers John enslaved 10, George 26, and William 24. Considering the proximity of the Federals, the people the Larkins held in enslavement most likely fled, becoming part of the great contraband camps which gathered in the area and follow the army.

⁴⁵⁸ Kate was Priscilla personal slave. The relationship was complex, as Priscilla tended Kate's ill children, then Kate herself. In the 1870 census, Katy Larkin, mulatto, age 36, was living in the household of William Keeble, a farmer, mulatto. The Larkins there consisted of Kate; James, 15, Anderson, 13, Mariah, 8, William, 1, Mariah, 63, Elgin, 22, Rufus, 18, and Clay, 16. This would account for Kate's three children as well as her mother's family.

⁴⁵⁹ Chills are often a precursor of fever and a serious illness, and it was considered crucial to head off these symptoms before they began.

month, and Priscilla called the doctor again. Later she sent for powders and quinine, making every effort to cure “my little negroes.” The next Sunday passed quietly except for harassment by the contemptible Yanks. Rebel cavalry fired on them, however killing and wounding approximately one or two each day. Home became a refuge, the greenest place on earth, especially now “in Yankeedom, how long O Lord will we be aggravated with those audacious scamps.” She vowed never to ask for or carry a pass, except in the case of a dire emergency. Bill sent a wagon-load of items, possibly family possessions, to her, including a trunk of books. The Yanky devils followed Ned’s wagon all the way, but she was relieved to find that they had not broken into the trunk.⁴⁶⁰

There was rare good news near the end of the month, “Yanks have absconded, the day of deliverance is at hand. God will give us strength ... Our cavalry or ‘Bush-whackers’ are in pursuit of them.” If Priscilla, a long-time well-connected resident, did not understand the difference between regular Confederate soldiers and bushwhackers, it is easy to see how anyone might be confused. The Federal soldiers had legitimate complaints about the tone and actions of the War. That hope was short-lived: the Yankees had returned, although Priscilla did not think they would stay much longer. Reports during this time were good; there were victories in Virginia. If there were any doubts of the depth of her feelings, “The Devil has dispatched to Stonewall Jackson, to kill no more until he made further preparations to receive them.” As the Federals left, they could easily view Fort Harker. She did not think it could resist the anticipated 5,000 Confederate soldiers.

The people Priscilla enslaved, along with those kept in bondage by others nearby, joined some civilians and soldiers to continue work on the fort, an earthen redoubt, although it did not look like much to her. The workers complained about the hardness of the soil that required not a shovel, but, more often, a pick. Expecting an attack at any moment, the officers forced the men to work day and night.⁴⁶¹ At the end of the month, the sisters were delighted to gather once again at Ann’s home. Priscilla observed that her sister looked rather lonely – the families of Black people

⁴⁶⁰ Ned Larkins, Black, age 65 lived with Sarah Larkins, in Larkinsville according to the 1870 census. Ned may have been killed with his brother Frank on New Year’s night in 1871 “by a lawless party.” (Kenamer, *History*, 46.)

⁴⁶¹ Fort Harker would undergo construction again in 1864 to include an exterior eight-foot deep dry moat, seven cannon platforms, a bombproof powder magazine, draw-bridge entrance, and an eight-sided wooden blockhouse in the center. Lat34north.com (accessed 5/1/18).

she kept enslaved were all safely across the river. She wished “hers” were healthy enough to join them. Sister Mary got permission to retrieve a woman she kept enslaved, Tuss, and immediately sent her across. Within one month’s time, everyone Priscilla kept enslaved would also cross into Dixie.

General Don Carlos Buell had gradually gathered supplies and forces across northern Alabama, and now made his way to the vital rail center at Chattanooga. On August 31, Priscilla wrote, “Yanks gone again, though we are all afraid to rejoice, until we hear they are entirely gone. O: the destruction of our little Village presents.” Destructions caused by fighting on both sides forever changed the familiar countryside. The mass Federal departure also meant that “Lincolnites,” camp followers, suttlers, women generally not considered to be ladies, and contrabands would follow the army, leaving even worse disarray.

The September 20, 1862 issue of the *Charleston Mercury* offered a description of northeastern Alabama she might recognize. Even if the article was exaggerated, the land was devastated:

**THE EVACUATION OF HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA,
VANDALISM OF THE YANKEES**
In Jackson County, Alabama

We learn from a gentleman, just arrived from North Alabama, that the Yankees evacuated Huntsville between the 1st and 4th of the month. General Buell and staff having gone a week or two previous, and General Rosecrans some days after. The left via Stevenson... between Huntsville and Stevenson the country is desolated and deserted, Jackson County having been left almost entirely without inhabitants or signs of animal life. The depot at Camden (now Paint Rock) is destroyed. The town of Woodville is burned to the ground, and from that place to Bellefonte scarcely a house is left standing. Blackened ruins are all that remain. The bridge over Paint Rock River (probably 200 feet long) was unfortunately burned by our own men (CSA) after the Yankees had passed the road a second time. The depot at Larkinsville was, we fear, carelessly destroyed. The Federals are said to have declared the independence of Jackson County, admitting that they had sustained more loss and stouter resistance from that county than from any portion of the country elsewhere. KUDOS.⁴⁶²

⁴⁶² JCC Vol. 17, # 1, (Jan. 2005), 4.

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Southerners began to appear again, but in September, it was impossible not to consider the new realities ushered in by the War. Strangers called and stayed for the noontime meals and dinner; this became a normal occurrence in the South. Three men introduced themselves as McCullum, Dodd, and Targent. Mr. Targent, previously a soldier, had now taken up bushwhacking. Priscilla was careful to point out, "The other two seemed to be gentlemen." Mr. Targent, a bushwacker, did not rise to that standard. Mr. Dodd spoke about Conscription and told the family, "He never met with as many weak-breasted and diseased men in his life as he has very recently." The Confederate Conscription Act had been passed in April 1862 ordering all healthy, able-bodied men between the ages of 18 to 35 to be drafted unless they had already been assigned an essential war-related job. (Exemptions were passed six months later by the Confederate Legislature giving men who kept more than 20 people in enslavement the privilege not to join the army and the right to hire a substitute. This proved very unpopular and gave rise to the bitterness of a "rich man's war and a poor man's fight" for many soldiers and their families. As a result, countless men, often with encouragement from their wives, chose to become unavailable when the conscription officers passed through the area.) Priscilla's dinner guests may have been government men.

Many enslaved people who had been taken across the river returned. Some, however, took their chances and fled with the Federal withdrawal. Sister Annis Cotten came home one morning and shared their Aunt Mary's distress. Brother George Larkin was selling Frone, and Mary was crying about it. (In a rash response to earlier taunting by George, Priscilla purchased Frone for the huge sum of \$1,000. The origins of the siblings' disagreement are unknown.)⁴⁶³ George was now in charge, however, and Aunt Mary (and, of course, Frone) would suffer. Priscilla had come to consider life more pragmatically than her youthful self had, worrying over reciting her lessons in Huntsville. "Mary had better save her tears for something more important, for I hardly think she will own her again." That weekend offered a lovely Sabbath spent at church "with hearts full of gratitude for the great blessing of our deliverance." It was a much-needed respite from the week's frustrations. The next evening promised excitement because a company of Confederate Cavalry were expected from Huntsville. After completing her toilette, Priscilla quickly walked to town, where she met her sister Ann Dillard and friend Margaret Cotten, about 19 years old, returning home. The two women brought disappointing

⁴⁶³ This extremely high price may reflect Frone's value, or some sort of long-standing disagreement between sister and brother.

news: Yanks were in Huntsville, and no Rebel cavalrymen would be about that night.

If activities of the War and a possible drought did not incite dread, unfortunate behavior emerged within the Larken family. Brothers George and Bill visited that evening, “George ripping swearing about Sister Ann’s house he had sold, ‘twas sufficient to mar the happiness of any one, they casted a gloom over the remainder of the evening.” The next day, it was discovered that the rumor about Yanks in Huntsville was false, and the Confederate squad, with possible news of friends, relatives, and reports of the War, passed through and were missed.

The formerly enslaved people now impressed for construction work on Fort Harker had apparently been taken to federally-held Nashville, where they might be reclaimed. Several gentlemen passed by on their way, and George and Bill joined them. A day or two after, however, Priscilla wrote, “Those men that started for negroes have returned as they left,” apparently empty-handed. Also passing through were “a great many” Southern men on their way to join the Confederate Army. “I am glad the Conscript has such good effect.” Members of Company K, Larkinsville Guards, left on the morning of the 18th, not waiting, she said, for Conscription. Because conscripts were not always trusted, many men who joined were given very difficult assignments, and were far more likely to desert as a result. Old Mr. Keith⁴⁶⁴ passed by and described seeing 20 Confederate soldiers with 40 “Yanky” prisoners. Oh what a glorious sight that must have been, thought Priscilla. The Southern army had swelled in number, and the triumph at the 2nd Battle of Manassas gave hope for more victories.

After church services on September 21, the sisters once again gathered at Ann’s house. The few remaining people they kept enslaved (those who had not been impressed to work or escapees) were safely across the river. The menfolk, none of whom Priscilla mentioned by name, were now military bound. With all these men gone, an unsettled feeling engulfed the family. Priscilla wrote that she had “nothing now of any consequence to do.” There would soon be excitement, however: Sister Mary was expected to marry soon. She had not yet shared her plans with Priscilla, but “secret communications to Huntsville” were transpiring. On the 24th, Lieut. John Parks appeared at dinner time, and “Mary was all smiles, with occasionally a blush playing upon her lovely countenance.” It took over a week for Mary to reveal her secret; she and Mr. Parks were to be wed the very next morning at 10 am. That day, however, a note arrived

⁴⁶⁴ Andrew Keith, age 66.

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with word that Parks was very sick, but that he would arrive as soon as he was able. A week passed and Priscilla considered it exceedingly strange that there was no news from Mr. Parks. "If I were her, I should not feel so unconcerned." In the meanwhile, there were hints of Col. Snodgrass and Mollie [Mary] Jane "stepping off," as Mary Jane Brown was about to "bid adieu to single wretchedness."⁴⁶⁵

Parks appeared on October 10; Annis and Priscilla prepared a room for his stay. On October 13, "Mary Jane has a very gloomy morn to leave single blessedness – for double wretchedness," and there would be "quite a bust-up at old Mr. Snodgrass's," the father of the groom.⁴⁶⁶ Now, on October 15, the crowd gathered again; Sisters Ann and Mary-George and Cousin Betsy Robinson arrived, then Jerry Brown and his wife, who were friends and neighbors. "After anxious looking, and impatient waiting, we hear the buggies at some distance. Here comes 'Old Bobbie,' Mr. Parks, Parson Brown & Ben Snodgrass ... Then comes the bride & groom, I never felt as serious in my life. I made great efforts to refrain from shedding tears ... Oh how much I did miss her last night."

Annis Cotten had been busy doing-over her older son Jerry's coat. He was a still-growing boy of 17, now joining Col. Frank Gurley's Co. C 4th Alabama Cavalry.⁴⁶⁷ This would leave the widow Annis at home with Willey, 15, and her five young daughters. Home on furlough and just back from the fighting, 2nd Lieut. John D. Ogilvie visited with a broken arm from a shell at the Battle of 2nd Manassas. He shared news of victories –

⁴⁶⁵ Col. John Snodgrass was stationed in Huntsville with the Alabama 55th.

⁴⁶⁶ John Snodgrass from Bellefonte finished his education in Huntsville and returned to Bellefonte as a merchant. At the start of the War, he enlisted and quickly moved up the ranks. He was wounded in the head at Shiloh in April of 1862, but when the 55th organized, he became a colonel. He was 6'1" with gray eyes, a fair complexion and dark hair. Molly's parents were Jeremiah and Mary (Williams) Brown. www.geni.com (accessed 6/2/18). Mollie Snodgrass's brother, Jeremiah Brown, would teach law to Priscilla's son, William Larkin Stephens.

⁴⁶⁷ Captain Frank Gurley's command of mostly local men formed Company C of Forrest's 4th Alabama Cavalry. Youngster Jerry Cotten was not involved in Gurley's most famous exploit on August 6 near New Market. Union General Robert McCook, recovering from wounds in an ambulance, was killed in an attack by Gurley's men. This action was significant; it was noted in the journals of Mary Jane Chadick in Huntsville, Cassie Fennell in Guntersville, Sallie Foster in Florence, and by Mary Fielding in Athens. While McCook and his Ohio brothers were highly regarded officers, this action was considered by many as wanton acts of guerilla warfare and murder.

one in Virginia and one in Maryland, the bloodiest of the War this far. Confederate forces were now in Maryland and Pennsylvania, “making them share some of the evils of invaders.”

On the Sabbath, October 19, Priscilla could bring herself to feel inspiration from Mr. Frazier’s preaching and felt gloomy without Mary’s company, “I feel like one who treads along some banquet hall deserted.”⁴⁶⁸ She was consoled in the expectation of sharing dinner the next day. “I have been gazing anxiously this live-long day – expecting Mary and her husband to appear at any moment. Annis was truly disappointed even more because ‘she put the big pot in the little one’ and had prepared an elaborate meal. Annis looked cut-down,” the next day, but they feasted on cake and custard without the newlyweds. By Wednesday, Priscilla waited until after dinner to depart for Sister Ann’s, who had also been disappointed. Fortunately, by Thursday, Ann sent for Priscilla, sharing the news that Mary and her husband had appeared. Trifling as these entries may seem, theirs was a close-knit family in uncertain, war-ravaged times. The women and children, by and large on their own with the fate of their husbands, brothers, and now sons unknown, desperately needed the comfort of gathering with one another.

Life settled into a routine of quilting and sewing. Priscilla sent to Huntsville for music from Lodgeman & Hollenberg, dealers in pianos, musical instruments and sheet music. Visitors (Bill Williams and his lady, for instance) spent one day and one night; the family gathered for this occasion. On October 2, Priscilla visited Bill’s home to admire the new baby which she called “his ugly offspring although Lizzie wouldn’t allow any comments.” Later that month the ground quickly and unexpectedly became covered with snow, and the air turned sharply cold. Mr. George [Keeble] returned home on a furlough, looking very much the soldier but also “old and altogether weather-beaten.” Priscilla stayed overnight with Miss Lizzie Keeble and “how delightful that drink of brandy was Miss Lizzie sent in the room this morning.” With bitter frost, it was now time to pick haws, fruit of the hawthorn bush, which she and Mary enjoyed again and again.⁴⁶⁹

Priscilla reported that sister Ann went to see a man John enslaved named Jeff, who was suffering from serious illness. Jeff’s “death would be

⁴⁶⁸ Thomas Moore’s Scottish air, “Oft in the Stilly Night.” Moore was one of her favorite poets.

⁴⁶⁹ The fruit of the hawthorn bush is a local treat and has long been considered a natural remedy for heart problems.

regretted – besides a loss to John, he proved himself to be a true Southern darkie – whilst the Yankees were in here, he had gained many friends from the manner in which he conducted himself.”⁴⁷⁰ During these days, the women spent much time visiting and hosting friends and neighbors in an effort to keep their lives as normal and social as possible in the chaotic circumstances.

With the removal of Federal troops, it became safe to reopen and manage the critically important gunpowder caves. Captain James H. Young was put in charge of the Nitre & Mining Corps in the nearby caves, most particularly Sauta Cave.⁴⁷¹ A young friend, Kate Frazier, stayed with Priscilla in early November, whiling away time reading *Paradise Lost* and even taking notes “of every new idea and sentences that tickle her fancy.” She incessantly urged Priscilla to practice her music and read from her Bible. Despite this visitor, Priscilla expressed dissatisfaction with the monotony of home life. Visits with friends and neighbors continued to offer security even as little family spats, (“miffs” she called them) appeared between the Larkin siblings. There was a much-needed diversion

⁴⁷⁰ Jeff, who was well-liked may have survived his illness. The 1870 federal census shows a Jeff Larkin, mulatto, age 42, as a farm laborer living in the Larkinsville district.

⁴⁷¹ The *Jackson County Chronicles* printed three articles, “Sauta Cave Mining Works” by Marion Smith detailing the history, process, equipment and inventory of property while under CSA control. #36 (April 1984), 2-11, #37 (July 1984), 2-9, and #44 (April 1986), 8-10. The earliest people to perform this grueling labor were enslaved people hired from Clement Clay; 11 of those men ran away within the first month. Conscripts and enlisted men then took over the work, mustered in under Captain Young in December of 1862. The site was mined until April 1863 when the equipment and supplies were evacuated to new headquarters at Guntersville. Whether they simply wanted to go home or avoid the harsh labor, at least 36 men deserted once across the river. One man, Newton J. Fletcher, was captured and a prisoner at Camp Chase, “kissed the eagle” and swore allegiance to the U.S. (Arthur E. Green and Ann B. Chambless, “Captain James H. Young’s CSA Co. in Jackson County, Alabama,” JCC, Vol. 19, #2 (April 2007), 3-12. Some men were listed as deserters or AWOL, but many simply went home or joined another unit. Desertion was not uncommon. Of the approximate 96 names of Jackson County Co. K, 4th Regiment it would appear 20 were killed; 3 resigned; 18 were discharged when their first commitments were served; one was disabled; 17 were wounded; there were 13 conscripts of which two shot themselves to be discharged; 12 conscripts deserted; two men’s whereabouts were unknown; four were captured; and, 12 regulars deserted. The remaining simply returned home with no notation. “Civil War Rolls of Soldiers of Jackson County,” Jackson County Newsletter #12, (Oct. 1977), n. p.

when George returned with news of a skirmish near Nashville with little damage – “the Yanks wouldn’t fight.” Considering that the Federals had held Nashville since February of that year, they had no real need to fight, except for fending off small skirmishes. A story from the *Chattanooga Rebel* reported that Federal General Rosecrans would soon have five divisions refitted for action; Priscilla did not see how the Confederacy could ever retake Nashville.

At Ann’s, Lieutenant Parks became quite ill during a visit. He’d taken the fever, as they visited, Priscilla wrote that he “looks badly – he fatigues himself too much sitting up,” and she and Annis departed, leaving poor Ann lonely again. Even thoughts of Christmas, a new quilt to prepare, music to practice, an old silk dress to refurbish, and the 7th pair of stockings knitted could not keep the everyday monotony at bay. There was nothing new except for soldiers. These men were apparently not even true soldiers; they’d been hired by the government to work at Saltpeter Cave. She attributed the increase of workers to Conscript Law.⁴⁷² “Tis a great Law – though I really believe there are more exemptions than need be... There are men that ought not to be exempted.”

Still suffering with the “blues,” Priscilla often went to visit Lizzie, Mary-George, and Ann. On one trip “Kentuck” wouldn’t let her or Kate Frazier ride, so they “very wisely concluded to walk.” Now she wondered if she had not shared too much chatter with her friend, “divulged too many of my secrets to Kate, I feel conscientious about it – fear she might betray me through confiding in anyone (with some exceptions) is running a great risk.” The War had made everyone apprehensive; paranoia had set in, and they were fearful of talking too much. Mr. Frazier, Kate’s father, returned from Huntsville where Mary Jane Chadick, associated with the Female Seminary, gave a complimentary opinion of Kate. “Miss Frazier is susceptible of making a moderate lady” given a chance and by means of Mrs. C’s guidance.⁴⁷³ Now, in mid-November, Mr. Parks accompanied Priscilla and Kate to church when Kate inexplicably became “miffed.” She

⁴⁷² Mr. C. Thornton, on detail at the mine, declared he was exempt from being a conscript as long as he was at the Nitre Works at Matthews Cave. He was warned, however, as were all the men, that if they were “found one mile from said Works without a written Furlough from the superintendent of said Work, he will be liable to be arrested as a conscript and taken to the nearest Camp of instruction.” Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Kate Frazier returned to Huntsville under the care and schooling of Mary Jane Chadick. She toured the newly constructed fortifications on Patton’s Hill and Mrs. Watkins’ garden with its three terraces and statuary representing the seven continents. *Incidents*, 154.

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spoke only a little on the way to church and “looked as if she could bite a ten-penny nail in two.” She even rode back with Jonnie Moore, riding double, “so anxious to go, she may ‘tuff’ it out for what I care.”

The Larkins were not alone in their miseries:

Mrs. Brown has called with a long catalogue of complaints about this negro and that one ‘picking up and leaving’ until she now has all of her work to do, though her treatment to her negroes are so well known that she receives no sympathy from any quarter – poor wretch. What a great fault – she has other admirable qualities.

Priscilla and Mary ventured out into a miserable rain. While Priscilla mentioned the need for rain with some relief, Mary complained constantly. They arrived at Mary-George’s “wet as water,” to discover that their hostess was not even expecting them; she was surprised that anyone would have ventured outdoors on a night so bad. The Chattanooga newspaper suggested General Rosecrans arrived in Nashville with three more divisions, making the total five complete divisions.⁴⁷⁴ Priscilla still could not image why Rebel forces had not safeguarded their position and taken the city earlier.

Doctor Moore was busy with Mary’s husband, Lt. Parks and another patient, John Larkin. (This was apparently not Priscilla’s brother John, but a man of the same name who lived with Ann Dillard and her household that included Priscilla and Mary in the 1860 census. He was listed as a clerk, age 30, with no financial assets) Everyone anticipated news of a fight at Fredericksburg as it became known that Gen. Robert E. Lee had gathered the Army of Northern Virginia there.⁴⁷⁵

December began with a renewed promise to spend her time more profitably. After reading the Bible one morning, Priscilla commenced reading *Buckeye Abroad*.⁴⁷⁶ She knitted scraps from her quilt into soldier’s socks because neither wool nor anything else could be found at a reasonable price. Conscript officers were in Larkinsville during their job. “I guess there were some grim looking faces of the ‘Lords of Creation’ ... There are some who would never have gone – but this catches them or a

⁴⁷⁴ By this time, Rosecrans’s command of the Army of the Cumberland had been in Nashville for seven weeks and totaled 46,000 men.

⁴⁷⁵ Lee obtained a tremendous victory against General Burnside through Dec. 11-15, 1862.

⁴⁷⁶ Samuel S. Cox. *Buckeye Abroad: The Wanderings in Europe and the Orient*. Cincinnati: Moore Anderson & Co., 1854, Forgotten Books 2018.

Substitute over forty years of age.” Furthermore, it was “charming news to hear of the deserters being caught.”

Mrs. Birdsong dined with them. Cold weather continued through the month, and Priscilla often stayed at home reading in her snug room with the carpet put down for winter warmth. Temperatures were extremely cold with heavy frosts; a great deal of ice “will give no cause to grumble about ice next summer, I hope.” Patsy, a slave belonging to Annis, gave birth to a fine son, and Annis was in good spirits. It seemed that Beck and Lizzie chattered enough to call it slander, “Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue out-venoms all the worms of the Nile.”⁴⁷⁷

Larkinsville became the headquarters for Confederate Nitre District No. 9 under the command of Capt. William Gabbett. Priscilla put on her best attire to make a fashionable call; she sent in her card, and was received by Mrs. Gabbett at the Harris Hotel. (Later, Gen. Morgan Smith made his headquarters there, conveniently across from the railroad depot.) She was happily surprised to find the lady intelligent and pleasant, although she did not have country manners. Other visits included those with Cousin Cary, Cousin Susan, and the Young families. She finished reading *Buckeye Abroad*, and was impressed with Joseph Paxton’s Crystal Palace and the remarkable antiquities described by Cox. On December 21, the entries of Priscilla Larkin offered the name of no particular person or event, although there was undoubtedly much going on around her. It is possible that Absalom Stephens had returned to visit.

Priscilla now quoted from *Two Gentlemen from Verona*, *Twelfth Night*, *Measure for Measure*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. Her favorite writer, however, seemed to be the popular poet and balladeer Thomas Moore. It is unclear whether the next pages, undated, were written at that current time or later, but they are poetic and involve Cupid, one heart unchanging, and lyrics from an old English ballad that she may have played often on the piano, “so warmly we met and so fondly we parted ... I but know that I love thee whatever thou art.” This final entry was signed “Priscilla Stephens.”



It is difficult to fathom how Priscilla and her family grappled with the violence and chaos in their homeland in the remaining years of the War. Unfortunately, her home and much of the Larkin land backed onto or

⁴⁷⁷ Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, Act 3, scene 4.

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faced the railroad, with its constant flow of soldiers and soon to be carpetbaggers. Brig. Gen. John E. Smith's 3rd Division maintained over 20,000 soldiers between Woodville and Bellefonte. This meant they would receive even less news, food and everything, save for dreaded Yankee soldiers. With their assets and social position, the Larkin family most likely did not suffer to the extent that many of their neighbors did. Frank Wilkeson, a Federal soldier, passed through Stevenson and encountered the large refugee camp there composed of women, children, crippled, and elderly people seeking safety from bands of guerillas and rations of food from the government. "All were utterly poor." He perceived a future for these people that did not bode well:

The pretended soldiers disgraced uniforms of both armies and stole, pilfered, and murdered their defenseless neighbors to enrich themselves. Farming was limited to very small plots [because] no one dared to till lean fields for fear of being shot and no stack of corn or grain was safe from the torch or plunder. [With the Southern men, brothers, husbands and sons gone, he saw hundreds of women forced to bring themselves and their children to safety.] Some were clad in homespun stuffs, others in calico, others in bagging. Many were unshod ... Sun-burnt women sat or stood in groups. Their features were expressionless as wood, their eyes lusterless. I talked to many of these women who told stories of murder, of arson, of blood-curdling scenes. It was easy to foresee the years of blood shed, of assassination, of family feuds, that would spring from the recollections of war, handed from widowed mothers to savage-tempered sons in the mountain recesses of Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Alabama.⁴⁷⁸

The federal government established refugee camps during the War. They offered some sense of safety, but after the War "death, rapine, and starvation were rampart and both civil and military authorities were helpless to restore order."⁴⁷⁹

Details of Priscilla Larkin's story are nebulous during this time, but a few events were recorded. Federals occupied the Larkin home, and, later, it was used as a hospital for smallpox patients. Afraid that it might be contaminated by the deadly illness or, possibly, poisonous memories,

⁴⁷⁸ Frank Wilkeson. *Recollections of a Private Soldier in the Army of the Potomac*. (NY: Putnam, 1886), 246. Jeremiah Clemens wrote vivid accounts in *Tobias Wilson* of the prevalent Jackson County hostilities among former friends and families.

⁴⁷⁹ Caudill, 42.

Priscilla had the house burned, and moved into town. Of her sisters, the oldest, Ann Dillard, widowed and mother of Henry and four daughters died on June 18, 1863. The young couple Mary and John Parks who married during the lull in October 1862, faced a hopeful time with the Federals out of sight. They had little time together, however. Mary Larkin Parks died on August 16, 1863, probably of complications resulting from pregnancy.

George Larkin served in the 4th Alabama and appears to have made it back home unscathed. His brother John was wounded at Chickamauga in September of 1863. He was likely present at Appomattox when his regiment surrendered, now only with 21 officers and 2,202 men. John Larkin remained single and died in 1902. At the beginning of the War, the Confederacy declared decisively that payment of any debts to northerners gave “comfort and support” to the enemy. That money, they reasoned should rightfully go to the Southern government instead. After the War, however, northerners called in those debts made in good faith, and The Federal Bankruptcy Act 1867 confirmed this. As the big city merchants of New Orleans and Charleston suffered losses, they called in those obligations, resulting in a catastrophic domino effect. The result was voluntary and involuntary bankruptcy. Five men from Jackson County filed for bankruptcy. The bankruptcy case for George W.R. Larkin, who in 1860 listed himself simply as “gentleman” became Case No. 905, filed in the Federal Court at Huntsville.⁴⁸⁰

William Larkin, the administrator of his father’s estate and guardian of Mary and Priscilla, continued to bear his own responsibilities, and many more besides. There was a partial settlement of the estate of his father, David Larkin Senior, in January of 1864. Records show this estate to have consisted of 12,000 acres of improved and 20,000 acres of unimproved land, slaves (soon to be none), a grist mill, a tan yard, a blacksmith shop, and 468 shares of Memphis & Charleston Railroad stock. Debts owed to the senior Larkin amounted to over \$38,000, if it could be collected, that is. Few, if any, of David Larkin’s vast holdings survived, but the land remained priceless. Brother-in-law John Parks agreed. In 1876, Parks, as administrator for his wife Mary’s estate, took Bill Larkin to court for the original site of Larkin’s Landing, once Riley’s Reservation, totaling 720 acres. (Since the TVA re-structure of the river, this is now in the general vicinity of Goose Pond Island.) The property was to be sold on the courthouse steps in Bridgeport on the first Monday of September 1872.

⁴⁸⁰ Wren, Michael Dean. “Federal Bankruptcy Act 1867” in JCC, Vol. 20, #4 (Oct. 2008); Annie Coleman Proctor History Collection, Vol. 9, 82, HMCPL.

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Although he was considered energetic and an outstanding citizen in the community, the final notice of insolvency for William was printed in a newspaper in May of 1894.⁴⁸¹ William Larkin lived until 1899, and, along with most of the Larkin family, was buried at Blue Spring Cemetery just west of Larkinsville.

After the War, only Larkin sisters Annis Cotten and Priscilla survived. Ed and Annis Cotten's family grew to 10 by 1875, and in 1868, a newborn daughter was named Prissy for her aunt. Ed lived until 1912, surviving his wife Annis by only one year.

Still reeling from the instability and chaos of the War years, the Larkin family only tentatively moved forward with life. Priscilla married Absalom Stephens on March 6, 1867. Five years earlier, she had given him the cold shoulder or, at the very least, a cold parlor, at Mrs. Bradford's house. His family was not wealthy, but acceptable. Stephens' father, J.B. Stephens, had served in the militia with Priscilla's father and two terms in the state legislature. Absalom, born in 1830, was a merchant and travelling salesman, which was a respectable trade. In 1860 he had 900 acres of land, but only 200 acres of which was improved farm land, for a total value of \$5,000. His skills had allowed him to serve successfully as Quartermaster for the 55th Alabama during the War. Their first and only child, William Larkin Stephens, was born on January 23, 1868. Tragically, only five weeks after the baby's birth, Priscilla Larkin Stephens died on February 2, most likely from childbirth or puerperal fever. Young William was raised in the household of none other than Priscilla's brother Bill. By 1870 Bill Larkin's, household included his children David, 17; Mary, 15; Lou, 12; Rutledge, 6; two Higgins nephews; his brother John Henry Larkin; and William Stephens, now 12; and, his brother-in-law, Absalom Stephens, age 50, who suffered from extreme rheumatism. (The house must have overflowed with five boarders in addition to these family members and, thank goodness, one cook.) Young William, Priscilla's son, studied law under Jeremiah Brown at Scottsboro. He later became a judge and eventually moved with his wife to the Washington, D. C. area.

Priscilla Larkin recorded lively entries in her journal about her life in Huntsville and Larkinsville during the year 1862. The following years became more stressful; if she wrote additionally, it was not saved. As much as the women yearned for peace, one wonders if they could have imagined the post-war years as a fellow Jackson County man urged. On

⁴⁸¹ Annie Coleman Proctor History Collection, Vol. 7, 3, and Vol. 15, 150-A, HMCPL

August 1, 1865, Larkin Willis announced his candidacy for delegate to the approaching State Constitutional Convention:

And war is over, secession and slavery is settled forever in this Government – the future is before us, we have now to deal with the present. The plan of reconstruction laid down by President Johnson and Governor Parsons is plain we all understand it. If we desire civil government, we can have it very soon. It is with the people of the State to say how long we are to be ruled by the sword and bayonet. If we will work in earnest and show to the government that we are going to quietly and peaceably submit to the laws thereof, it will not be six months until there will not be a [Federal] bayonet in the state. Their camp has already had its day of song. The sword, bayonet and plume, has crowded out our song too long. The plow, the anvil and the loom [can return.]⁴⁸²

At the time, of course, Priscilla and her sisters did not have the opportunity to vote. Would they have considered this message of “getting on with” and restoring life? It is important to note that Mr. Willis was not elected as a delegate to the Convention. Times of turmoil would continue throughout the South for decades to come. One memoirist wrote, “In nearly every home not a chicken, or goose or duck was left.” Salt, such a necessity was to be found nowhere except from the soil on the floor of the smoke-house. Women worked the fields, followed the plow, carried corn to the mill, fed the stock (if there was any left), hid bread or any meat in the cellar, loft or field, spun and wove their clothing, and tried to feed and raise their children. All the while, strangers and neighbors alike presented, a “constant dread of robbers, murderers, or the torch... Neither tongue, nor pencil, nor pen, nor all combined with human and angelic wisdom and skill can ever do justice to the trials of the fairer, feebler, purer, truer, and braver sex.”⁴⁸³ “Our” Priscilla bravely faced all of these conditions in her short life, and, had she survived childbirth, would most likely have continued to. Through these invaluable journals, Priscilla’s voice can still be heard.

⁴⁸² Jackson County History Association Newsletter, #2, (April 14, 1975), 3.

⁴⁸³ Kenamer, *History*, 63, 95.

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MEMOIRS

Five women who lived in Huntsville during parts or all of the Civil War, Sue Mooney, Rowena Webster, Lilie Bibb Greet, Mary Jane Wharton Bruckner, and her sister, Laura Wharton Plummer, wrote their memoirs 30 or more years after the events. They remembered the sweetness of their homes and loving families, and they recalled the threat of hunger and invading soldiers. Many of the events clearly describe the actions of intruders and the women's response. It is important to remember that memory can fade with time; some days drift away completely, and others, with many retellings, take on a significance they may not have had at the time.

Susan Dromgoole Mooney (1837-1920)

Amid the lamentations of friends, we turned our faces to the south.

Susan Mooney used the biblical phrase "My Moving Tent" for the title of her memoirs. She followed and made a home for her husband on his Methodist preaching circuit. She, the children, servants, her household, and everything she possessed travelled with this "hero of the saddlebags" for 46 years. The years of the Civil War separated them, and she recalled the strength she found within herself.

The strong-minded, well-educated Susan F. Dromgoole, was born near Murfreesboro, Tennessee as the daughter of Lucy (Blanch) and the Honorable John Dromgoole, prominent members of their community. In 1856 at the age of 19, she married a Methodist minister, Wellborn Mooney. His vocation took them endlessly to the next circuit; Susan moved with their trunks, a bonnet trunk and carpetbags (later not to be included at as an emblem of Reconstruction) to hold her "flounces and furbelows and hooped skirts." They constantly stayed in other people's homes, which she often recalled fondly. Their first two children, Emily and William, were born before the War. Baby Erwin Randle (named for the beloved Rev. Dr. Alexander Erwin and Thomas Randle of Huntsville, both recently deceased at the time) lived for less than a year, but five children survived. Reverend Mooney spent most of their time on the roads and byways, preaching in as many as 21 places every four weeks. He was on the road so often that Susan, as most women would, looked forward to

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the pleasure of conferences where the church leadership gathered and women could enjoy real social settings.⁴⁸⁴



Sue Dromgoole Mooney

An 1859 conference in Huntsville allowed the family to enjoy the spacious home of well-to-do Episcopalian widow Mrs. Elijah Rice.



Mary Rice's "Spite" House, 311 Lincoln St., Huntsville

⁴⁸⁴ Susan F. Dromgoole Mooney. *My Moving Tent*. (Memphis, General Books, 2012), 2, 3, 12, 16, *passim*.

The Right Reverend Henry C. Lay's stay at this home coincided with the Mooneys'. In no uncertain terms, Susan declared she had met her "first religious monopolist." Reverend Henry Lay "read all the prayers and said all the graces. It never dawned on him that this was a breach of clerical courtesy... an illustration of dogmatic High Church imperialism!" She knew, however, to "exercise the grace of silence." Regardless of this affront, "Social life was at full tide and many were the invitations to dine, to drive, to take tea."⁴⁸⁵ She met the beautiful daughters of Dr. Benjamin Wharton and the family of much-beloved Rev. James Plummer.⁴⁸⁶ Here also were "elect Methodists," in prominent families, such as Grandma Watkins, Mrs. Pope and her daughter Mrs. Mastin, Mrs. Bibb, and the Facklers. The next Conference was in Athens, where they again found unstinted hospitality. Susan mentioned the Coleman, Frazer, Hobbs, and Malone families, all the "choicest material." She suggested, however, that "Mrs. Chiles" (Madame Childs of the Female Institute) was "a Northern woman, not of Southern sentiments."⁴⁸⁷

After the First Battle of Manassas, Susan Mooney foresaw change coming as the "pulse beat high," and then at "fever heat." However, "no star in the Southern constellation told of the coming tide of woes." The fall of Fort Donelson found her family in Pulaski, Tennessee, which was now occupied by Federals. It had first been liberated by Gen. John Hunt Morgan, but was recaptured. At that time, Special Orders were issued on June 12, 1862, from which Susan Mooney quoted in her memoirs. Four men, including her husband's name, led the list, "citizens of Giles County, who have been active participants in the rebellion, so far as urging the enlistment of soldiers and furnishing them money, outfits, and arms, industrious circulators of reports calculated to aggravate the already inflamed minds of their countrymen ... now battling to desecrate that flag which floats from the capitol of Giles County" have been duly notified that the "Federal Government could no longer brook treason in any shape

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., 17. Mary Rice's house, fondly known as the "Spite House" on Lincoln Street in Huntsville, is recognized for its unusual height; the first floor is 14 feet tall, the second floor 16 feet tall, supposedly to spitefully obscure the view of the house of LeRoy Pope behind it.

⁴⁸⁶ Two Wharton daughters also wrote memoirs; see below. Reverend Plummer additionally served as pastor of the almost 200-member Black Methodist mission in west Huntsville until 1862. He and another man warned General Stanley on January 4, 1864 of the dangers of Union troops cooking in the basement of the First Methodist Church. Fire destroyed the building two days later. (Ford, *History*, 50.)

⁴⁸⁷ Mooney, *Tent*, 26, 29.

beneath that flag.” The men had until 10 pm to make their decision to either take the oath or go south. The results were not surprising: Union Captain Twyman, with 20 mounted scouts as escort, was ordered to deliver “them under a flag of truce to any officer of the Southern army that may be met with ... Should they return within our lines ... they will be dealt with as spies.”⁴⁸⁸

It became evident that Susan could no longer remain in the parsonage unprotected. She prepared to leave at 7 am the next morning with as much of the family’s belongings as she could carry. “Our worldly possessions were put in a wagon drawn by two stout mules.” The assemblage included two enslaved women: the children’s nurse, Harriet and the old cook, Aunt Edith. Susan Mooney would never forget the deep sense of injustice and indignity of these days at the hands of merciless Union soldiers. After 39 years, here was her chance to vent. “Before starting Capt. Twyman assured me in the presence of friends that he would give five minutes in each hour for a rest for me and the children.” Moreover, they would always be carefully secure in the midst of this caravan of other refugees. “Amid the lamentations of friends, we turned our faces to the south.”

In mid-June it was hot, they were weary, and the mules Jane and John were lazy. The heat turned sultry and a heavy rainfall left everyone drenched; it was not even noontime yet. She graciously invited the captain to share their lunch already prepared by friends in Pulaski, and he accepted. Evening found them north of Rogersville, Alabama at a humble home occupied by two frightened women, where their band was fed and kept overnight. Everything stopped the next morning as General Buell’s Federal troops took the right-of-way on the road. Stop-and-go and counter-commands seemed to be the order of the day. Their next night was spent under guard and filled with the constant clatter and swearing of the military camp-life surrounding them. Now, on the third morning of their trek, the army convoy left, their own wagon had somehow disappeared, and they were still ordered to move on.

Her account does not mention Reverend Mooney as a member of the party; it was Susan who took all action. “The captain, I take it, was never, at his best, very amiable. He was cross, easily irritated, and the suspicion was not lacking that he kept himself unduly stimulated.” There was much more. When she addressed him, she spoke for the others, “I am

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 31. Captain Henry G. Twyman with his mounted scouts had been recently commended for their actions against Gen. John Hunt Morgan. OR. Ser. 1, Vol. XVI, part 2, p 8, 596.

not your prisoner ... [and I] mean to report you and have you arrested ... He simply smiled in a superior, sardonic sort of way, and we were told to move on!" The roadways were impassable, filled with troops and their paraphernalia. The captain most likely yearned to be back fighting General Morgan. While he reclined under an apple tree to rest, a body of higher-ranking horsemen appeared. With a gladdened heart, Susan spoke to the officer in charge, who then addressed her. Their wagon was led to the front of the caravan, and they crossed the Tennessee River to Dixie.⁴⁸⁹

The exiles continued on rough road into the night. They found their way to the home of friends they had known from Pulaski, and "our tent was never pitched under a more cordial roof." Along the Byler Road, over the white and glistening Sand Mountain, daylight hours were spent blistering in the sun; night was for battling bedbugs. One stopping place, "a travelers' inn," offered a meal with "sure enough coffee, fried chicken, biscuit, batter cakes, butter, and milk out of glass goblets!" During this journey, Susan received word that Reverend Mooney's next post would be the church at Marion, Alabama. A new path took them through North Port, across the Black Warrior River and the fine old city of Tuscaloosa, shaded with triple rows of water oaks. They needed provisions, but unfortunately, the only item to be purchased there were watermelons. They found nowhere to lodge, so the carriage rolled on and "the children went to sleep crying for bread ... Give us this day our daily bread," took on a new, personal meaning. They slowly found their way to Marion where there were new kind-hearted friends, happier times, and, as Susan wrote, "Paradise regained."⁴⁹⁰

Due to a temporary lull in fighting in north Alabama, Reverend Mooney was reassigned to Athens. His wife and children remained behind. There, women who had been "delicately reared" now learned to knit, card, spin weave and dye garments with natural herbs. It even became fashionable to wear shoes made from Confederate jeans.⁴⁹¹ Everyone waited hopefully for letters containing news of the War, causality, and killed-in-action lists from the north.

By May of 1863, it appeared safe in Athens for the family to arrive, so Susan once more moved their "tent" to join Reverend Mooney. They

⁴⁸⁹ Mooney, *Tent*, 31-32. For most of the War years, northern soldiers did not come south of the Tennessee River in Alabama. There are many references to "Dixie" as a safe haven.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

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were all invited to stay at the home of Elizabeth Coleman, just at the edge of town on Coleman Hill. Mrs. Coleman was the well-to-do widow of Judge Daniel Coleman who had died in 1857. Her fine home must have seemed almost empty with one son, John, gone, killed at Murfreesboro and two others in the Confederate army. Two daughters, son Ruffin, about 16, and a sickly son, Franklin, about 14, remained at home. Reverend Mooney's presence there provided an adult male as a safeguard. Methodist ministers were always welcome at this haven that included "one of the most extensive libraries in the state." "Her home was noted as "one of joy and culture."⁴⁹²

No sooner had they comfortably settled in than the Yankees returned to Athens. Susan and the Colemans moved to safety across the river at Somerville. There, they stayed with the family of Dr. James Coleman, the oldest son of a Louisville School of Medicine graduate and a minister himself. Reverend Mooney was appointed as chaplain to the Army of Tennessee, and was called away. Susan "saw him no more till the final folding of tents at Appomattox."⁴⁹³ She, the children, and their nurse remained with the Colemans in Somerville until late September of 1863 when the doctor returned to Athens in concern for his mother who, with much anxiety, was attempting to protect their property. Mrs. Coleman's trauma was compounded when she learned that her second-born son Richard was killed at the battle of Chickamauga.⁴⁹⁴ It fell upon Susan Mooney, she said, to relay the news at the stricken home. "John and

⁴⁹² Saunders, *Settlers*, 515. The 1860 Federal Census estimated Mrs. Coleman's total worth at over \$150,000. Two of his adult children residing at home inherited over \$23,000. Robert (Dink) Thach at the Coleman house was valued at \$23,000 (his wife, Eliza's, share). Rev. James, who did not live at home, may have received a share of his father's estate, as well. Daniel Coleman commissioned William Frye to make a portrait from a photograph of his brother John.

⁴⁹³ Mooney, *Tent*, 36.

⁴⁹⁴ Unable to find his brother Richard, Capt. Daniel Coleman traveled to the Chickamauga battlefield on September 20 to find him. "I found him on the field and got his sword and pocketbook... My brothers have fallen at the hands of our wicked enemy. This dear sweet boy, only 19 years old, so good, so fine, so gentle pierced through his heart by a cruel foe... Shot through the heart, in the groin, thigh and leg." He obtained an ambulance and took the body to a nearby house used as a hospital. There, old friend Reverend Mooney offered to attend to the burial; Daniel returned to his unit. Later, his brother-in-law Robert Thach and brother Ruffin Coleman escorted the body back to Athens for burial. (Norman M. Shapiro, "Diary of Daniel Coleman, 1863-1864," *Huntsville Historical Review*, Vol. 26, #2 (Summer-Fall, 1999), 29-31.

Richard both gone!” Mother Coleman’s anguished words remained forever in Susan’s memory, “O God, how can I stand it!”

Yankees once again returned to Athens, now pitching their tents in the grove next to the Coleman house. Rebecca and Ira Hobbs, who had already lost their only son in battle, kindly offered to share their house in town with Susan and the children. On December 17, however, “a day of snow, slush, mud, a leaden sky” Susan became homeless again when the “old people” were ordered out of their house and outside of Federal lines. Tearful friends gathered to say good-bye to the Hobbs, and a sergeant came to accept the keys. Rebecca Hobbs handed the sergeant her basket of keys, “after the manner of Virginia housekeepers,” and with kind Methodist sincerity offered, “Personally, sir, I have no ill will toward you, and I hope to meet you in heaven!”⁴⁹⁵

This left Susan and her children in a difficult position which she resolved “not seeing the opportunity, but realizing the necessity” by asking the soldier to help her find an army wagon of some sort. As they approached the picket potentially blocking their departure, she told their driver to proceed briskly while she waved a folded handkerchief as if it were an official pass; they were allowed to continue. The wagon behind them carrying their belongings was, after all, stamped as “U.S. Government Issue.” They were soon welcomed back at the Coleman house, safe outside the lines.⁴⁹⁶ Because it was not customary at the time, Susan never mentioned that she was far into her pregnancy with son Wellborn P. Mooney, soon to be born on January 30, 1864. The soldier may have taken pity on her when he realized her situation.

Meanwhile, Capt. Daniel Coleman attempted to return to Athens on furlough, hoping to be allowed to make the last 15 miles to stay at home. His men were settling into winter camp in Tennessee at that time. He got as far as Federally-controlled Decatur but was “cruelly refused.” Coleman was able to meet up with local hero Gen. Phillip Roddey, who just happened to be preparing a quick skirmish into Athens. He needed no urging to join, and, at daylight, made a raid which drove the Yankees off.

⁴⁹⁵ Mrs. Mooney provided a lovely description of Martha Fraser, one of the lamenting friends. Mooney, *Tent*, 36. Mrs. Fraser is also mentioned in Mary Fielding’s account. The “old people,” Ira and Rebecca Hobbs were just over 60 years old.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

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Most of this fighting took place around his very own childhood home where he found his mother and sisters in a highly distraught state.⁴⁹⁷

Susan Mooney remained in the middle of this action. As loyal as she was to the cause of the Confederacy, she described the next month as more than frantic. A new reign of terror appeared in the form of Southern cavalymen who continued to arrive and disappear with munitions, provisions, and everything else they could carry despite the fact that “the defenseless are the sufferers. I thought I would never sleep again” as brave men fighting for a good cause had somehow lost their way.⁴⁹⁸

By February of 1864, the enemy had returned and Daniel Coleman heard they had “sacked and pillaged” his home and driven out his family, “all innocent women and children.” At least one sister and brother, young Ruffin, evacuated to Rocky Hill at Courtland, the home of Col. James Saunders who “offered them a home there kindly – for a while.” If Mrs. Coleman remained to protect her house, this may have been the time the Yankee soldiers “took Elizabeth Coleman’s teeth for their gold content.”⁴⁹⁹

It was time for Susan Mooney, with a newborn baby and two young children, to attempt to find her way home to Tennessee. Her husband was still with the army, money was quickly dwindling, and a pressing issue she’d been avoiding now reared its ugly head. In order to purchase a ticket for the now military-run train, she would be required to take the unacceptable Oath of Allegiance to the Union. A kind acquaintance of old, Rev. John Edmondson, now attired in a blue uniform, solved the problem by purchasing tickets for both Susan and her nurse, and made arrangements for their trunks. He accompanied the family as far as Pulaski, Tennessee.

All trials seemed to be behind Susan until she attempted to board the train; a uniformed soldier demanded to search her luggage and found a contraband pair of boots and a pair of cotton cards. She attempted to justify these possessions declaring, “I am not going South; I am coming from the South, and the cards belong to this old colored woman.” Faithful nurse Harriet declared, “Yes, and I’m gwine ter keep ‘em, too.” She did. Susan handed the now-illegal boots to an acquaintance to share with any

⁴⁹⁷ Shapiro, “Diary,” 37.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁹⁹ Limestone County Historical Marker 17 on the site of Coleman Hill, Athens, Alabama.

needy man. (Years later, she and that man, Major J.W.A. Wright met socially; he shared with her that, without those boots, he would never have escaped from the Yankees.)⁵⁰⁰

The War was not over, but home was a welcoming place for Susan and her children. She was there when General Hood's army passed through, fresh from defeat in the Battle at Franklin, and she clearly wanted it known that, although overwhelmed, the men had not "dissolved into a rabble of demoralized fugitives" as some claimed.⁵⁰¹ Nonetheless she knew wives and mothers "weary as the waiting was at home, the earnest exhortation to loved ones in the army had been, 'Stay on till all is over; we can endure.'"⁵⁰²



There would be many moving tents among all classes of people as "the old home life was a thing of the past. The laborer was no longer worthy of his hire, and, had he been worthy, his former owner could not have afforded to 'keep' him." As soldiers returned home, the new battle was "for bread without hoe or plow or horse." Soldiers' horses, assured under the terms of surrender were, not always granted for personal use. There were newly free Black men claiming the 40 acres and mule promised to them. Reconstruction was burdened with oppressive measures. Those who might have been faithful except "for the evil counsels of bad

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 38. Major J.W.A. Wright of the 36th Alabama, had been the valedictorian of his class at Princeton; he married Margaret, a daughter of Dr. Henry Tutwiler. He later became principal of the Military Academy at Talladega despite sustaining a serious wound at Chickamauga. In the spring of 1864, during a removal of officers from Camp Chase to Fort Delaware, he made a daring escape by climbing through the railroad car transom and leaping onto a passing freight car. He made his way to Philadelphia, Canada, then back into the U.S., where he once again reported for duty. (*Confederate Veterans' Magazine*, Vol. 3, 206.)

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 39. This may be how Susan remembered the events; she took food and clothing to many of those injured on the field and those captured. Major Wright, the beneficiary of those boots, declared marching toward Franklin, "ghastly spectacles... our dead lay thicker... than we had ever seen in any battlefield." Confidence in General Hood disappeared as one-third of his 20,000 men became casualties, with 1,800 dead, 4,000 wounded, and 700 now prisoners. Other writers such as Mary Fielding of Athens reported men straggling southward, disheartened and disheveled. Eugene D. Schmiel, *Citizen-General Jacob Dolson Cox*. eBook, (Columbus, OH: Ohio Univ. Press, 2014), 161.

⁵⁰² Mooney, *Tent*, 39.

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white men come hither from the ends of the earth to prey, to plunder, and for political purposes ... vultures, whose sharp beaks found no dead body too filthy for picking, if perchance some morsel could be found to appease for a time the insatiable appetite.”⁵⁰³

Susan Mooney taught school during the final year of the War. When her husband returned, they prepared to move again; after paying bills, the couple had three children and possessed a total of 35 cents. Reverend Mooney offered to beat rock on the turnpike if it might help them recover economically. They were not alone. Their friend Captain Morgan replied, when asked how he was doing, said that he’d never felt better, “I’m at the bottom. I can’t get any lower.” The captain was on a mission of some sort because he hired both Susan and Wellborn to teach school at Salem, Tennessee. The next Monday, school opened “with the best-behaved ‘boys’ I had ever seen, many of them being ex-Confederate soldiers.”⁵⁰⁴

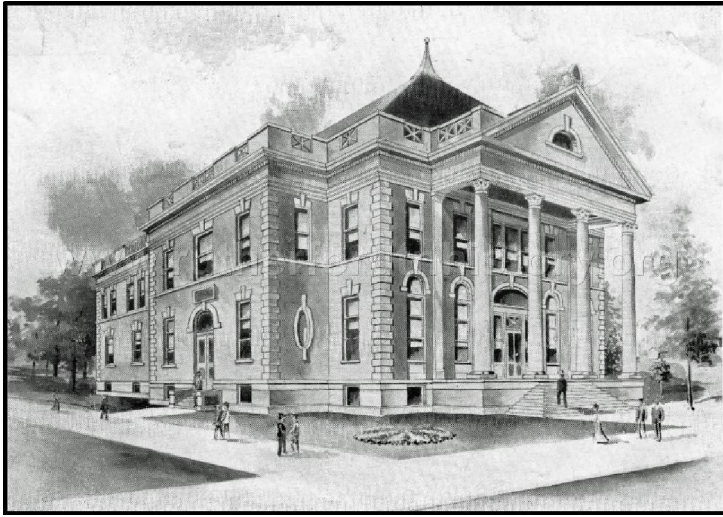


Rev. Wellborn Mooney

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 48, 49.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 49.

They returned to Pulaski, where Susan knew the Ku Klux “having its birth in the strenuous exigencies of time, was cradled in a house” there. It “sprang ... full armed, and as supernatural being inspired a very wholesome awe upon superstitious violators of the law.” Reverend Mooney continued his preaching and their tent moved to Clarksville, Edgefield, Murfreesboro, and, again, Pulaski. Their oldest child, Blanch, died in 1876. Dear friends consoled them in this loss. They were sent to Cape Girardeau, among other places; Susan’s religious fervor was as strong as her husband’s.⁵⁰⁵ Education became her calling. She and three of her children opened a school in their home in Dresden, Tennessee with considerable success. Wellborn Petway Mooney, born in Athens during the traumatic times of January 1864, established the successful Mooney School in Murfreesboro in 1903: it was a school for young men that stressed academics and athletics.



Mooney School, Murfreesboro (Rutherfordnhistory.org)

After 51 years of marriage and eight children, three of whom predeceased them, Rev. Wellborn Mooney died on October 5, 1907, while Susan Dromgoole Mooney lived for almost 13 more. She passed on September 13, 1920. They are buried at Sunset Cemetery in Weakley County, Tennessee, and their common stone reads, “Passed over the river

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., 55-57.

to rest with people of God.” Her death was noted in the *Confederate Veteran*: “The Old South was in her heart next to her religion.”⁵⁰⁶

Rowena Webster (1821-1907)

***I am vandalized and very vexed,
but if I have to go, I will try to be a lady.***

The battles of Rowena Webster, a single woman in her early forties, may have gone unnoticed by many, but were hard-fought and now stand as a valuable record for those seeking to understand life in Alabama during wartime. Her heritage was replete with a Revolutionary War captain, a War of 1812 colonel and significant marriage connections. Her parents Sarah (Jossey) and Jonathan Webster had passed away and she, now unprotected as a single woman, lived at Beechwood – the family home of her sister and brother-in-law, Mary and Col. Andrew Erwin. After the Federal invasion into Bedford County, Tennessee, Rowena took refuge in Huntsville and stayed with the Samuel Matthews family on the north side of McChung Street on Patton’s Hill.

Miss Rowena recalled after the fall of Fort Donaldson that her sister, Mary Erwin, had opened the doors for the sick and wounded. Federals soon arrived there like a cyclone and wreaked havoc. They committed all sorts of depredations and Row (as she was called) and her young niece were sent south to Huntsville for safety. With what must have been a sinking heart, Rowena reported that Federal troops arrived in Huntsville on the morning of April 11, 1862, taking control of the city.⁵⁰⁷

A lady would not acknowledge these vile men, and Rowena recalled walking sedately on the streets with her friend Mrs. Mastin. When the Union soldiers passed them, she shut her eyes tightly. Apparently, Mrs. Mastin said, “Miss Row it is all lost on them for they will think that you are a blind woman.”⁵⁰⁸ The women considered this political statement to be lost on the rude northern invaders.

⁵⁰⁶ Findagrave.com at Ancestry. (accessed 1/12/2017); *Confederate Veteran*, Dec. 1920.

⁵⁰⁷ Bessie Russell. “Rowena Webster’s Recollection of Huntsville during the 1862 Occupation” in *Huntsville Historic Review*, Vol. 2, #2 (Ap. 1972), 37.

⁵⁰⁸ *Incidents*, 337.

News about the Federal army under Colonel Turchin confirmed the worst rumors from nearby Athens, including one that Judge Daniel Coleman's house was almost demolished. "Molasses and lard were poured on the carpets and the furniture was broken up. All the vehicles, carriages and buggies, were hacked apart or rolled miles away just for meanness. The events were so horrifying and would not be forgotten "until no one is left to tell the story."⁵⁰⁹

The arrest of a well-connected, educated woman during this time was almost unheard of, but Rowena was taken into custody two months after the first Union incursion in Huntsville. Troops brought her to Gen. Ormsby Mitchel's headquarters for having attached a "tiny" Confederate flag to the rolling hoop belonging to her niece Rosa Turner and friend Sallie Matthews. Unfortunately (or, rather, fortunately as Rowena would tell her story later), the girls played with the hoop when some Ohio soldiers passed by. The festooned hoop so upset one of the soldiers that Row ripped it off and put it in her pocket. According to her memoirs, when the soldier demanded the flag she replied, "You haven't the bravery to capture one on a battlefield, but ask for a baby flag from a woman?" With no authority, he threatened to send Federal soldiers suffering from smallpox to quarter at the Matthews' house. Row defiantly replied, "Bring on your smallpox case, I am not afraid of you or your smallpox." (Her host Mr. Matthews might have not been so pleased with that retort had he heard it, or had it actually been made.) The offending hoop ended up in the reservoir down the hill when the soldier tried to confiscate it. What's more, she said, "If you are a good diver you can get the hoop."⁵¹⁰

Mary Jane Chadick wrote in her journal of this day, as well; a crowd of soldiers and locals soon gathered, neither side gave ground. A report was submitted to authorities, and Mr. Matthews, Rosa, Sallie, and Rowena were arrested the next day. In her memoirs, written many years after the events, Rowena recalled that a summons came from the General's tent, and she'd responded, "I would not go if they brought a regiment for me." Mr. Matthews prevailed, but she proclaimed, "I am very indignant and very vexed, but if I have to go, I will try to be a lady." The women righteously refused the offer of several officers to assist them from their carriage. At the tent, "I sneered looking to the right and left before choosing a seat." According to her, "General Mitchel said, 'don't you know I could send you to Fort LaFayette in five minutes?'" She replied, "That is very rapid traveling." She saw, in her remembrance, "a lurking

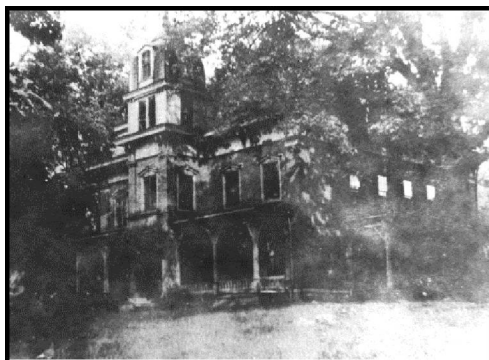
⁵⁰⁹ Russell, *Recollection*, 42.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 36-47.

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smile pass over his face.”⁵¹¹ When asked by Gen. Mitchel if she were a Rebel, Rowena answered “over and above board.” Growling like a lion he said, “No man or woman, or child shall say that they are Rebels in my tent... How dare you tell me this in my tent? Women go home and behave yourselves. Henceforth, I shall keep an eye on you and know all you do.”⁵¹² All the so-called miscreants were sent home with a stern warning.

Huntsville women had helped Southern soldiers escape on the morning of April 11, but other men could not make their getaway until later. The ladies helped some men, “disguising them in female attire.” On one occasion, a heavily veiled woman in deep mourning was seen putting flowers on the grave of a Yankee, even though boots could be seen at the hem of “her” skirt. Two Southern soldiers were fed and concealed on the oddly-shaped roof of Mr. James Donegan’s house until they could make their escape. She recalled playing tricks, “We often kept the Yankees in hot water reporting that Forrest, Morgan, or some other famous general was in the neighborhood.”⁵¹³



J.J. Donegan House (HMCPL)

Rowena described the funeral at the Huntsville burying ground (later Maple Hill Cemetery) of a Federal colonel of artillery, “His body was in an ambulance draped in crape; his war horse also was draped.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, 31-41.

⁵¹² *Incidents*, 59-61. This meeting with Gen. Mitchel, contrary to all earlier stories was not held inside any home. According to the Federal policy at the time, houses and possessions were not commandeered for personal use. Rowena clearly stated that she, Sallie, Rosa, and Mr. Matthews met in the general’s tent in General Lowe’s grove of trees. Russell, 39-41.

⁵¹³ Russell, *Recollections*, 38, 44.

Officers rode in reverse arms, [with] many soldiers; band playing the dead march in muffled drums.” Funerals of Confederate soldiers were only marked with immense bouquets of flowers from ladies of the neighborhood.

She did not consider all Union soldiers to be totally depraved. About one third of the men were polite, but two-thirds were “turned loose to do what they pleased.” Her reasoning, knowingly or otherwise, took her past the consequences but the reason for this war:

...take it to yourselves, if you were about to be robbed of all your possessions and accumulations of wealth which was honestly gotten by your parents and your rightful inheritance, would you not have felt the same way, especially when the parents and grandparents of these Yankees had bought and sold slaves? They were once just as much their property as ours.

Rowena remembered most of her acquaintances remaining aloof to friendly overtures made by the occupying officers. Her most harsh declaration was made not in regards to the men, but from seeing a daughter of General Mitchel attired in a blue riding habit with a sword at her side, which was “coarse to us.”



Rowena probably had other adventures with rude Yankees, but she did have a short respite. In March of 1863, she returned to Beechwood, the home of her sister Mary and Col. Andrew Erwin. An old family acquaintance, Daniel Coleman, called on her there. Other guests included Lt. Gen. Hardee and his family with two daughters, Annie and Sallie. Not surprisingly, young Coleman visited again.⁵¹⁴ The Erwins welcomed “the Stonewall of the West,” Gen. Patrick Cleburne, who Rowena considered to be neglectful of his appearance, but had dreamy hazel eyes. Others who dropped by included Generals Polk, Cheatham, Liddell, and John C. Brown. Their staffs were often invited for tea and evening entertainments that included charming conversation and music.⁵¹⁵ Among the visitors was Col. Arthur Freemantle, later General Sir Fremantle who had come to observe military affairs. “He came to our social circle every evening,” once commenting that Beechwood was the most beautiful place – outside

⁵¹⁴ Shapiro, “Invasion,” 10, 11.

⁵¹⁵ Rowena Webster, “Memoirs of a Southern Girl.” Jill Knight Garrett Collection, Box 14, f 15, Tenn. State Library and Archives. Typed copy, p. 16.

of England. On one occasion, the ladies rode to a ball in Shelbyville in an ambulance with a small Rebel flag posted gaily on the top and “Rebel Wagon” written on the side. They were greeted by gallant General Hardee who said, “Put down the steps and let the angels descend.”⁵¹⁶ General Bragg made his headquarters there and was entertained lavishly in 1863 while the Army of Tennessee was stationed on the Duck River.⁵¹⁷

Unfortunately, the gaiety of their winter camp ended with the reality of booming cannon and the need to flee south. Mrs. Erwin and many of her servants, along with Rowena’s faithful Henry Camp and cook Cap, travelled to LaFayette, Alabama in a line of freight cars hauling furniture and \$20,000 in gold that Mrs. Erwin held for a friend. The gold became a nuisance because, as they continued by a circuitous route, it had to be counted time and again and hidden time and again under the hearth, in an old ice cream freezer, or covered with sand, as was the heavy silver tea service in the smoke house. On one occasion Rowena hid her handsome diamond pin on the instep of one of her gaiters.⁵¹⁸

In 1865, they returned to Nashville, residing with gracious friends for a time. Little is known of Rowena’s later life; she wrote no memories of these years. In these times, as an unmarried woman, it was customary for her to live with family members who could offer her security and protection. Rowena Webster lived until October 2, 1907, and is buried in the Webster family cemetery on Hampshire Pike, Hardeman County, Tennessee.⁵¹⁹

Mary Jane Wharton Bruckner and Laura Wharton Plummer

Although their recollections were written almost 50 years after the events, these two sisters vividly recalled hardships and injustices they suffered at the hands of the invading Union army. The Wharton sisters were raised in an environment of elegance and protection with their younger sisters on Pulaski Pike, about 5 miles north of Huntsville, at the home place of their father, Dr. George Wharton.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 17, 18.

⁵¹⁷ Tennessee State Marker #3G 42, Beechwood Plantation.

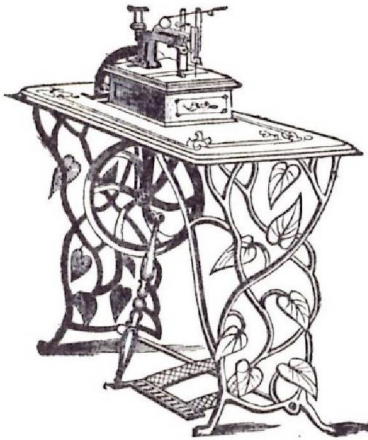
⁵¹⁸ Garrett, *History*, 20-26.

⁵¹⁹ Findagrave.com at Ancestry (accessed 8/1/2017).

Mary Jane (Wharton) Bruckner (1834-1922)

Never shall I forget the first cannon we heard.

In 1860, Mary Jane (Wharton) Bruckner lived near her childhood home with her husband John T. Bruckner (listed as an artist) with a value of \$4,800 that included three enslaved Black people. They had three young sons: George, 5; Eugene, 3; and baby Herbert, a one-year-old. Bruckner also owned Bruckner's Depot on the north side of the town square, offering several varieties of the newest sewing machines.⁵²⁰ Six-year-old George died in February of 1861. Later in December of that year, baby John was born. Mr. Bruckner, a native Georgian, enlisted in November of 1862 in the Alabama 50th Infantry, leaving his young family in the care of his in-laws, Dr. George Wharton.



SEWING MACHINES!

-OF-

Several Different Varieties,

MAY ALWAYS BE FOUND

-AT-

BRUCKNER'S DEPOT,

Huntsville, Alabama.

At the behest of her grandchildren, 77-year-old Mary Jane Bruckner began her memoirs by noting the nobility of her father's old English background. He was born in Virginia, graduated from Transylvania Medical College, and became a much-loved physician in Huntsville. On her mother Eliza's side, Capt. Richard Harris fought in the Revolutionary War and stood beside General Washington to accept the sword of General Cornwallis. She recalled the glory of that British defeat in stories she must have heard repeatedly of ragged and dirty American soldiers, some bloody

⁵²⁰ Williams, 60, 43.

and barefoot, facing down the British in their new, dazzling crimson coats.⁵²¹

They had all loved the Union, their recently-formed country, and Mary Jane recalled that the possibility of war troubled the last years of her grandfather, Harris. She called to mind a speech by “Alabama’s most gifted son,” Jeremiah Clemens. “Tomorrows sun in his long journey will shine upon no land so fair, so heaven blessed as our own South-land, and shall we with suicidal hand apply the torch that will lay waste so fair a heritage? Heaven forbids!” She shared “these facts to show that the better class of people and the larger proportion of the Southerners were not for secession in the beginning.” After Harper’s Ferry and the threat of slave uprisings, public opinion drastically changed. Now the few remaining Union men were suspect.⁵²²

Thus, setting the scene, Mary Jane Bruckner described her own position. After her husband joined the army, she and the three boys moved to her parents’ home, residing alongside the four Wharton sisters still living there. The house was an old-fashioned brick building of many airy rooms as she recalled. Their “servants” (they kept about 40 people enslaved) seemed faithful, even if “freedom is sweet,” but distrust among everyone soon prevailed. It was in April of 1862 when “never shall I forget the first cannon we heard when Gen. Mitchel’s army corps entered Huntsville. At last we were in the midst of it.” Scouts appeared at daylight, demanding breakfast in the dining room, armed “with pistols and clanking swords.” It soon became a daily occurrence for provisions and supplies to be taken. Doctor Wharton could only save a pen of fattening hogs by explaining that the enslaved people would suffer the most for their loss. As many as 30 large army wagons continually carried off fields of forage corn.⁵²³

Mary Jane twice managed to get to the Tennessee River with clothing for her husband; friendly sympathizers delivered them to John. The clothes were cleverly hidden under her hoop skirts – skirts voluminous enough for her to take a “full suit of uniform gray jeans, made

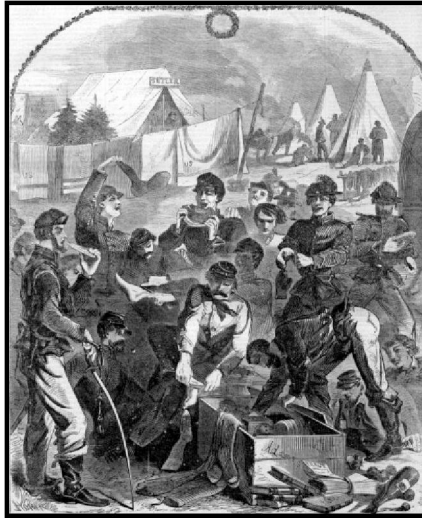
⁵²¹ Laura Wharton Plummer and Mary Jane Wharton Bruckner. Ed. Nancy Rohr, “Memoirs of Laura Wharton Plummer and Mary Jane Wharton Bruckner,” *HHR*, Vol. 32, #2 (Summer-Fall 2006), 67, 78. Capt. Harris refused to give up the old ways; he still wore breeches and knee buckles on the day of his death at the age of 92.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 67, 68.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 68, 69.

from wool grown on the place and spun” by enslaved women. The only other way to make contact with John was the exchange of letters also sent and received across the river. He had at least received the letter from her describing the death of their son John, and replied to her of their terrible loss as he waited for the attack at Missionary Ridge in November of 1863.⁵²⁴

Mary Jane described civilian merchants – sutlers who followed the army – and their horse-drawn wagons, conducting business in their front grove. Dr. Wharton tried to explain to them that bushwhackers were almost certainly watching, waiting for a chance to steal their horses in the night. His warning was correct but went unheeded; even the Wharton’s fine stock of carriage horses was taken.⁵²⁵



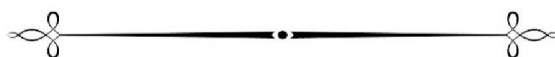
Sutlers, Winslow Homer, (Harper’s)

Although they would later have a “safe guard” for protection, Doctor Wharton and his household’s greatest danger appeared with a small group of soldiers. Federals had come to take the remaining stock, even the old mule that pulled the “school cab.” Under the guise of needing him to search for other animals, Wharton was to accompany them. He expected the soldiers to kill him once out of sight of the family. Hurriedly he told Mary Jane where the gold was hidden and for her to dig it up. The men

⁵²⁴ Ibid., 69.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., 70.

ordered everyone to vacate the house in 15 minutes because it would be set aflame. “Martha, the house girl, blew the horn, called the negroes from the field and in a short time they had a wagon loaded with flour, lard, sugar, meat, coffee, etc.” Clothing and bedding were bundled and throw out of windows to be gathered and pulled away from the house that would soon almost certainly be aflame. “Merciful Providence” arrived with Capt. Williams, who had been at their house earlier. He asked what the trouble was and the Doctor Wharton reported his house was to be set on fire and he was to be killed. This captain countermanded the order and told Capt. Ben Harris, “the meanest man in the army,” to move on out. The Whartons were aware they had been blessed when, soon after, they smelled burning feathers, indicating that some other neighbor had been burned out.⁵²⁶



After the War, two men walking Pulaski Pike stopped in and asked for shelter. Doctor Wharton, who had never turned a man away at nightfall, asked them in. After supper, the conversation naturally came to the recent war. Among his stories, Wharton related their misadventures with Ben Harris, and the doctor said that after that he would have felt compelled to hunt the man down and kill him, except that Harris already had died. The next morning one of the two guests quietly left before the house stirred to wake. When Wharton asked the remaining guest about him, the man informed him that he was none other than the son of Ben Harris.⁵²⁷

The War finally ended, and Mary Jane wrote:

We were in a measure at the mercy of our former slaves, uneducated, elated at their emancipation and feeling they had the sympathy if the approbation of the carpet-bag officers ... of what pretense of law there was ... committing acts of the lawlessness and outrage ... Is it astonishing then that some expedient should have resorted to for the protection of our homes and firesides? Hence the Ku Klux Klan.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., At least four journalists spoke of Ben Harris, “the meanest man in the army,” and his vengeful nature: Mary Jane Chadick, Mary Fielding of Athens, Cassie Fennell of Guntersville, and Milus “Bushwhacker” Johnston.

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 70. If this truly was the son of Ben Harris, it was Thomas, who was 13 in 1860. A family originally from Big Cove, Caroline Vann Harris had returned after the War with three of her children.

She described incidents of lawlessness, now faint with detail, before order was restored.⁵²⁸

After the death of her father in 1873, Mary Jane, two remaining sons, her invalid sister Ellen and mother, Eliza Wharton, moved to Atlanta. “I pass over the death of my good noble husband as of no interest to others, only saying at the age of 30 years, when the war was over, my husband, two children and property were all gone, leaving only myself and two small children. The God of the widow and fatherless has been our stay and help in every time of need.”⁵²⁹

Laura Wharton Plummer (1836-1924)

We scarcely dared to breathe.

Laura, the second of Eliza and Dr. George Wharton's six daughters, married Rev. James R. Plummer, a widower with a young daughter, Martha Louetta (called Lou) now about 10 years old. They added a daughter, Dora, to their family in 1858 while they made their home in Huntsville near the busy intersection of Pulaski Pike and Holmes Avenue (the most important road west to Athens, Alabama). The main railroad line of the Memphis & Charleston Railroad ran behind their property. Like her sister Mary Jane, Laura's children and grandchildren urged her to write about her experiences during the difficult times of the American Civil War. She began writing in 1910 at the age of 75, “Nothing but the true patriotism inherited from our Revolutionary heroic grandfather and the hope of final victory ever kept us going, and willing to suffer, and, if need be, die for our homes and native hearth that our brave soldiers were fighting for.”⁵³⁰

Theirs was a lovely honeysuckle-twined cottage home in the suburbs of Huntsville then known for the “beauty, wealth and native refinement of its citizens.” No one there could have foreseen the horrors of war when brave brothers and sons responded to the first call. Women, previously idle, began to sew soldiers’ clothes, pants, shirts, coats, and piles and piles of socks. The need for lint for packing wounds and bandages soon reduced linen sheets and tablecloths, which were cut into bandages and scraped into lint. The family did not expect the War to affect

⁵²⁸ Ibid., 72, 73.

⁵²⁹ Ibid., 73.

⁵³⁰ Rohr, “Memoirs,” 46.

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them; Laura wrote, “For two years we hugged this delusion to our heart,” All seemed well when, on one hot summer day, the first troops arrived. The streets were full of men in grey uniforms. General John C. Breckinridge galloped about on a splendid gray horse and waved his hat, “every inch a soldier and gallant gentleman.” His men asked for water from the Plummer’s well – they could drink their fill! The band’s sweet strains of “My Old Kentucky Home filled the air.”⁵³¹

Grocery stores quickly emptied of supplies; old dresses became new again. Salt was not available, and real coffee and tea skyrocketed in price. Coffee could be bought for \$10 a pound, Tennessee money; raspberry leaves were brewed for tea. Laura’s father had the dirt floor of his smokehouse dug up to repeatedly boil the soil and gather the salt left at the bottom of the huge kettles. Salt was precious everywhere.⁵³²



Kettle used for boiling down salt

Due to bushwhackers, the Federal military closed the corn and flour mills, and no food stuffs from the countryside could be brought into town. The Whartons had just enough cornmeal for two meals and only one bushel of corn to parch when a Yankee tried to confiscate even that. The corn was in the stable, and Mr. Plummer (as she always addressed him) whispered for her to hand him his pistol. He was able to talk the soldier out of the corn, but he returned “pallid and trembling, and said: I never in my life made up my mind to kill a man before, but if that man had taken that

⁵³¹ Ibid., 47. Memories and dates sometimes do not coincide. From the journal of Priscilla Larkin, it is evident that Gen. Breckenridge arrived in Madison County on March 11, 1862.

⁵³² Ibid., 49, 53.

corn, I never meant he should come out of that stable.” When the last bit of meal was eaten, “dear old trusty Davy,” one of the men Dr. Whatron enslaved who was allowed through the picket lines, brought hidden supplies from the country. Davy had watched the sisters grow from little children through school and womanhood; Laura wrote “he often used to boast, he had educated us.” The next night Davy returned “with two large hams, some shoulders and side meat, lard, flour and meal” hidden in a wagon load under a load of tan bark.

Laura was particularly proud of the clothes she sewed for her husband. She cut the wool off an old sheepskin baby mat, and her mother had it spun into thread. She was now ready to knit undershirts, but where to find knitting needles? Her husband, the good man, made her needles of polished cedar wood and always declared the undershirts to be the best he ever wore. Furthermore, “His *best coat* had to be his *only one*.” She located an old cape, lined with plaid flannel. A tailor made a pattern and cut the material, but a Herculean task lay before her. She only returned to the tailor once to ask for help with the sleeves. She was able to purchase shoe soles and, with a shoe-last, created tops of cloth and used a leather strap to stitch them together. No woman in the South went without a hat; Laura, like a few other diarists, made her own by bleaching and plaiting long, ripe, rye straw. She was later forced to sew for herself with black thread from the Bell Factory that she dyed with ground ivy to a gray, then wove with a pincheck of black. A neighbor shared scraps of black alpaca to trim the dress.⁵³³

In early April of 1862, her father left hurriedly to tend to the wounded at Shiloh, but two days later, he returned at dawn to inform them, “The Yankees are all around you.” She said they looked to see a nearby field filled with tents displaying Confederate flags – a ruse. General Mitchel’s men had raced into town and “seized the telegraph lines and telegraphed to Shiloh to send every available man to Virginia via Huntsville, signing the name of one of our Confederate generals.” As a result, 18-20 carloads of Confederate soldiers were captured; most were sent north to prison camps. (No other writer mentioned Mitchel signing the name of a Confederate general or using Confederate flags as a trick.) Federals arrived early the next morning, seizing train cars full of Rebels as they captured the unprepared town. Doctor Wharton had been on one of those cars apparently and as the train slowed to approach the depot, he jumped off and ran to the Plummer’s house for safety.⁵³⁴

⁵³³ Ibid., 49, 53.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 49-51.

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“By this time all was the wildest confusion, soldiers on horses and soldiers on foot were everywhere – galloping, shouting, halting, swearing, cursing and pounding on doors and rushing into houses searching for Confederate soldiers who might have escaped.” The men, she continued, “threw open every door and closet and wardrobe, took our breakfast from the table and eagerly devoured it. And oh, such horrible language! We, who have been so gently reared, had never heard such language.” They “scarcely dared to breathe.” Reverend Plummer gave a Rebel in hiding an old suit of clothes when searchers left their house and “hired” him on the spot to hoe their garden until he could make a plan of escape.⁵³⁵

Laura recalled that her husband was arrested along with other town leaders by General Mitchel in an attempt to stop guerilla action along the essential railroad. This left her unprotected in the house with two young children. Reverend Plummer asked for a guard to be stationed at their house to no avail. Then he thought to give the Masonic sign, “and without a word General Mitchel ordered that he be sent home with a guard.” (Rev. James Plummer was never listed among the 12 men who were detained; the Masonic sign was a powerful symbol at this time, apparently transcending even the deadly rules of war.) Laura revealed that she pitied the weary soldier who, after his nighttime march, had to stand guard all night.⁵³⁶

Fifty years later, Laura could “hardly depict the depravity of those Yankee soldiers ... when [they] walked into your room and lift[ed] the cover off you bed, throw it over their shoulders and walk off with a triumphant laugh!” Or when the Yankee, a soldier on horseback, took the very umbrella her husband was using in a downpour. The soldier had no need for it; he tore it to shreds and threw it down. She challenged them to be manly and not make war on defenseless women and children, but, as she soon learned, the least said, the better the outcome.⁵³⁷

On one occasion, both Laura and her husband were called away to help sick neighbors, leaving the two children in the care of Bettie, “my trusty girl.” She returned to find the girls alone swinging in the front yard and Bettie nowhere to be found. She had gone to the Yankees. Laura looked to see what she might have taken with her:

⁵³⁵ Ibid., 51.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 52.

⁵³⁷ Ibid., 49-51.

Twere far easier to tell what she had left... Almost everything [gone]... She had spread a Marseilles counterpane on the floor, emptied every dresser drawer and wardrobe into it, tied it up and gone off the back way ... Every dress – winter and summer – among them three silk dresses, heavy winter dresses besides other simpler dresses, my hat, winter cloak and shawl, every piece of my underwear, stocking and shoes, counterpanes, sheets, pillow slips, towels, table linen... Indeed, I had not a vestige of clothing left.

The next morning – a Sunday – the carriage from home came to take her to church, she met them, she said, “crying like a child.” The carriage driver, Davy who just happened to be the runaway Bettie’s father, denounced his daughter in bitterest terms. To Laura’s great relief, her sisters quickly shared clothes with her. Later, she heard more of Bettie’s escapade. A Black lady said she had some of “my handsome linen underwear, embroidered and with Valencia lace (the real, we did not have imitation then), that she had bought from Bettie for a pair of old shoes.” Bushwhackers had apparently attacked the Yankees Bettie was with, and they left her behind. Some of her bundle of clothing was lost in the river and some she traded for food. “You may imagine what a desecration it seemed, that great black negro should be wearing my handsome wedding clothes.” Her husband eventually purchased two calico dresses for \$77 in Tennessee money.⁵³⁸

Because of contaminated food and water, or possibly spread from a person already ill, typhoid fever struck in town and in the army camps. Reverend Plummer fell ill; Laura’s father and Dr. Newman thought his case to be desperate. When a regiment of cavalry passed by twice daily on their way to the Big Spring for water, it was difficult to keep the patient resting quietly. Soldiers seemed to delight in making as much noise as possible even though they could clearly see that a sick person was abed in the middle of the room with the doors and windows open, hoping to catch a soothing breeze in the intense heat. An officer, a Frenchman at that, came to their aid and inquired of the situation. He ordered the horses to be walked past the house and not a word spoken aloud. “From that day the most orderly troops imaginable passed the house.” Plummer’s condition worsened nevertheless, and his family gathered to offer prayers and say good-bye. Making this difficult scene even more painful, two uniformed soldiers entered demanding a Rebel soldier be turned over to them in three minutes or they would begin shooting. Jim, the mulatto nurse, offered to go, hoping the men would think he was the Confederate and they dragged him away. The next day, she “bought” Jim’s release with a glass of Mr.

⁵³⁸ Ibid., 52-54.

Plummer's medicine – brandy. The bribe was risky because she knew it was against the law for a citizen to give liquor to the soldiers and their house could be burned.⁵³⁹

By now “three doctors said he could not live until midnight, and as the order had been given to shoot down any citizen found on the street after dark. Dr. Wharton had made every preparation made to have Reverend Plummer shrouded.” The Reverend fell into a deep sleep and Laura herself nodded off, exhausted from six weeks of anxiety and nursing. Her mother called out for her to come; surely it would be the last time she would see him alive. As she held him, he awoke and spoke clearly of a dream where he was protected by the Savior who led him safely back to the shore. “He lived twenty years after this to spend his life in devotion and good works.”⁵⁴⁰

Adding a softer, human touch, Laura Plummer recalled a “great rough” Yankee soldier playing in the yard with little Dora, “kissing and caressing her lavishly.” He spoke to her, “Madam, don’t be alarmed for your little girl... I left a sweet little flaxen-haired girl behind me, away off North,” and he could not resist the temptation. The next day Dora offered the man potatoes from her little basket and in exchange “he left a dime and a cake of soap in the basket.” He returned later to ask if he could have the privilege of rocking Dora to sleep and tenderly put her to bed. Recalling the Biblical verse, “And a little child shall lead them,” Laura considered the possibility that good impulses resided within everyone.

The War called forth more memories for Laura. At night, horses, men, bullets, cannon booming, and of course “the never-failing accompaniment of profanity,” warned of serious danger. The family wrapped themselves in blankets and quilts and hid at the large double chimney in the house. On one occasion, a different visitor roused them from bed after midnight; they answered the door to a whisper. One of their closest friends, Methodist minister David C. slipped inside. He was once the leader of Kelly’s Rangers and had now become a prominent Lt. Colonel in Forrest’s cavalry. They sat in the middle of room in total darkness and talked for an hour or so before he left to find other friends for brief visits.

Laura Wharton Plummer may have enjoyed writing, for now, in a new setting as she began another chapter in life: taking charge of the

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 55-56.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 55-57.

young ladies at the prominent Huntsville Female College. The trustees asked Mr. Plummer to take over when Rev. John Wilson was sent north by the Union. Their small family responsibilities swelled to over 75 girls, teachers, and servants. Fortunately, Mrs. Wilson remained in charge of the kitchen and dining room.

Dear friend Rev. John Edmondson (the very same man who helped Mrs. Mooney) called one evening in his new blue uniform to share the rumor he had heard of the death of brother-in-law John Bruckner – killed with a Minnie ball to the head. Laura and her husband immediately went to tell her sister, Mary Jane, at the home place. “We found her anxiously watching at the bedside of her baby, who afterward died. How it fell like a thunderbolt on her! She almost collapsed ... Our hearts were all torn and bleeding, yet we knew her suffering was far beyond ours, and we felt so helpless to soothe and comfort her.”⁵⁴¹

Life at the college settled into a routine as Laura cared for girls living far away from home. She helped alleviate their homesickness and fears with cheerfulness, and of course, taught them their school lessons. Terror returned with the news that General Forrest surrounded Huntsville, demanding surrender of both the fort and the town. The panic was certainly real to the baby’s nurse who announce, “here’s your chile: I got to go for my life to the fort; Marse Forrest gwinter catch us all and kill us.” Even 50 years on, Laura recalled these incidents with clarity. The Federal pickets were called in; streets were filled with people “making for the country. Buckets of turpentine, with long faggots, put at every street corner, with two men to guard it.” Every building was to be burned if Forrest attacked, and trees were cut down to barricade the streets. Everyone in the house went to the basement with a quilt or blanket and pillow, preparing to run when told.

About noon, cannons from Fort Taylor on Patton’s Hill were fired and the Confederates replied, “and all that day and night we could hear the peculiar whiz and whistle of the shells as they passed over our heads, we being in the direct line from the fort ... Forrest demanded surrender, or at daylight he would take the town by storming it.” After the night’s chaos and horror, at six o’clock the next morning, “all was serene and calm as a mid-summer’s day.” This “attack” was all a feint as General Buford’s men

⁵⁴¹ Lt. John Bruckner, Acting Assistant Adjutant-General of the 26/50th Regiment Ala. Infantry, died July 7, 1864. The Union Reverend Edmonson helped Susan Mooney, as described in her memoir above.

held the attention of the Huntsville garrison while General Forrest, with his supply wagon trains, crossed the Tennessee River with General Hood.⁵⁴²

The terror of these events was simply too much for Laura; her health suffered as she became thinner, weaker, and finally bedridden. With no civilian doctors available, Mr. Plummer was allowed to call in the post doctor who implied that there was no hope for her. She yearned to see her father, but he had not signed the oath to the Union, and was therefore not allowed past the pickets. In desperation, she asked to be propped up; someone held her arm while she wrote to General Logan. She knew she was dying, “indeed his own doctors had told me so, and as a dying woman I begged that he send me a pass for my father to come to see me ... Would he not in mercy to one so near the grave, allow him to come in to see me?” She was granted her request and, better still, her father arrived in the family carriage supplied with blankets and pillows and “when night closed in” she was taken home. There, in the home of her childhood, she was nursed back to health. Only then did Laura mention her confinement and the new baby, who also suffered an illness requiring her to be nursed back to health. This child was Katherine Merle, born on November 12, 1864 “whose little innocent face seemed remote from the turmoil of the day.”⁵⁴³

The military authorities at last released the school girls, now wild with delight, to go though the lines to return home and family. With the school now empty and their cottage rented out, the Plummers were invited first to stay with their friend, Mrs. Willis Harris.⁵⁴⁴ Soon after, Dr. Slaughter’s house, located at the corner of Eustis and Lincoln Streets, became available because he, his wife, and three children had fled south. Laura gathered up pots, pans, an old-fashioned crane and andirons, and a skillet to cook provisions left from the now-empty college in the “old-time way” in an open fireplace. Although few people had money to pay, her husband opened a school in one room of the house. He was invited to use the old unoccupied Episcopal Church for the Methodist congregation since

⁵⁴² Rohr, “Memoirs,” 61. It may have seemed so at the time, but the firing did not occur all night and all day. Mary Jane Chadick, Octavia Otey, and Mary Fielding in Athens vividly described the troops in motion, the ruse, and Forrest’s success in their journals.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 59. Many years later, Laura admired his monument in Chicago. Gen. Logan, who helped establish a national Memorial Day in 1865 in remembrance of lives lost in the War, later became a U.S. Senator. In 1884, he ran for U.S. Vice President with James G. Blaine.

⁵⁴⁴ Mrs. Willis Harris, friend and relative of many, is mentioned in the Fennell, Foster, Saunders, and Fielding journals.

their Methodist church had burned. Church offerings could be a little as 25 cents; they were certainly never more than one dollar.⁵⁴⁵

Attendance grew unexpectedly one Sunday when they heard the “the familiar tramp of soldiers and the dropping of guns on the pavement; then in walked a hundred soldiers.” The sermon was good, Laura thought, deeply spiritual, and “prayers were for all soldiers in arms and for peace to overspread the land and that war might be swept from our borders.” Respectfully, the soldiers waited for the congregation to file out before an officer announced they had come to arrest Reverend Plummer! However, “your sermon, and your prayers for peace and your deep piety have touched us and we have changed our minds.” The collection that day was 10 dollars, “Soft words turneth away wrath.”⁵⁴⁶

As time passed, the Plummers, like most other civilian families, took in Yankee officers (who had commissary privileges) to board. This provided a new, small bit of income and provisions. Some of the men, so very far away from their homes and families, made great pets of the children.

In a recollection of a different kind, Reverend Plummer was called in the middle of the night to the two spinsters who lived next door where a soldier, dreadfully stabbed, had burst in their front door. Reverend Plummer told the man that his time was short and asked if there were any messages he wanted sent to loved ones. The dying man replied in the affirmative, giving names and addresses as he took out a picture of his wife and child and pressed it to his lips. “Tell them I die with their picture to my lips.” Plummer dutifully wrote the soldier’s wife, sent his watch and picture, and offered words of consolation.⁵⁴⁷

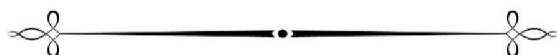
Laura offered other stories, but perhaps the worst was the “thunder-clap shock” of the death of President Lincoln. All houses were ordered to put crape on their front door knobs; not everyone did. “If two or more people were seen on the street, or a smile or a laugh was heard, a soldier was there to forbid it. Now, the War was over, our brilliant hopes lay like withered leaves at our feet; our hearts were bleeding and sore; unbidden

⁵⁴⁵ Rohr, “Memoirs,” 62, 63.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

tears would fall, and we would sit and wonder what the end would be.” Was it all for naught?⁵⁴⁸”



“We broken spirits and blasted fortunes, we drove ourselves to the task of living again.” The Slaughter family returned to reclaim their home. The Plummer cottage had been burned. The 5½ acres of land they had purchased for \$4,500 sold for only \$200 years later. Loans made to four wealthy men went unreturned, and the deed for their Florida property sent in the mail disappeared in the confusion of the times. They had \$800 her father had saved for them, and nothing else. They settled at Soule Female College in Murfreesboro, with Reverend Plummer serving as president. This home, “new” to them, had served as a hospital during the War; the building had to be completely disinfected, scrubbed, painted and papered before they could bring in used and borrowed furniture, bedding, desks and chairs. Former students and new young eager girls, 130 in number, arrived to study after the enforced hiatus. The Plummers’ own family of girls increased with Lylie in 1866, Claire in 1870, Laura in 1872, and Elizabeth (Bessie) born in 1875. In 1878, they relocated to the Clarksville Female Academy. It was here in December that “Little Bessie’s feet grew tired... and one day... the angels came for her.”⁵⁴⁹

Like her sister, Laura described Ku Klux Klan activities intended to frighten “unruly and superstitious” newly-freed Black people with threats made at the offenders’ homes to scare them. On one occasion, a rumor spread that several hundred hooded Klansmen would ride together in costumes designed to frighten.

As she concluded her reminiscences, Laura Wharton Plummer told her family that she had not intended to become a “tiresome old woman.” She enjoyed writing the facts, and wanted future generations to know that the people of the South, their ancestors, were “a true, loyal patriotic people, willing to suffer and die for home and native land.”⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 64.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 76, 77.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 66.

Lilie Bibb Greet (1844-1923)

I threw open the door and dared him to enter.

These memories shared at the Virginia Clay-Clopton Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in Huntsville are vivid. Recollection can sometimes become what one should have done, could have done, or simply wanted done, and sometimes includes deceptions of memory. As reported by the Huntsville Mercury on May 9, 1911, it is evident that Lilie told a good story.

Looking back, Eliza (Bibb) Greet found it amazing that they had not all “succumbed to fear and despair” during the times of the War.⁵⁵¹ Lilie, as she was called, was the daughter of plantation owner Porter and Mary Pleasants (Betts) Bibb. David Porter Bibb was a son of Thomas Bibb, second governor of Alabama. Theirs was a family of distinguished lineage, prosperous from cotton. Lilie grew up just over the Limestone County line at one of the governor’s houses, Belle Mina.



Belle Mina (LHA)

Governor Thomas Bibb also had a fine house built in Huntsville at 303 Williams Street, at which his daughter Adeline resided with her

⁵⁵¹ Lilie Bibb Greet Papers, HMCPL, 95.1 B F 617, *passim*.

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husband, Maj. James Bradley. The tradition of gifting homes extended to Woodside, which Porter Bibb built for his daughter, Mary, at her marriage to William Fleming Eggleston.⁵⁵²



Woodside (LHA)

Only 17 years old at the time of Yankee invasion, Lilie described General Mitchel's tyranny with the arrest and imprisonment of 12 hostages, all private citizens, as an inconceivable act at the time. She listed the men, whose names would be immediately recognized by her audience. They were William McDowell, cotton merchant; Thomas Fearn, doctor and planter; George Beirne, merchant; Samuel Cruse, President of the M & C RR; and, Rev. John Monro Banister, Church of the Nativity, Episcopal. May years had passed since these events, however, and a few men listed by Lilie were not actually arrested by the Federal authorities in that grouping of twelve. She named James J. Donegan, President of the Bank of Alabama and Patton & Co.; Robert Fearn, planter and brother of Dr. Fearn; Dr. Robertson, of the Church of Nativity; ex-Governor Ruben Chapman; Alex Lacy; Ed Betts; and then she threw in the name of a local slave dealer Thoustin Lumpkin.⁵⁵³ Furthermore, she reported that

⁵⁵² Edwards and Axford, *Lure*, 202.

⁵⁵³ These men may have, at some point, encountered the invading military, but they were not part of the group of 12 whose arrests caused distress within the community. They were all wealthy and prominent. The men held hostage were Rev. Henry C. Lay; John G. Wilson, merchant, Stephen W. Harris, planter; Gus

McDowell and Lumpkin were sent north to a prison in Nashville. As a result, she said, McDowell's health suffered and he never fully recovered from the "peas and pumpkin in the pen."⁵⁵⁴

The defiant Lilie bested a "Homemade" Yankee named Kitch Britt, one of the local men who changed to the Federal side to search and rob their neighbors. Britt:

made his appearance one-night demanding admittance at the front door of the Scruggs home near town where I was visiting. Not realizing my danger, I threw open the door and defied him to enter, telling him I knew he was nobody but old 'Kitchen Bricks,' and I would have him arrested. After storming and threatening, he left, saying we would see him again.

The entire community was relieved when the "demon" was shot and killed on Winchester Pike by Mek Robinson. Earlier, Kitch Britt had deserted the Confederate army and returned to his old neighborhood on the Athens Road to scout for Federals. Britt informed Federal troops that Robinson would be at his family home, and the house was surrounded. Robinson killed Britt in the ensuing melee and escaped. His father's home, Forrestfield, was burned to the ground in retaliation. Mary Jane Chadick also reported on the death of the infamous Britt in her journal, and he was thinly disguised as a character in the novel *Forrestfield* by Robert Bentley.⁵⁵⁵ (Note: It is difficult to believe that, as a woman in a home that was not her own, Lilie would have opened the door to anyone. It seems even more unlikely that the adolescent Lilie confronted this man, but she gives a vibrant account.)

Mastin, merchant and planter; Thomas McCalley, merchant and planter; and William Acklen, a grandson of Huntsville founder, John Hunt. (In *Incidents of the War* the name of Reverend Bannister was inadvertently left off the list.) Lumpkin was related to Robert Lumpkin, the notorious slave dealer in Richmond.

⁵⁵⁴ Field peas and pumpkins were often used to extend limited meals in the South. McDowell and his wife Priscilla (sister-in-law to former Governor C.C. Clay) chose to refuge for a time across the river in Lacy's Spring. McDowell died at the age of 64 in early 1865.

⁵⁵⁵ Mrs. Chadick set the date of the offensive acts at the home of Mrs. Scruggs as August 4, 1862. James, the unfortunate son of Kitch Britt, was abandoned by his step-mother when she remarried and left the area. The boy of only six years was most likely one of the first (and certainly the last) residents of the county poor house when he died at the age of 72 in 1932. Lilie told an exciting story, but Charles Rice tied down these events in his well-researched *Hard Times*, 239-245.

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In her memoir, Lillie recalled her “dear old friend,” Rev. John Murray Robertson of Church of Nativity, always “more truthful than polite.” He continued to pray from the pulpit, as others Southern ministers had, for the president of the country: Jefferson Davis. She added that “his grey hairs were insulted by his being sent across the river in a chicken coop.”⁵⁵⁶

Lillie added levity to her narration as many in her audience would have known her buxom Aunt Elmira (Bibb) Mills. Mrs. Mills was in the country with the Bibbs family when Yankees approached the house. Everyone immediately hid valuables and weapons. On this occasion, however there was not enough time and auntie “stuffed all the knives, forks and spoons in her bosom; being a portly lady they projected at all angles. Notwithstanding, their being so in evidence, the good lady swore to the Yankees that there were no firearms and not even a silver spoon in the house. The leader turned to his companion, winked at the absurdity of the statement, and said, ‘Well lady, you are such a fine old liar, we’ll spare your spoons this time.’”⁵⁵⁷

In one undated story, Lillie Greet set the scene with a quote from Henry W. Grady, spokesman for the coming “New South.” “History has no parallel to the faith kept by the Negro of the South during the War.” Grady, a noted writer and speaker, to prove his point, continued, “Often 500 Negroes to a single white man, and yet though these dusky throngs the women and children walked in safety and the unprotected homes rested in peace.”⁵⁵⁸ Lillie then recounted a long story about her grandmother’s slave, Old Uncle Harry who ranked high on the list of loyal and faithful servants. At one time, he was the only man at Belle Mina, and his old mule, St. Paul, was the only living animal left. The widow Mary (Chambers) Betts (Lillie’s grandmother) was able to remain at the homeplace, located about

⁵⁵⁶ Robertson, born in 1804, probably had gray hair by that time. Two of his sons served in the CSA under Wheeler and Forrest. (usgenwarchives.net accessed 1/13/18). The “chicken coop” story has not been confirmed.

⁵⁵⁷ Elmira Porter was the sister of Lillie’s father Porter Bibb. She married lawyer Archie Mills, who was at one time President of the M & C RR. They had 10 children together. Merchant James Clemens had married Minerva Mills, sister of Archie and John Mills who was the sheriff for a time. Thus, The Bibbs were in-laws to Sen. Jeremiah Clemens, but that is a story for another day.

⁵⁵⁸ Henry W. Grady maintained that great numbers of enslaved people were peaceable and harmless, even protecting their masters’ property, and he praised them for their loyalty during the War. Grady County in Georgia and Oklahoma are named for him.

two miles northeast of Madison during the War. Her son Porter Bibb's family stayed at Woodside, apparently with an enslaved Black man named Harry. Lilie's mother grew very concerned as time went by; almost a year had passed, and they had not heard any news about Grandma Betts.⁵⁵⁹ Her mother asked Uncle Harry if he would ride out and "bring back word if they were all well, indeed, if they were all alive." The countryside was full of Yankees who, of course, questioned every person passing through the area. Would he dare make the journey? Now using the sound and speech patterns Lilie had heard all her life, she recalled him saying, "La, Miss May, too by sho, I'll try to make it. You jest' you're your amser, for the Lard knows Old Miss will be tickled to death to git de word from you, if Paul Mule kin hold out, en I don't get drugged all around de country till I die, and de Lord willing, I pointedly will make de tempt." Uncle Harry set off with the note and "a rabbit foot in the rabbit skin cap he had made himself with one little tail down the back, saying: Dis foot done keep off all the haunts and witches for two years; shorely de Yankees will not 'less me.'"

Harry returned safely; the Yankees were kept at bay by the rabbit foot even when he was surrounded by a whole squad of soldiers. When questioned about his mission he replied, "Gemmen (but I knowed dey want no gemmen)" and the story went on quite a bit, with Harry's observations and slyness at the enemy, but the outcome was one of delight as Old Miss came down the walk to him and Paul Mule. She did not cry or carry on; her posture was like an "Injun," so straight with head held high. She wrote her answer for the family in town, and Harry returned with the note and his rabbit's foot intact. "Having laid down the shovel and the hoe, the next journey Uncle Harry took was to the land where the good negroes go. Soon after his death, Old Paul Mule walked to Uncle Harry's cabin, poked his head in the door, and laid down and died." Lilie Greet knew her listeners; they, too, were attuned to the accent and the tone of servility that marked many of their "servants" as they chose to remember them.

⁵⁵⁹ Martha Chambers Betts born about 1795 (sister-in-law to Governors William and Thomas Bibb and sister to Senator Henry Chambers for whom the county is named), was apparently quite capable of taking care of herself and had been doing so for a long time. Her husband, Charles Betts, purchased almost 2,000 acres at the first sales in 1818 and when he died in 1834, she was left guardian of six children under the age of 14. His estate included 82 enslaved people, and Martha was required to post \$100,000 in bond and securities. (MCRC, Probate #160, files 1-3.) According to the 1860 census, she was listed as residing at the home of her son Elisha near Madison Station; she did not appear in the 1870 census.

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The next adventure Lilie related was truly incredible, and her role in it remains to be seen:

The climax of my war experience was reached when I went with the men who were deputized by General Forrest to burn a railroad bridge near my home. With my own little brown hand, I applied the torch. The burning of this bridge detained the supplies for a whole division of the Yankee army.

She most likely referred to the torching of the strategic trestle bridge at Sulphur Springs, about five miles north of Athens. Burned in late September of 1864, the bridge destruction disrupted Sherman's supply lines. By now, many of her listeners and readers were most likely questioning the possibility of a 20-year-old single woman joining with men of the Confederate army, no matter how famous she was.⁵⁶⁰



Sulphur Trestle Railroad Bridge

New dangers emerged when Lilie's uncle, Elisha F. Betts, was jailed with serious charges. Betts, Dr. Richard Fletcher, and James Pride were arrested as spies after the humiliating attack and defeat by Confederates at Madison Station in May 1864. (The bitter Federals said that the Confederates must have had insider information to succeed.) The men were jailed in Huntsville. Fletcher was fortunately found innocent,

⁵⁶⁰ Mary Fielding and Mary Jane Chadick mention the destruction of the 75-foot high and 300-foot-long Sulphur Trestle Railroad Bridge. Union forces lost 107 men and over 2,300 were captured.

partially due to the testimony of Union officer Col. John Hickman.⁵⁶¹ Lilie claimed that she, herself, was persecuted and played a part in the trial of her uncle, Elisha Betts. She, along with Elisha Betts and his family governess, Carrie Hentz, was arrested. She gives no hint as to what the charges against the women may have been, but her uncle was tried as a spy. What follows is her undated account:

Near the close of the war Miss Carrie Hentz (the governess in my uncle's family) and I were arrested and brought to Huntsville where he was being tried as a Confederate spy. We were made to walk between two files of mounted soldiers several miles to the railroad station at Madison. We reached Huntsville about twelve in the night. We were taken to headquarters which were in Mrs. Rice's house ... All night we listened to the tramp of the guard passing our door. Miss Carrie being of a very timid spirit and dreading very much some impudence of tongue on my part, spent the night imploring me to be silent, asking me questions, and in the next breath telling me to shut my mouth.

Twice a day we were carried to the Court House, and subjected to a rigid cross-examination. My appearance at the courtroom in the Calhoun building caused a ripple of amusement. Being a tall, leggy girl, I was arrayed in my diminutive grandmother's black silk gown made paroda waist and full skirt. My puppy having chewed up one of my shoes and one of grandmother's, my feet were shod in a kid boot and a cloth gaiter. On my head was a Neapolitan skyscraper tied under my chin with a huge bow of royal purple.

Regardless of strict order to hold no communication with the prisoner, I rushed up and embraced my poor old Uncle Elisha, whose hair had turned white, and whose clothes had become ragged and unsightly from his long imprisonment in a filthy jail.

Before the end of my uncle's trial and acquittal, I was stricken with typhoid fever and removed from headquarters in the Donegan carriage to my aunt, Mrs. Bradley's home. The Yankee doctor allowed dear old Dr. Sheffey to assist in caring for me during this

⁵⁶¹ Mary Jane Chadick wrote in her journal on May 17 and 18 of 1864 of the affairs at Madison Station and the arrest of the men with Dr. Richard Fletcher. She did not clearly state which Betts man was arrested, nor did she specifically identify James H. Pride. The raid was unexpected for the Federals, and charges of spying were very serious. Dr. Fletcher was found innocent and freed by the testimony of Colonel Hickman, an active northern sympathizer. Lilie's account also clarifies that it was Elisha Betts and not his brother Edward C. Betts who was arrested and tried.

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illness, and I am quite sure my only nourishment for six weeks was slippery elm bark, which had lain in Cooper's drug store ever since the war began. I didn't fatten on this diet but got well enough to go back to my uncle's home.

One of the officers who accompanied me taunted me with our defeat which he declared was an assumed fact. I contradicted him flatly, telling him as sure as there was a nose on his face, it was not true. This man's nose beggars description. I will say briefly Cyrano de Bergerac's was classical symmetry in comparison. Having a sense of humor, Mr. Yankee replied, "Just as sure as it is a very defective nose, it is true.

Lilie Bibb Greet's listeners probably nodded in agreement, laughed genteelly, and privately questioned the accuracy of her tales.

There is much to ponder in Lilie's narrative. Its setting of Huntsville, Alabama and its players are noteworthy. Caroline Lee Hentz, the governess arrested with Lilie and Elisha, had immigrated to the U.S. with her father, Capt. Nicholas Hentz. Together, they had fled France and, after a stop in Pennsylvania, settled in Huntsville where the captain became a carriage maker. His daughter, Carrie, with her true French background, made a good choice as a governess for the young family of Elisha F. Betts with whom she lived in 1860.⁵⁶² His hair may have turned white prematurely from stress, but the 1860 census tells us that "poor old" Uncle Elisha F. Betts was only 34 years old, living with his wife Mary (Moffett), 29, four sons under the age of 10, his mother, Martha C. Betts, 64, and, Caroline Hentz, teacher, 22. His worth at that time was over \$65,000.

Widow Mary Pitman Rice, a strong supporter of the Episcopal Church of the Nativity, had always made her house open to the clergymen of many denominations. Richard Hamer Cobbs and, later, her dear friend Rev. Henry C. Lay (mentioned earlier by Sue Mooney), stayed at the Rice

⁵⁶² Clement Ferdinand Heverly, *History of the Towanda* [PA], 1886, ebook. Carrie's cousin, Caroline Lee Hentz, was a popular novelist who maintained a school in Florence called Locust Dell for a time, and was a close friend of Gen. John Coffee's widow. In an earlier literary group in Cincinnati, Ohio, Caroline mingled with Harriet Beecher Stowe. Hentz, while northern born, identified as one of the "Anti Toms" who defended slavery in a very successful novel *The Northern Planter's Bride* in 1854. For more about her fascinating life, see Rhoda Coleman Ellison, "Caroline Lee Hentz's Alabama Diary, 1836" *Alabama Review* (Oct. 1951), 254-269 and Phillip D. Beidler, "Caroline Lee Hentz's Long Journey" in *Alabama* (Winter 2005), 214-231.

home with their families. Now Mrs. Rice's house also held the arrested Lilie, her alleged partner in crime, Caroline Hentz, and the officers conducting the trial who were surely uninvited and unwelcome, as they made her home their headquarters. The Calhoun house around the block served as the courthouse.⁵⁶³



Calhoun House (HMCPL)

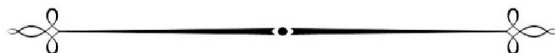
Guards escorted her to the trial, but Lilie used the wonderful southernism, “they carried me” to the courthouse. Her attire as she described it must have sent the audience into laughter⁵⁶⁴ if true. Her uncle was found *Not Guilty*, which might have been a suitable ending to the story, but Lilie became serious ill with typhoid fever soon after and was taken to the home of her Aunt Adeline Bradley, wife of James Bradley, at the current-day 303 Williams Avenue.

Lilie's listeners also knew J.L. Cooper's Drug Store which offered drugs, paints, oil, perfumery, fancy articles, and slippery elm bark that could be made into a paste for wounds or taken orally to ease coughs, stomach ailments, and many other maladies. According to Lilie, Dr. Lawrence Sheffey was called to tend to her. He died of cholera in 1865,

⁵⁶³ Ed. Robin Sterling, *Newspaper Clippings from Colbert County, Alabama*, Leighton News, 1908-1914, 370.

⁵⁶⁴ This was no laughing matter to the men. Dr. Fletcher said he could hear the hammering as the scaffolding that would be used to hang him was being constructed.

however, so the events she described must have occurred prior to then. It is the reader's loss that Lilie did not write more.



What became of the players and Lilie, the star of the production?

The struggle for many intensified; not all endings were happy. Uncle Elisha Betts had married Mary Moffet of Monroe County; they filed for bankruptcy in June of 1868. Lilie's older sister, Mary C. Bibb, "one of the belles of North Alabama," married William Fleming Eggleston from nearby Leighton, Lawrence County in 1861. Eggleston served in the Confederate army under General Forrest. Unfortunately, Mary only lived until 1873, leaving him a widower with four children. W.F. Eggleston made his way to Birmingham and taught school there until his eyesight failed almost 30 years later. He then maintained a respectable cigar stand for 10 years in the courthouse, and was well-known to most who passed him. Mary's husband W.F. Eggleston died in 1913 in Birmingham. They are both buried in the Bibb cemetery at Mooresville.⁵⁶⁵

A different episode in Lilie Bibb's life seems to have been forgotten but is of note. On November 13, 1867, at the age of 24 (not a young lady by the standards of the day), she married H.B. Eggleston. He disappeared from records, along with any life they may have shared together. His last name indicated a possible familial tie to her sister's husband's family, but there is no account of annulment or divorce. The license was issued and the marriage was certified.⁵⁶⁶

In June of 1873, Lilie, now approximately 30, married William Greet. Greet had emigrated from Guelph, a small town west of Toronto, Canada where his family had settled and farmed in the early 1840s. Greet, still a British subject, first appeared in Alabama in 1870 at Stephenson as a 21-year-old railroad clerk. He next worked as stationmaster of the Memphis & Charleston Railroad depot at Belle Mina, which is where he most likely met Lilie. They married, as had her sister Mary, at Woodside mansion. The couple later moved to Huntsville, where he took a job as head bookkeeper with the Alabama Cotton Oil Company. The city directory for 1899-1900 lists him as a traveling salesman for that company. He developed a lingering illness and died in 1900 at the age of 50. His loss was regretted by many of the local business men and those in nearby

⁵⁶⁵ Sterling, Clippings, 370.

⁵⁶⁶ MCMB 5:411.

counties. His wife and five children remained in Huntsville. From 1911-1912, Lilie lived at 417 Adams Street, a comfortable bungalow.⁵⁶⁷ Of their five children, daughter Lila married Cassius Stanley, editor of the *Montgomery Journal*. Active in United Daughters of the Confederacy, Eliza Bibb Greet lived until 1923 and died in Birmingham. She and William were both buried at Maple Hill Cemetery.⁵⁶⁸



Past experiences can become distorted, even corrupted, by the bias of background, religion, or political stance. One would not suggest there was any intent to mislead. A good story-teller, after all, wants to be believed. These are selections from these womens' memoirs, and a reader must decide for oneself. Helen Keller made the astute observation that "fact and fancy look alike across the years that link the past with the present."⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁷ A.W.H. Rose, *Emigrant Churchmen in Canada*. (London: Bentley, 1849), 2:3; Edwards and Axford, *Lure*, Addenda, 114; Sterling, *Clipping*, July 6, 1910, 9: #23; Wilkens' City Directory 1899-1900, no page.

⁵⁶⁸ Robey, *Maple Hill*, 31.

⁵⁶⁹ Helen Keller. *Story of My Life*. (NY: Random House, 1988), 1.

OTHER WOMEN OF NORTH ALABAMA

Although a number of men and women remained loyal to the Union, some experienced shifting feelings about the conflict. The majority of people in northern Alabama took up the Cause with enthusiasm. Along the Tennessee River Valley, the majority of women keeping journals and writing letters supported the Cause and believed in its justness. Any remaining doubts were erased on April 11, 1862 when the reality of an invasion of their own streets and homes roused their sense of honor.

When captured Southern prisoners arrived at the railroad depot on August 11, 1862, the ladies of Huntsville immediately gathered together to collect medicine, bandages, food, and wine for their care. After delivering these much-needed supplies, they offered comfort by visiting the men and writing letters for those who were injured. Among these ladies were Fanny Mayhew, Louisa (Watkins) Harris, Tulliola Powers, Mary Toney, Mary Jane Chadick, and Martha Bradford. The prisoners required continual support from the moment they arrived in Huntsville, but, as food and supplies were already scarce for those residing at home, aid for these men often desperately lacked.

Battle casualties were plentiful, but even more soldiers died from disease, including measles and smallpox. A measles epidemic broke out in Huntsville among new recruits of the 19th Alabama under Col. Joe Wheeler. Martha Bradford took charge, working tirelessly to establish hospitals in local school buildings and private homes, including her own.⁵⁷⁰ She also opened her home to boarders and out-of-town students attending the Huntsville College for Women. (Priscilla Larkin from Larkinsville, who also kept a Civil War journal, resided there during her studies.) Later, a camp at the old Blue Spring militia training site was named in honor of her.

⁵⁷⁰ Rice. *Hard Times*, 12, 14. Many of the women in this chapter did not record their actions, and parts of their stories have been assembled by others in attempts to share details of their lives during these years.

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Frances Mayhew

Many women did not personally record events, but relayed parts of their experiences to others. One such woman was Frances Mayhew. Her husband was Sidney Mayhew, principal of Huntsville Female Seminary and instructor of mathematics and mental philosophy. Fanny's family had a good reputation: her father, Benjamin Graves, was a Presbyterian minister and Ohio native. Sidney's parents, Jonathan and Elvira, lived in the Brownsboro community where he previously taught school. In 1860, their connections were respectable; Thomas Strong, age 23, whose worth totaled over \$58,000, lived in their household.

In April of 1862, Mayhew returned from the Confederate defeat at Corinth where he served as a topographical engineer and brought everyone accounts of loss and news of their loved ones. He did not stay, however; like many others, he quickly reenlisted and departed. In the autumn of 1863 Federal soldiers made dashes into Huntsville from encampments in outlying areas approached. Colonel W.D. Chadick, home on leave, fled from the house without his uniform jacket, raced across the streets and up the long yard to Fanny Mayhew's house. Fanny, about 33, was there with only the protection of her 13-year-old son Jimmy and any servants who may have remained. At first, only the Chadick house was searched, but informers led soldiers to search the Mayhew house.

If caught, Colonel Chadick would likely be sent north to a prison camp where disease ran rampant or, worse, hanged as a spy because he was out of uniform (a complete uniform always included a jacket). During these long hours, Fanny Mayhew could not confide to anyone that she had hidden Chadick in the pantry cellar below. He waited beneath a trap door covered with a small piece of carpet; a barrel was positioned atop that carpet, hiding the entrance. Soldiers searched the Mayhew house for him; a person with nerves of steel would be stressed under these circumstances. The searching soldiers did not help matters by sharing in loud voices that one of the Chadick girls had shot herself! To Fanny's sick relief, they did not find the Colonel. As evening fell, a young neighbor girl stopped by the Chadick house. Fanny and Mrs. Chadick pinned the colonel's uniform jacket up under the girl's hoop skirt and sent her to the Mayhew house. Colonel Chadick, whose life may have been saved twice that day, made his escape into a stormy night to the river and Dixie.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁷¹ *Incidents*, 36, 118, 119, 121.

In April of 1864, Mrs. Mayhew was ordered out of the Seminary where she resided because of the dire need for hospitals. While the town underwent shelling and threat of destruction in September of 1864, Fanny Mayhew and her friend Mrs. Parker decided to slip away with just a few possessions. Rebel soldiers – yes, *Rebels* – stopped them and took their luggage, two bolts of cloth, and their shoes. One jubilant “soldier” told Fanny his wife had told him to bring her home some shoes! Fanny may have gotten off easily; Mrs. Parker lost a large amount of money. In her own journal, Mrs. Chadick generously credited the Confederate “robbers” who may have believed the two women were Yankee supporters in their fine carriage. Two days later, Mrs. Mayhew added distressing details to the misadventure. The report was true; the ladies had been detained by a major and a captain who had instructed them to dismount the carriage and walk around a hill. When the carriage was returned to them, their belongings had been plundered and the officers were nowhere to be seen. Back in town, their sympathizers were indignant at the outrage and agreed the men should be hanged, swearing that there would be an official investigation.

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About a month after the surrender at Appomattox, Sidney Mayhew returned; he had not been home in almost three years. He arrived via an army freight train and noticed the stark contrast of his gray overcoat among the blue ones. He asked a friend if his wife and son were alive and where might he find them.⁵⁷³

Mary “Ma” Lewis

Ma Lewis, who lived across the street from the Mayhews on Eustis Street, had also recently learned to do without. Her upbringing had not prepared her for these circumstances. Born on Amelia Island off the coast of Florida, Mary Marguerite Betts had expectations of enormous wealth.

⁵⁷² *Incidents*, 156, 201, 203.

⁵⁷³ Mayhew Family Files, HMCPL. The Mayhew family remained in their home on Eustis Street and, by 1870, Sidney was listed as a lumber merchant with a total worth about \$9,000. Their son James, now 20, became an engineer and married Matilda French in May 1878. The service was performed in the Mayhew house by grandfather Rev. Graves, who died less than a month later. The Mayhews worked hard and lived long, productive lives. He remained with the lumber business through the 1880s, but by 1910, now 81, Sidney Mayhew was listed as a bank president. Fannie Mayhew, who dared to hide a fleeing Confederate officer, and who was herself later robbed and forced to endure daily fear while surrounded by invaders, died in 1916. Robey, *Maple Hill*, 93.

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As a reward for loaning \$14,000 to Spain's royal treasury for the defense of St. Augustine, her father, Samuel Betts, was given a grant "four leagues to each wind with absolute authority" over 289,000 acres. This did not include the land he already owned or his mercantile partnership in Cuba. In 1811, Florida was still a rough and unsettled area, so widower Betts sent his daughter Mary to live with friends (these friends, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Fenwick, had settled in the newly-opened land which eventually became Meridianville, Alabama). Betts' partner John T. Lowe sent his son Bartley to live with the Fenwicks, as well. "Aunt" and "Uncle" Fenwick gave care and tenderness to the two motherless children and, in turn, the two "loved them in life and revered them in death. The children rode three miles to school on horseback," and Mary rode "behind Bartley with her arms close around his waist." Her first love, she always thought him the nicest boy who never teased her, "and would have whipt any other boy that dared try it."⁵⁷⁴ Bartley Lowe married Sarah Manning in 1823.

One year later, Mary Margaret Betts married John Haywood Lewis, a lawyer from a distinguished Tennessee family overflowing with Revolutionary War heroes. The letter of introduction Lewis carried to her Betts relatives in Connecticut was written by a recognizable name and family friend, Andrew Jackson. Lawsuits from Florida eventually took the Betts' anticipated assets. (Sarah Lowe alluded to a settlement from Florida that her father, Bartley Lowe, attempted to resolve.) The couple made plans to send their daughters abroad for a fine French education, but this was only realized by one daughter, the eldest, Mary Fenwick Lewis. Now, in 1860, Widow Lewis and six daughters – two widowed and four single – resided at the home place on Eustis Street. The women attempted to support themselves by teaching. Mrs. Lewis declared a worth of \$12,000 and personal property (the Black people she kept enslaved) of \$8,000 that year. She was involved in lawsuits in Florida, however, and was dependent on lawyers in that state to represent her. It soon became evident that no more money would come from Florida.⁵⁷⁵

Each Lewis girl had received enough education to teach basic reading and writing, piano, dancing, painting, and needlework, using these skills when neighbors had enough money to pay them for lessons. Most male schoolmasters were now serving in the army, so women who might never have supported themselves earlier could, for the first time, leave the

⁵⁷⁴ Rohr, *School Girl*, 14-16; *Echoes*, 5.

⁵⁷⁵ The Lewis and Calhoun family connections offer an astounding account of money and privilege that centered in Huntsville before spreading to Louisiana and France.

household to earn money. (Note, however, that they were not seen on the walkways unescorted, even when heading to work in a place of trade or commerce as northern women often were.) Mrs. Chadick mentioned “the mania for teaching” so prevalent among the young ladies, including her own step-daughter Sue.

Perhaps Ma Lewis and the other young ladies used Marinda Moore’s *Dixie Speller*, published late into the War, in their lessons. As fervor for the Cause waned, Moore produced a series of popular readers and spellers for Southern children in the schoolroom. One lesson, intended to emphasize one-syllable words, presented a different voice from her earlier textbooks full of patriotism and glory of battle:

This sad war is a bad thing.
My pa-pa went, and died in the army.
My big broth-er went too and got shot. Bomb shell took off his head.
My aunt had three sons, and all have died in the ar-my.
Now she and the girls have to work for bread.
I will work for my ma and my sis-ters.
I hope e will have peace by the time I am old enough to go to war.
If I were a man, and had to make laws, I would not have any war, if I could help it.
If little boys fight, old folks whip them for it; but when men fight, they say “how brave.⁵⁷⁶

If school teaching was a means of income for the Lewis women, music remained a passion and refuge. Of marriageable age, the Misses Lewis were most likely not offended when the Federal band serenaded their house in August of 1862. Mary Lewis Clay wrote, “They are really philosophers and so they have aplenty of new music they are satisfied if their stomach and back bones grow together.”⁵⁷⁷

Marriage and children had always been the central aspiration for American women, especially those in the South. Marital status was often the only measure of a woman’s position in life. During and after wartime, however, the Lewis girls were unfortunate in this regard; given their high social status, they entertained little hope for suitable marriages. Only one of Ma Lewis’s daughters married after the War, and none of Mary Lewis Clay’s four daughters married. One-fourth of Southern men in the army were killed; more still were in poor health and badly wounded. One young

⁵⁷⁶ Qtd. in Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 239.

⁵⁷⁷ *Incidents* 100; undated letter from Mary Lewis Clay to John Withers Clay. HMCPL Clay Collection.

lady, perhaps in jest, wrote a friend, “It will be no disgrace to be an old maid, we can always swear our going-to-be husband was killed in the war.”⁵⁷⁸ Not only were there fewer men to offer protection, but returning soldiers were seldom financially stable enough to organize their own affairs, much less afford a home, wife, and children which would follow. Ma Lewis wrote often to her daughter Mary (while she resided in Paris) of the desire for her to shine by the fireside hearth, making her home a sacred place. Little did they know that, while Mrs. Lewis herself remained in the Home Place on Eustis Street with her six daughters, she would be joined by the growing family of her eldest daughter, Mary Clay.

Mary Mastin

The losses and contributions of other women are not known in near as much detail. Three sons of widow Mary Mastin served in the Confederate army. As men of the Huntsville Guard left for Virginia, it was 1st Lieut. Gus Mastin who accepted a silk flag from the girls at the Female College and gave “a strong, manly and striking address, which was in good taste.” The girls closed their program with a song composed by the music teacher, Mr. Saroni, “to Arms Ye Brave.” Their silk flag, still neatly folded, was recovered with his body, at the Battle of Seven Pines just one year later.⁵⁷⁹

Elizabeth Dillard

In early August of 1862, Elizabeth Dillard arrived from Woodville and stayed with Mary Jane Chadick. The 59-year-old widow of Dr. Frances Dillard sought compensation from Generals Buell and Rousseau for the burning of her home in June. Authorities were not sympathetic, given the circumstances of the house burning: Federal soldiers invaded the home of Elizabeth and her 15-year-old son Henry C. Dillard. At gunpoint, soldiers forced Henry to take them to the smokehouse for meat. According to his account, one soldier grew impatient, set down his pistol, and took up the knife the boy was using. Henry immediately attacked the feckless thief who shouted for help and, in the struggle, killed the soldier. Another version of the story included the death of a second soldier. Henry was arrested and taken by train to Stephenson. It was reported that friends slipped laudanum into whiskey the soldiers “just happened” to find on the

⁵⁷⁸ *Incidents*, 140.

⁵⁷⁹ Rice. *Hard Times*, 36, 37.

train, and the Yankees soon passed out. Reports went on to say that other friends, led by Sheriff Stephen Kennamer and James Skelton, managed to block the tracks with crossties, forcing the train to stop near Scottsboro, ensuring young Dillard's escape. He was not welcome in Federal-occupied north Alabama now, so he joined the Confederate army. In retaliation, General Mitchel, then in command at Huntsville, arrested 30 citizens and among others, Mrs. Dillard's house was burned. Mrs. Dillard received no payment for damages and returned to friends in Woodville.⁵⁸⁰

Mary Margaret Jordan

Mrs. Mary Margaret Jordan arrived from Richmond on July 25 with the body of her son, Jesse, who had died at Mechanicsville. Her husband, Henry Jordan, just 23, was an aspiring lawyer who had been killed at the battle of Gaines' Mill. Mrs. Jordan found her way by train to Virginia mere days after Henry's death, securing an ambulance with an escort for the battlefield area ten miles away. She obtained a casket and had her son's remains disinterred, "and with her own hands unwrapped the soldier's blanket, pulled off his boots and helped to place her precious dead into the coffin." She accompanied his body by train to Huntsville, where she had the sad task of confirming the deaths of local boys Tom Patton and Willie Acklen to their relatives. The Jordan family was well-liked, and the funeral procession to the burying ground for young Jordan contained 50 carriages. In the spring of 1864, Mrs. Jordan set out for Nashville by train to help her older son, Capt. Thomas Jordan, become paroled from prison camp. She kindly offered to take money from friends to purchase goods not available in Huntsville for other prisoners. Mary Jane Chadick sent her with \$23, Margaret McClung sent \$1,150 for her son Frank, another inmate at the prison, and others sent cash as well, but it, along with Mrs. Jordan, would all be lost. News came the next day that their train had crashed into a second train at Stevenson, and among the dead were Lillie Picket, Isabella Vogel, Catherine Keys, and Mary Jordan. Mary's Presbyterian funeral was well attended. Her son, Captain Jordan, was allowed leave to attend the service. The church overflowed with friends, and even a few Federal soldiers. Private Jones noted the funeral sermon was "very eloquent."⁵⁸¹

⁵⁸⁰ *Incidents*, 85, 51, 52; W. Jerry Gist. *Story of Scottsboro* (Nashville: Rich, 1968), 57; Kennamer, 52, 53.

⁵⁸¹ *Incidents* 80; "An Alabama Mother" in *Confederate Veteran*, 5:523; 140-142.

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Eliza Lay

Eliza Lay, the wife of the Right Reverend Henry C. Lay, whose husband was earlier confined at the courthouse under arrest, experienced a confinement of her own, giving birth to their seventh child in Huntsville. Bishop Lay, while assigned to Arkansas, traveled back and forth with his duties and large family. In Huntsville, Mary Rice always extended an invitation for the Lays to stay at her spacious home on Lincoln Street.



Bradley House, 303 Williams St., Huntsville (HMCPL)

(In her memoirs, Susan Mooney wrote about dining there much earlier and her regard for the pastor, whom she considered discourteous.) Reverend Lay and his wife had a fondness for the widow and called her “grandma.” However, In the autumn of 1864, Yankee Col. William Lyon occupied a room with Mrs. Rice who he described as an old (64-years-old) widow, seemingly an “amiable and excellent landlady.” “We have nice quarters. The Adjutant and I each have a large, carpeted, well-furnished room, in the second story of a large mansion very pleasantly located.” During this lull in action, Colonel Lyon intended for his wife, Adelia to join him there. The plan drastically changed with the apparent planned attack by General Forrest on Huntsville. Reverend Lay had just left Atlanta after dining with General Sherman and made his way to Huntsville to find the streets barricaded in anticipation of the assault. Lay found Mrs. Rice, who was understandably anxious. She had recently been robbed of her silverware while at the table; the blankets had been stolen directly off her bed. It was soon learned that the military action was only a devious tactic

by the Southern army to divert attention from their real intention to invade Tennessee. Mrs. Rice's anguish and stress, however, were incalculable.⁵⁸²

Felicia Chapman

In March of 1862, former Governor Reuben Chapman and his wife Felicia kindly took in the family of Eliza (Pickett) and Leroy Pope Walker (including their three children) when the Walker home at the corner of Adams and Williams Streets was destroyed by fire. Walker (grandson of the town's "father," LeRoy Pope and son of Alabama's first Senator, John Williams Walker) had been appointed by President Jeff Davis to become his Secretary of War, although Walker had no military training. In his official capacity, Walker sent the telegram from Montgomery (then capitol of the Confederacy) to General Beauregard in Charleston instructing him to fire on Fort Sumter. Walker had agitated the north with his declaration that Washington would soon be captured, quickly followed by Boston and other northern cities. Furthermore, he said, the Confederate flag would fly over northern capitols by May, just a few short days away. Enlistment rates among northerners immediately swelled in response. Disheartened by his lack of career success, Walker retired in November. Perhaps to soften his downfall, he was appointed a brigadier general, albeit without any actual action. He resigned this post in March of 1862 and returned to Huntsville, narrowly avoiding capture as he fled with others at the Federal occupation of Huntsville on April 11. Walker was a valuable political and military enemy of the north; Federal officials searched the Chapman house for him on a daily basis. Eliza and the children were aware of Walker's fugitive status, and they most likely lived in constant fear of his capture. Fortunately, Robert Brickell, Walker's former law partner, later escorted them to Montgomery to stay with relatives of Eliza's.

Until then, Chapman continued to be active in war efforts, but Felicia was somewhat isolated on Maysville Road with her four daughters and youngest son, who was only three years old. (The Chapmans had previously lost six children in infancy.) In January of 1864, Federals ordered the family out their house, instructing them to pack immediately. Felicia refused to hurry, and, overwhelmed and unable to contain her frustration, let loose a barrage of angry words. A Federal officer threatened to arrest her. A story handed down from this time attributed Felicia's husband, with the former governor, the following words to the officer in charge, "Sir I've put up with her for 24 years, so surely you can stand it a

⁵⁸² Ibid., 187, 188.

little longer.” The house was next used to billet a regiment of Black soldiers. Chapman was later arrested and imprisoned in Boston while Felecia refugeed with the children in Tuscaloosa. There, in May of 1864, news arrived of the death of their oldest son, Steptoe, at the age of 23. About the same time, their house was burned to the ground in the Federal panic of late November 1864.⁵⁸³

Sarah Patteson

Both a veteran of the War of 1812 on Jackson’s staff and a U.S. Marshal for the Northern District of Alabama for many years, Brig. Gen. Benjamin Patteson, now in ill health, retired to the village of Summit in Blount County. (Before his retirement it was rumored that his wife Sarah had been arrested for attempting to send him prohibited information.) Patteson died in 1862, at the age of 73, leaving his widow with eight children still residing at home.⁵⁸⁴ The two eldest sons, Benjamin and John, were just old enough to join the army. They left their mother with the responsibility of raising six girls under the age of 14. Adding to Sarah’s already significant burden, the general’s will was not probated until 1866, leaving her in limbo regarding his estate. Patteson had been a successful merchant; according to the 1860 census. His real estate was valued at \$15,000 and his personal estate at \$11,650, including 17 people he kept enslaved. Little did that matter now, however, as his estate proved to be insolvent. Six uncollectable notes were eventually determined to be valueless, and the stock in the Louisville & Nashville Railroad raised slightly over \$273. At a sale on the courthouse steps, Sarah raised only \$48 for the carriage and \$13 for the carryall; no one bid on the wheelbarrow.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸³ *Incidents* 33, 35, 135, 228; *Heritage of Madison County, Alabama*. (Clanton, AL: Walsworth, 1998), 136. Both Eliza Walker and Felicia Chapman had the same maiden name, Pickett. They were most likely cousins, but the connection cannot be confirmed. References have suggested that Reuben Chapman, with others, served as an envoy to France in an attempt to receive official recognition for the Confederacy. This, too, could not be verified. Likewise, the wonderful story that Felicia out-talked General Croxton to save the Observatory at the University of Alabama from burning when other buildings were set afire has not been verified. Perhaps verbosity was a family trait. Two of her daughters, Ellelee Humes and Alberta Taylor, became persuasive leaders in the women’s suffragette movement in Alabama.

⁵⁸⁴ *Incidents*, 51, 52.

⁵⁸⁵ MCPR, 1866, #2681½.

Nearby skirmishes occurred on different scales and for different reasons. In the winter chill, Union soldiers ripped wooden slats from fences at homes and businesses around town to use for cooking and firewood. At the home of Virginia Cabannis on Randolph Street, only the metal gate remained standing. She insisted that family and friends enter and exit through that gate, opening it, closing it behind them, and seeing that it was locked at night. Anyone could simply walk around it, however.

Eve Rebman

Eve and Francis Rebman, with the help of their young daughters Agnes, Frances, and Catherine, fought invading soldiers who attempted to help themselves to the family's Washington Street bakery and confectionary. One soldier "was in a deadly conflict with Mr. Rebman, Mrs. Rebman took another by the collar and made him 'see sights.'" The girls cried, "Havoc! And let fly the rocks with the most undaunted bravely." When the provost guard finally appeared, "The foe retired heels foremost by the Big Spring."⁵⁸⁶

Ellen Steele

In 1856, Ellen Steele married Edward Dorr Tracy at Oak Place (her childhood home). She was 23 and had just completed school in New York City; he was the same age and trained as a lawyer. This was clearly a love match whose fervor continued long after their wedding. In letters she addressed him as "My *own* darling husband" and he to her, "You already know from your own heart, the inexpressible, height and depth, length and breath and infinitude of that love." As the War commenced, Tracy enlisted and quickly rose to the rank of brigadier general. He participated in the First Battle of Bull Run, Shiloh, Chickasaw Bayou and the Battle of Fort Gibson. Ellen remained with their daughters at her family home, and he wrote her reassuringly, "God is sovereign over us... be comforted my wife."

The summer of 1861 was particularly stressful for Ellen without her husband to share daily tribulations, and she felt her heart might break. All the "dear sweet children" had been ill. Even the *tiny* wee one, in despair for her life." She herself was "pale, thin, haggard, and care worn" and in great apprehension about Tracy's battlefield duties. Attempting to reassure

⁵⁸⁶ *Incidents*, 79.

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her, he replied, “trust in me, I will not die until my time.” One year later, Ellen wrote to Tracy:

It is exceedingly painful my darling husband... to send you a letter of sad intelligence. But God has seen fit to remove one of our little household treasures. Oh! Our little sun beam, sweet wee Ellie... died on the 8th of scarlet fever... Your presence would have done much towards comforting me.

And to her on May 3, 1863 a formal telegram, “Your Gallant husband is dead, fell mortally wounded on the first inst...” General Edward Tracy was buried far from home at Port Gibson, Mississippi. His body was reinterred in Madison County in 1866. Ellen died in May of 1868 after embracing and speaking to her two remaining daughters in a scene described as “a calm death-bed,” comforting to those with her.⁵⁸⁷

Adelaide Rogers

Colonel William P. Lyon, stationed in Huntsville, kindly wrote a letter of introduction to his senator James R. Doolittle of Wisconsin who helped widow Adelaide Rogers appeal to President Lincoln in Washington City to parole her son and grandson from prison camp. The appeal was denied. Now, at the age of 62, Adelaide went to claim the body of her son Jim Rogers, who had died of pneumonia after four months as a prisoner at Camp Chase. Upon her return, neighbors visited to hear accounts of the sufferings of their husbands and sons at the prison camps:

No vegetable diet is allowed, and only 14 ounces of bread and eight ounces of meat are issued daily... The diet causes scurvy to prevail, and the cold... produced thousands of cases of pneumonia. Mrs. Rogers says they average 20 deaths per day... Poor Harris Toney, a delicate and refined young man, told his grandmother ‘he had eaten many a rat since he had been there and a dog never escaped from the prison alive!’

The “funeral obsequies” for Jim Rodgers took place in Huntsville February 6, 1865, just two short months before the end of War hostilities.

⁵⁸⁷ Patricia H. Ryan. Ed. *Cease Not To Think of Me*. (Hsv.: Hsv. City Planning Commission, 1979), 161, 173, 175, 113-154, *passim*.

Mary Ann Gooch

The Patton family arrived in Huntsville in or around 1811 in an ox-cart with three children and more to come, including Mary Ann, who was the first to be born there. William thrived as a merchant and plantation owner. One son, Robert, lived in Florence, where he married the daughter of Gen. John Brahan, Jane Locke Brahan. (Robert later became governor of Alabama.) The remaining siblings also married into families of wealth and resided conveniently nearby. Sister Eliza married Lawrence Watkins and lived on McClung Street. Martha, now widowed twice, had married Joseph Bradley, a very successful merchant and lived on Eustis Street near the Chadicks. Jane had married William Pope, son of the town's founder, LeRoy Pope. Dr. Charles Patton was successful enough to purchase the home of LeRoy Pope, and the site became known as Patton's Hill. Sister Mary Ann Gooch, also twice widowed, was now 35 years old with four young children and lived on the hill nearby. Unfortunately, that very knoll was needed for fortifications which would soon be called Camp Taylor, and Mrs. Chadick reported that Federals were tearing down Mrs. Gooch's beautiful cottage in order to place cannon there. Mary Ann graciously invited Mrs. Chadick and other ladies to bring their servants and dig up the shrubbery. Mary Jane Chadick returned home with fine roses, boxwoods, and verbenas. That evening, the sounds of the crashing walls could be heard all over town.⁵⁸⁸ Mary Ann Gooch was fortunate however; she knew that friends and family would welcome her and the children to stay with them.

What of the countless families driven by violence to live in the streets or farm sheds during these years? The Yankees burned Whitesburg, leaving women and children homeless. The flames could be seen from Patton's Hill. As Federals prepared to evacuate Huntsville, soldiers were placed at every street corner, poised to torch the town when ordered.

The harassment of citizens came not only from Yankees. William Lowndes Yancey set a tone of harsh punishment for secessionists early on; he would allow no mercy for dissenters who, he said, deserved a "traitor's fate." Another activist, James Graham Gilchrist, felt the pace of secession should be quickened by causing a "wider act of war" and thus "sprinkle blood in the face of the people" lest they revert to the Union.⁵⁸⁹ This came

⁵⁸⁸ MCMB 41:126, 48:291; *Incidents*, 74, 75, 153-155. (One hopes off-shoots of Mrs. Gooch's flowers still blossom in Huntsville.)

⁵⁸⁹ McIlwain, *Civil War*, 41, 55. In response to Yancey, Robert Jemison asked, "Will the gentleman go into those sections of the State and hang all who are

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to pass more than once. Jeremiah Clemens depicted rural northern Alabama in his 1865 novel *Tobias Wilson*: “Neighbor was arrayed against neighbor, and to the evils of open violence were added private assassinations and midnight burnings. No man knew whom to trust, and gloomy suspicions, even of friends, settled upon every man’s heart.”

Sergeant Lucius Barber of Illinois, marching from Decatur, Alabama to Rome, Georgia, recording in his journal in May of 1864, “The country was very thinly settled. The inhabitants generally were poor, but a strong Union sentiment prevailed among these sturdy mountaineers and many had to leave their homes and families and flee to the mountains to escape from their merciless foes. They were hunted like wild beasts.”⁵⁹⁰ Deserters were likewise set upon and hunted by soldiers with dogs, which was a method normally used to track down escaped Black people they kept enslaved.

opposed to secession? Will he hang them by families, by neighbors, by towns, by counties by Congressional District? ... Is this the spirit of Southern chivalry?”

⁵⁹⁰ Clemens. *Tobias Wilson*, 314; Lucius W. Barber. *Army Memoirs*. Rpt. NY: Time Life (Chicago: Jones, 1884), 145.

EPILOGUE

General William T. Sherman, unyielding in his opposition to secession, wrote to a friend, “You people of the South don’t know what you are doing. This country will be drenched in blood, and God only knows how it will end. It is all folly, madness, a crime against civilization... War is a terrible thing!”⁵⁹¹ By war’s end, the South was truly defeated. Although northern Alabama was not the scene of battles as merciless as those at Shiloh or Gettysburg, its counties were left in ruins and occupied by foreign troops: the dreaded Yankee invaders and the United States Colored Troops were both perceived as offensive. As the war concluded all food supplies had gone to feed both armies, and there had been no one to plow the fields, much less glean any harvest that might have remained. Most poor Whites, yeomen farmers, working townsmen, and even plantation owners returning from battlefields found their farms and homes laid waste, stripped of crops and possessions. In Alabama, approximately 120,000 men served in the armies. Of that about 35,000 died, leaving some 20,000 women as widows and 60,000 children without fathers. 30,000 men returned to Alabama with serious disabilities. They returned to find women and children, Black and White, exhausted from their enforced roles during wartime.

Upper class women during the time of the Civil War were generally homebound, raised to be the fair but weaker sex. They were neither famous for nor rewarded for their actions. If any woman resembling Scarlett O’Hara ever lived in northern Alabama, she had long since departed. During the years of warfare, women maintained homeplaces which included the elderly, the disabled, and children, leaving little time or energy for themselves. Southern women had never been encouraged to have an opinion, but for four long years many had made all domestic, financial and legal decisions almost entirely on their own. Would returning men entrench themselves once again as head of household? Many women must have longed to relinquish their new, unwanted role. Some, however, had come to terms with their new lives and worked hard to established new and better methods for solving old problems.

⁵⁹¹ Qtd. in *Old Tennessee Valley Magazine*, #260, 26.

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In what condition did these women find themselves as the long, miserable war concluded? Some were physically weakened and sick. More were spiritually wounded by their personal losses and the loss of the Cause. Of the writers featured here, only Ellen Tracey's husband did not return, although several women lost brothers killed in action. Many male family members made their way home only to succumb later to ill effects of injuries or diseases contracted in prison camps. Some women such as Mary Ann Cruse found comfort and solace in church work.

A new population of urban women living in reduced circumstances emerged. Some could add income through teaching like Mary Fielding, the Mooney children, and the daughters of Ma Lewis and Mary Lewis Clay. No writers here were among the many women who served as hospital nurses, however Mary Fielding and Mary Jane Chadick took food, blankets and supplies to prisoners at the depot. Two young women from the college dutifully knitted "helmits" for the soldiers. Their day-to-day preoccupation was to maintain a sense of normalcy, at least as they perceived it, in their homes during wartime.

White Southerners often expressed anxiety over the dangers for unprotected White women in the countryside, particularly now at the mercy of newly-freed Black men. In truth, Black women, with their status as subservient women in every respect, were far more likely to be molested by White men. These White men, in turn, were far less likely than Black men to suffer criminal repercussions.

Prisoners arriving home were fortunate to have survived wounds and sickness; not all were as lucky as young Eddie Chadick. Many came home carrying wounds of the worst unseen kind, trauma, which was not a diagnosis and was barely acknowledged at that time. Attempting to cope with the horrors they'd seen and friends they'd lost, some returning men developed alcohol and drug addictions. Shamed and morally derided for these so-called vices, these circumstances compounded their families' post-war difficulties.

Of the women featured, Susanna Clay died, exhausted from her heavy responsibilities and worries just as the War concluded. Her two Huntsville daughters-in-law managed totally different lives. (Celeste and Hugh Lawson Clay later made their home in Huntsville, as well.) Virginia Clay, wife of the senator, had no children and few ties to Gurleystville, Alabama where her husband took refuge. Her dissatisfaction with him (who she'd spent months campaigning to be released by the Union at the conclusion of the war) and country life in general led her to visit urban friends for as long as they would permit her to stay. After the death of Senator Clay, she remarried and took the unusual step of hyphenating her

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name to become Virginia Clay-Clopton. (This was most likely not to advance the role of the 20th century woman, but rather maintain an association with the influential Clay name.) The family of Mary Lewis Clay, on the other hand, owed their survival of the difficult post-war years to Mary's superior French education which allowed her and her daughters to teach. They kept the family afloat financially while Withers Clay attempted to regain his newspaper's circulation. None of their four daughters married.

In Florence, Eliza Weakley and Olivia O'Neal lived blocks from one another, but, post-War, their social situations wildly diverged. Mr. Weakley, who now had little fortune and less motivation, was unable to restore his former assets. The adult Weakley children returned to the family home in reduced circumstances, finding support and perhaps comfort from their parents. Conversely, the men of Olivia O'Neal's family were newly energized to establish a powerful political presence. Politics allowed father Edward and son Emmett to rise to the positions of the 26th and 34th Alabama state governorships. The talk around that family dinner table must have been remarkable. Young Sallie Independence Foster, also from Florence, never attended finishing school in Nashville as she had planned. "The War has broken Pa up so he does not mean to send us." Her mother's estate, however, appeared intact in the 1870 census. Mrs. Foster, formerly a Watkins, may have had her own fortune, or perhaps protected her husband's remaining assets from debt collection. Sallie Foster married and moved to Arkansas with her husband. They eventually returned to live at Courtview with their five children.

Adventuresome Mary Fielding of Athens who "saw the elephant" and hung out the upstairs window amid flying shells never married. She had no financial means of any significance, and probably believed that this would not change when she moved west with her brothers and their children. The reserved Mary Ann Cruse had able access to financial security. She also remained single and lived quietly within her select group of friends and Episcopal churchwomen in Huntsville.

Ellen Saunders of nearby Courtland in Lawrence County may have had the opportunity to continue her education, but this is doubtful. She returned to a house with family portraits still on the walls, but Federal officers occupying rooms and soldiers camped in fields. She married respectably and moved with her husband to Memphis, Tennessee.

Cassie Fennell wrote in May of 1865 that the Stars and Stripes were hoisted in Guntersville amid the cheers of a large crowd. "Yes, they cheered the old flag, when our hearts were almost breaking." Crowds continued to grow by August when Major Arthur Beard, an influential

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community leader, spoke before an assembly of about 500. “We have met to bury the tomahawk – to smoke the calumet of peace. All of us ought to reverence that government which we could not destroy, and to which we have been compelled to submit. I shall do so cheerfully.”⁵⁹² Cheerful or not, families were now destitute who had been only marginally so before the War. Many lived in truly wretched conditions within the countryside of Marshall County. Cassie Fennell was fortunate to have a devoted husband, and, like many other seemingly dislocated and displaced families, settled in Madison County with seven children near the Big Cove area among the hills, not far from the Hamer and Johnston families.

How could Mary Hamer Johnston and her defenseless neighbors, mostly women and children, ever forget the awful memories of their homes burning to ashes? How could they forget the smell of their few possessions as smoldering embers, or the feel of dampness in the winter cold as nightfall came upon them, now homeless? She was dragged away from her still-nursing baby and taken on horseback overnight to spend four days under arrest in Huntsville. As the daughter and wife of ministers, perhaps her religion and faith eased later trauma, but, as mountain folks are known to say, “Forgive yes; forget, hell no.”

Priscilla Larkin did not leave a continued record of her life during or after the War. Stories shared by her descendants reveal she lost two of her beloved sisters in 1863. Legal records show the financial losses her brothers suffered as they became insolvent while attempting to hold the remains of the property and family together in the now destitute countryside. Priscilla married after the War and died in 1868 at the age of 29, one week after giving birth to her only child.

Mary Jane Chadick and her family relocated with her husband’s religious callings. Their children became less dependent and found prosperous places for themselves given their incomplete education and limited financial means. After the War, Green Lawn Plantation’s Octavia Otey suffered the immediate loss of her husband and father-in-law, along with most of her land and property, in Madison County. She was fortunate to retain her hold on her dower share with the house, but there was no money. The worth of her estate had been counted in the value of the land and the people she and her husband kept enslaved. They were now free, and as tentative as Octavia in making future plans. Tenant farmers and sharecroppers had to be negotiated with, encouraged, and urged to do their share in the rapidly changing times. Octavia still had five children at home to raise, feed, and educate.

⁵⁹² Barbara Snow. *Guntersville Advertiser Gleam*, Aug. 8, 2018.

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After they set their journals, letters, and memoirs aside, the written words of these singular women were replaced by family accounts and recollections. Those, too, have now almost completely vanished. What compelled these journalists to write? What need did taking a pen to paper fill during these overwrought, chaotic days? Sarah Morgan wrote as a “vent for my feelings... agitated and nervous.” Her journal was essential to her life; “I get nervous and unhappy in thinking of the sad condition of the country ... and just before I reach the lowest ebb, I seize my pen, dash off half a dozen lines... and Presto!” Sarah feared she might “die without some means of expressing my feelings.”⁵⁹³ Perhaps some found themselves in such unbelievable circumstances that they felt recording these extraordinary events would convince future generations that they had occurred. Younger women like Sallie Independence Foster may have begun journals to practice writing skills, and soon found themselves transcribing the events of a world-changing conflict.

Unfortunately, the unrecorded accounts of thousands of women far outnumber these very few samples of letters and journals of well educated, upper-class ladies. What about women like Margaret Nixon, who lived in rural Limestone County? Her husband, James Monroe Liberty Independence Nixon, left Margaret with their seven children, the oldest a 14-year-old girl, his brother-in-law, helpless since infancy, and his wife’s sister, developmentally disabled from infancy “to get along the best they can.”⁵⁹⁴ Had Margaret the time or inclination to leave an account of her days, current generations would almost certainly have an entirely new view of life during wartime. Was Margaret’s life story any less valuable simply because it was not recorded?

Were these the same people – these haggard, wrinkled women, bowed with care and trouble, sorrow and unusual toil? These tame, pale, tearless girls, from whose soft flesh, the witching dimples had long since departed, or were drawn down into furrows – were they the same school girls of 1861? These women who, with coarse, lean and brown hands... these women with scant, faded cotton gowns and coarse leather shoes?⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹³ Qtd. in Faust, *Mothers*, 163, 164.

⁵⁹⁴ James Monroe Liberty Independence Nixon Papers, Auburn University, Auburn, AL. Liberty Nixon (his actual name) had such strong feelings about the War that he renamed his son Winfield Scott to Beauregard at the beginning of hostilities.

⁵⁹⁵ Qtd. from Francis W. Dawson, “Our Women in the War,” in Anne Firor Scott, *Southern*, 86, 87.

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How was the newly-freed Black woman and her remaining family to find the most basic of human needs – food, shelter and clothing? Many had left their accustomed plantation setting to fend for themselves in a new cultural landscape to wait for their 40 acres and a mule with “...no experience to guide people in so total a disaster, greater than any previous disruption by epidemic or economic depression or natural calamity.”⁵⁹⁶ White distrust of Blacks, so palpable before and during the war, boiled over to an angry resentment in the following years. Newly freed Blacks faced a completely different justice system and far fewer rights than their White Southern counterparts. Black women now inhabited not only a cruel world, but a totally unfamiliar one.

Middle class and poor White families in the South were in a slightly better, but not enviable position. “But now our vocation is work, and we all recognize it to be so, for young and old, men and women, are pushed by a necessity, before undone.”⁵⁹⁷

Men marched off to battle, suffering, and prison camps. Southern women, however, fought a constant battle of their own: one of *endurance*. These experiences were “battles” for women in both a literal and figurative sense. All able men were deployed to war, leaving no one at home to protect women and children from harm and to keep businesses, farms, and livelihoods running. The terror of home invasion, theft, violence and destruction was a daily reality for women and children left at home. These writings recount instances of women blocked at every turn when attempting to obtain even the most basic of necessities. Hunger and disease were rampant, even among the upper-class authors of these writings.

How difficult it must have been for the writers of these diaries and journals to endure in such grim circumstances. The initial optimism of a Southern victory faded as the war dragged into years. Their hopes may have waned, but the faith of these women remained strong. They swallowed (or wrote down) their fears and faced each new challenge with a matter-of-fact bravery and, often, ingenuity. Some managed to keep several large farm animals hidden from northern troops for the duration of the War. Many saved the lives of their children and neighbors with careful medical attention, rationing, and timely warnings.

These women learned that strength came from a sense of empathy. In times of imminent danger, women helped women. They took in displaced friends, shared food and supplies, and sometimes risked

⁵⁹⁶ Dawson, *Women*, 92.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

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everything to hide fugitive neighbors. They spoke on behalf of one another before the Provost and occupying authorities (who sometimes included the wives and children of the very officers turning a blind eye to robberies of their homes and much-needed property). Southern women often overlooked differences and offer kindness to their enemies, as well. Those acts saved lives, strengthened bonds, and kept hope alive.

Rather than paint all Southern women as saints, Scarlett O'Haras, or shrinking violets, picture a woman rising from bed on a freezing winter morning in 1864. She works alone, quietly, to heat the house and make meals from alarmingly scant food. Her morning will include caring for sick, aging parents, sewing and knitting warm clothes for the family while there is light, and gritting her teeth to remain on speaking terms with a northern border residing in her home against her wishes. She will spend the rest of her day creating more meals, washing laundry as best she can in cold temperatures, and anxiously awaiting news of beloved family members in battle or prison camp. Before bed, exhausted, she sits at her kitchen table to jot down a few lines about the previous few days – the scarcity, the backbreaking work, the heartache, the gunfire. She absently nods off at the table, then trudges up the creaking staircase to collapse into bed. She will do the same thing the following day. There will be no breaks or days off. Celebratory days like Christmas will pass exactly as the day before it. Any temporary reprieve from physical labor will offer only more time to dwell on the badly turning War, and fear of what the world will look like at its conclusion.

Let us look back and celebrate these women as the resourceful, hard-working people they were and take a moment to acknowledge those who took time out of their grueling days and nights to write down their thoughts. Because of these writings, we know that the home front could be as fraught and disorienting as the battlefield. Through tenacity, faith, love for family, and help (both from and *for* neighbors) women of the Civil War-era South drew the strength and courage to endure.

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Abbreviations

Alabama Department of Archives and History	ADAH
Florence-Lauderdale Public Library	FLPL
Historic American Building Survey	HABS
Huntsville Historical Review	HHR
Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society	HMCHS
Huntsville Madison County Public Library	HMCPL
Jackson County, Alabama Chronicles	JCC
Library of Congress	LC
Limestone Historical Association	LHA
Madison County, Alabama Deed Book	MCDB
Madison County, Alabama Marriage Book	MCMB
Madison County, Alabama Probate Records	MCPR
Madison County, Alabama Record Center	MCRC
Gen. O. M. Mitchel Correspondence Book	MC
National Archives	NA
<i>Official Records</i>	OR
R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library, Harvard Business School	Dun & Co.
Southern Claims Commission	SCC

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HMCPL Special Collections

Clay Family Scrapbook
John Withers Clay Journal, 1840
Hattie Figures Diary, 1861, 1862
Henry S. Figures File
Lilie Bibb Greet Papers
Daniel R. A. C. Hundley Journal, 1864
Sarah Lowe Journal
Mayhew Family Files
Roberts Collection, Digital, Box 1, f 02, 123.
Vertical Files, Madison County Towns, Maysville

Madison County Records Center

Chancery Court Records
Circuit Court Records
Deed Books
Probate Records
Will Books

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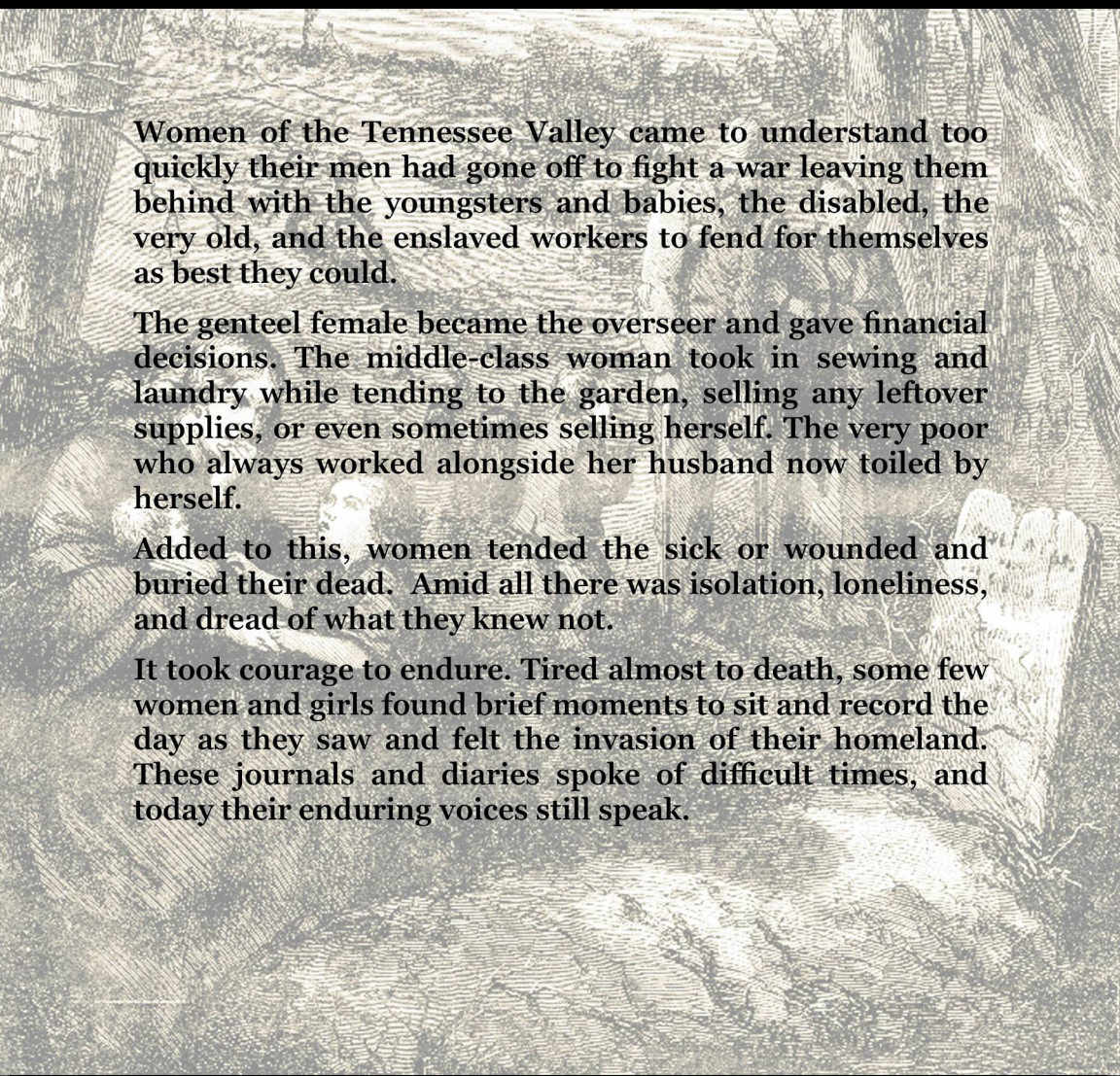
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Notes

Enduring Voices

Women of the Tennessee Valley: 1861-1865



Women of the Tennessee Valley came to understand too quickly their men had gone off to fight a war leaving them behind with the youngsters and babies, the disabled, the very old, and the enslaved workers to fend for themselves as best they could.

The genteel female became the overseer and gave financial decisions. The middle-class woman took in sewing and laundry while tending to the garden, selling any leftover supplies, or even sometimes selling herself. The very poor who always worked alongside her husband now toiled by herself.

Added to this, women tended the sick or wounded and buried their dead. Amid all there was isolation, loneliness, and dread of what they knew not.

It took courage to endure. Tired almost to death, some few women and girls found brief moments to sit and record the day as they saw and felt the invasion of their homeland. These journals and diaries spoke of difficult times, and today their enduring voices still speak.