

THE CHARGER



CLEVELAND CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE

MARCH 2018

VOL. 39 # 6

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Website : clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com

E-mail: m.wells@csuohio.edu or w.keating@csuohio.edu

Editors: Dennis Keating, Michael Wells

Newsletter Design: Catherine Wells

Message From the President

Greetings to all members and friends of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable! When we began this dynamic year, many of us had the opportunity to visit, on our field trip to the Virginia Peninsula, the site of the Battle of Big Bethel. It was at this location where Union ground troops from Fort Monroe first met the Confederacy in battle, where American soldiers first stood up and fired upon their countrymen. This month, our group will learn where, and under what circumstances, the last shots of the Civil War were fired.

The Confederate surrender at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865 was a traditional surrender, at which Gen. Lee, and fewer than ten thousand troops remaining with him, capitulated to the Union command. Grant's terms, though extremely generous to individuals, were militarily and politically uncompromising. With the exception of the officers' sidearms and the soldiers' mounts and private baggage, all weapons and equipment were ordered parked and stacked. Confederate officers and men would bound to swear again not to take up arms against the US government, and once they swore, they were permitted to return to their homes.

Matters did not proceed as smoothly in other theaters of the war. Gen. Sherman in North Carolina found it necessary to engage in lengthy negotiations to gain the surrender of the Confederate troops under Joseph E. Johnston, which discussions came to involve members of the Confederate cabinet. At one point, when negotiations stalled, Jefferson Davis and Confederate secretary of war John C. Breckinridge instructed Johnston to prepare his army to resume fighting. In early May 1865 Confederate troops under Richard Taylor surrendered his army of twelve thousand troops in Alabama. With Taylor's surrender, matters further west splintered into near chaos. The troops of E. Kirby Smith's Trans-Mississippi Dept. were ordered to carry on the fight, and plans for guerrilla warfare took shape in Texas. Indeed, segments of the Confederate Army and its supporters resolved to fight to the bitter end.

Please make your plans to join as we learn of the multiple surrenders of the Confederacy in a stirring talk by Robert "Bert" Dunkerly, a noted historian, award-winning author and speaker, who is travelling in from the Richmond National Battlefield Park for this exciting presentation.

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Confederate No-Surrender in the Trans-Mississippi West

by Dennis Keating

On July 1, 1865, several hundred Confederates led by General Jo Shelby who had refused to surrender crossed the Rio Grande at Eagle Pass, Texas ahead of Phil Sheridan's forces into a Mexico divided between a French invasion force and deposed Mexican president Benito Juarez. One of the members memorialized the lowering of the flag of Shelby's Missouri Iron Brigade into the river:

"They buried then that flag and plume in the
River's rushing tide,
Ere that gallant few
Of the tried and true
Had been scattered far and wide
Who had charged and bled
Where Shelby led,
Were the last who held above the wave
The glorious flag of the vanquished brave,
No more to rise from its watery grave.

Despite the previous surrenders of Simon Bolivar Buckner and Kirby Smith of Confederate forces in the Trans-Mississippi, Shelby refused to surrender.

Jo Shelby was a wealthy planter who joined pro-slavery Missouri fighters opposing the anti-slavery Jayhawkers in the "Bloody Kansas" conflict preceding the Civil War. Shelby then gained fame as a leading Confederate cavalry commander in the West. He was the commander of the Iron Brigade of Missouri volunteers. Beginning at Wilson's Creek, he fought throughout the Trans-Mississippi theater. His most famous action was his Missouri raid in autumn, 1863. After Sterling Price's defeat at Westport (Kansas City), Kansas on October 23, 1864, an outnumbered Shelby brilliantly covered Price's retreat to Missouri. At the battle of Helena, Arkansas on July 4, 1863, Shelby had several horses shot from under him and suffered his one wound in the war.

Shelby resolved to go into exile in Mexico with as many who would follow him. Ironically, on January 11, 1865 Preston Blair (of the pro-Union Missouri Blair family) visited Richmond to propose to Confederate President Jefferson Davis that the South end its rebellion and join with the North in a combined effort to expel Emperor Louis-Napoleon III's forces from Mexico. Nothing came of this proposal. Upon Shelby's entry into Mexico after a trek from Arkansas, his fellow ex-Confederates (joined by other adventurers) voted to offer their military services to the Emperor Maximilian, an Austrian prince installed by the French in January, 1862.



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In order to reach him in Mexico City, Shelby and his men had to fight their way against Apaches and renegade robbers and the harsh terrain of northern Mexico. Along the way, they rescued a besieged French garrison. Their reduced number by half entered the capital on September 3, 1865, having traveled 1,500 miles. Joining them in French-controlled Mexico were former western Confederate generals Kirby Smith, Sterling Price, Thomas Hindman. "Prince" John Magruder and the ex-Confederate governor of Texas.

Shelby's hopes of leading a large force of Confederate exiles against the Juarez forces were dashed when Maximilian rejected his offer. He did offer the exiles either land in Mexico and assistance to return to the United States. Shelby then disbanded his surviving followers (some of whom did serve with the French). Shelby took up the former offer and managed a farming site in the Cordoba Valley with neighbors like Sterling Price and the ex-Confederate governor of Tennessee. However, his stay was short lived as Mexican rebels attacked plantations occupied by foreigners like them and then Napoleon's forces withdrew from Mexico during February-March, 1867. The former Confederate notables departed from their Mexican exile with Shelby sailing on a federal gunship from Vera Cruz on June 9, 1867. The Emperor Maximilian who had been captured by Juarez's forces in May was executed on June 19, 1867, ending the French invasion and occupation of Mexico.

Shelby returned to Missouri without retribution and resumed farming. In 1882, he both met Phil Sheridan on a visit to Washington (who regretted not capturing him before he escaped to Mexico) and also then testified on behalf of Frank James, who was acquitted of a murder during a train robbery. Shelby had harbored Frank on his farm as a wounded criminal in 1872.

In an ending to his adventurous career, in 1893 President Cleveland appointed Shelby U.S. Marshal for the Western District of Missouri. Despite his Confederate past, Shelby objected to the display of the Confederate Flag during a Fourth of July parade, asserted that slavery had been wrong (although he had owned slaves). and hired a black deputy. Jo Shelby died in 1897.

References

Joseph O. Shelby (August 10, 2016):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-CAYOwi5wY>

Arthur Anthony. *General Jo Shelby's March* (2010)

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A Stroll Through Spring Grove Cemetery By Paul Siedel

Among the many Civil War sites here in Ohio is Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati. Besides being a fantastic arboretum, featuring many native and exotic species of plants, it is the final resting place for many well known Civil War personalities. Upon entering the Cemetery one is taken by the remarkable gatehouse. Built in the 1880s, it is truly a remarkable piece of late Victorian architecture. In the office one may obtain maps to the graves of many of the people that made Ohio one of our premier states both in business, industry and opportunity. Names such as Kroger, Chase, Hooker, Jacob Cox and others. The articles of incorporation were actually drawn up in 1844 by Salmon P. Chase. The Cemetery was opened in 1845 as part of the rural cemetery movement. As churchyards became filled huge plots of land were purchased on the outskirts of major cities and sculpted into arboretum-cemeteries where the general public could stroll and not only visit the graves of loved ones but actually take in the park like atmosphere that surrounded them. In Cleveland Woodland Cemetery in 1851 and then Lakeview in 1870 were begun and became model rural park cemeteries. Spring Grove, eventually became the fourth largest cemetery in the U.S. The chief arborist today is Mr. Dave Gressley. He not only took me on a cemetery tour but helped me find several graves I wasn't able to locate. He showed me several species of willow tree and flowering crab apple which were gifts of foreign countries to the cemetery. The natural surroundings are manicured and walking through the many groves and following the paths that grace the grounds is truly an experience that one won't forget.



Among the many graves one will see there are those of Salmon P. Chase, Joseph Hooker, Godfrey Weitzel, whose troops were the first to enter Richmond in 1865, Jesse Grant, father of Ulysses S. Grant, and Governor Jacob Cox, governor of Ohio and commander of part of the U.S. Forces at the Battle of Franklin, Tenn. An entire section is dedicated to the fighting McCook Family who lost three sons in the conflict. Also prominent among the many Civil War monuments is the Monument to the 5th Ohio Volunteer Infantry erected in 1887 to honor the members buried there.

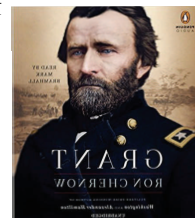
Spring Grove is still very much an active cemetery, open every day until 6:00 P.M. and is located on the west side of Cincinnati just off the Spring Grove Ave. exit (number 6) of I 75. A short drive will take one to the gates of this amazing place and all the wonderful assets, the historic graves, beautiful park like setting and an abundance of hiking and jogging paths which are available to the general public if one is inclined to take the time to go off the beaten path.

Book Note—Grant by Ron Chernow

Just finished Ron Chernow's biography of Grant. Even though it weighs in at almost 1,000 pages, I found it well worth the time. Chernow thoroughly covers Grant's life before the Civil War (he's a Buckeye!), convincingly makes the case for Grant as *the* great general of the war, and fairly assesses his presidency plus Grant's remarkable post-presidency. The saga of the terminally cancer-stricken Grant writing his *Memoirs* is nothing short of awe inspiring.

However much you know about Grant, I'll wager you will learn more by reading this book And be glad you did.

Patrick Bray



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SWAK by David A. Carrino

This history brief was presented at the February 2018 meeting of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable.



The word sarcasm comes from an ancient Greek word that literally means to tear the flesh. This makes sense, because a figurative tearing of the flesh is what sarcasm does, and what sarcasm is intended to do. However, sometimes sarcasm can be problematic, because too often, the line between sarcastic and hurtful is difficult to discern. In fact, I know someone who was so concerned that her sarcasm might be perceived as hurtful that one year she gave up sarcasm for Lent. (For me personally, I don't know what would be a more challenging Lenten sacrifice: giving up sarcasm or giving up chocolate.) Although there can be issues with sarcasm, there are some situations in which sarcasm is warranted and in which the target of the sarcasm is deserving of it. Such a situation is the subject of this month's history brief. The main characters in this story of sarcasm are Jordan Anderson (whose first name is sometimes spelled "Jordon" or

"Jourdon") and Patrick Henry Anderson, who went by his middle name, Henry. Prior to the Civil War, Jordan was a slave who was owned by Henry. During the war Jordan and his family obtained their freedom, and shortly after the war the family moved north. While Jordan was living in his post-war place of residence, he received a letter from Henry with a proposal that Jordan return to the plantation to work for his former master. The letter that Jordan sent in response is an exquisite piece of sarcasm. In recognition of February being Black History Month, Jordan Anderson and his brilliantly sarcastic letter are the subject of this month's history brief.

Jordan Anderson was born in December 1825 in Tennessee, although the exact location is not known. When Jordan was age seven or eight, he was sold to a person named Paulding Anderson, who owned a plantation east of Nashville, Tennessee. Paulding then gave Jordan to his young son, Henry, to be Henry's personal slave. Eventually Henry came to own the plantation, and Jordan continued to work there as one of Henry's most important slaves. Sometime in 1848, Jordan married a slave named Amanda, who went by Mandy, and they had 11 children. In 1864 Union soldiers arrived at the plantation and gave Jordan and his family their freedom. Jordan immediately left the plantation, but not without some personal danger, because Henry shot at Jordan as Jordan was departing. Luckily for Jordan, Henry failed to hit his target, in part because a man named George Carter grabbed the gun from Henry. Jordan subsequently worked at a Union hospital, where he met a surgeon named Clarke McDermont. After the war ended, Jordan and his family, with help from McDermont, moved to Dayton, Ohio, and McDermont arranged for Jordan to meet with McDermont's father-in-law, a lawyer and abolitionist with the romantic name of Valentine Winters, who helped Jordan find a job. In July 1865 Jordan received a letter from his former master, Henry, who was facing financial difficulties and desperately needed workers for that year's harvest, particularly a worker like Jordan, who possessed the skills to oversee the harvest. Because Jordan could not read, he took the letter to Valentine Winters, who read the letter to Jordan. Since Jordan could not write a response himself, he asked Winters to write a letter that Jordan dictated, and this letter was sent to Jordan's former master, Henry.

The letter begins, "Sir: I got your letter and was glad to find that you had not forgotten Jordan, and that you wanted me to come back and live with you again, promising to do better for me than anybody else can. I have often felt uneasy about you. I thought the Yankees would have hung you long before this for harboring Rebs they found at your house....Although you shot at me twice before I left you, I did not want to hear of your being hurt, and am glad you are still living. It would do me good to go back to the dear old home again....I would have gone back to see you all when I was working in the Nashville Hospital, but one of the neighbors told me that Henry intended to shoot me if he ever got a chance

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"SWAK cont.

I want to know particularly what the good chance is you propose to give me. I am doing tolerably well here; I get \$25 a month, with victuals and clothing, have a comfortable home for Mandy....Now, if you will write and say what wages you will give me, I will be better able to decide whether it would be to my advantage to move back again. As to my freedom, which you say I can have, there is nothing to be gained on that score, as I got my free papers in 1864....Mandy says she would be afraid to go back without some proof that you are sincerely disposed to treat us justly and kindly—and we have concluded to test your sincerity by asking you to send us our wages for the time we served you. This will make us forget and forgive old scores, and rely on your justice and friendship in the future. I served you faithfully for thirty-two years, and Mandy twenty years. At \$25 a month for me, and \$2 a week for Mandy, that earnings would amount to \$11,680....Please send the money...in care of V. Winters, esq., Dayton, Ohio. If you fail to pay us for faithful labors in the past, we can have little faith in your promises in the future....Here I draw my wages every Saturday night, but in Tennessee there was never any payday for the negroes any more than for the horses and cows."

The letter continues with a telling request for assurance regarding the safety of Jordan's daughters, whom Jordan described as "now grown up" and "good looking girls." In a statement that alludes to one of many reprehensible acts by slaveowners, Jordan went on, "I would rather stay here and starve and die if it come to that than have my girls brought to shame by the violence and wickedness of their young masters." In an obvious reference to the pre-war proscription against educating slaves, Jordan also asked about schools for his daughters. The letter is signed, "From your old servant, Jourdon Anderson. P.S.—Say howdy to George Carter, and thank him for taking the pistol from you when you were shooting at me." Not surprisingly, Jordan did not go back to the plantation. His former master, Henry, who was drowning in debt, sold the plantation and died two years later at age 44. Jordan remained in Dayton for the rest of his life and died in 1907 at the age of 81. Descendants of Jordan Anderson still live in Dayton.

Those who are of my musical generation probably remember a singer by the name of Brian Hyland. Brian Hyland had three recordings which peaked in the top five in the U.S. One recording, "Gypsy Woman," reached number three in 1970. Another of Brian Hyland's top-five recordings, which went all the way to number one in 1960, was "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polkadot Bikini." The third of Brian Hyland's top-five recordings peaked at number three in 1962. This one was "Sealed with a Kiss." As all of you know, the expression "sealed with a kiss" refers to a letter that is filled with so much affection that the sender seals the letter with a kiss. I suspect that when Jordan Anderson sent the letter to his former master, he did not seal it with a kiss. In fact, in light of the sarcasm in Jordan's letter, it seems that as far as Jordan was concerned, if there was any kissing associated with that letter, it was that his former master could kiss a certain part of Jordan's anatomy.

TAKE NOTE

Stand Watie and the Cherokee Nation in the Civil War:

<http://www.historynet.com/stand-waties-war-the-last-confederate-general.htm>



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MORE ON THE COMPLICITY OF THE CONFEDERATE GOVERNMENT AND ITS SECRET SERVICE BUREAU IN THE ASSASSINATION AND ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATIONS OF APRIL 14, 1865, IN WASHINGTON By John Fazio

The issue of who, ultimately, bears responsibility for the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, the near assassination of Secretary of State William H. Seward, and the attempted assassinations of Vice President Andrew Johnson, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton and Lieutenant-General Ulysses S. Grant, at least, on the night of April 14, 1865, in Washington, is a delicate one. It has been said that "Truth, like a bastard, comes into the world, never without ill-fame to him who gives her birth" (Thomas Hardy) and that "All great truths begin as blasphemies" (G. B. Shaw). Accordingly, after the publication of *Decapitating the Union: Jefferson Davis, Judah Benjamin and the Plot to Assassinate Lincoln*, in 2015, by McFarland, which, of course, postulates the ultimate responsibility of the Confederate government and its Secret Service, I received a thinly disguised phone call from a fellow in Virginia who told me that he had begun work on a book about the events of April 14 and was told in no uncertain terms by persons in Virginia, who, he said, refer to themselves as "Mosby men" and their state as "Occupied Virginia", that he should in no way tie Mosby to the assassination of Lincoln. I naturally reminded him of the First Amendment, and he naturally acknowledged its relevance, but he said he was merely passing on what he had been told and that he thought I ought to know about it. Well, needless to say, I put greater stock in the First Amendment than in his admonition, but it does illustrate the sensitivity of some people on the issue, particularly our Southern brethren. Consistent with this, I have given my PowerPoint presentation on *The Confederate Secret Service and the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* dozens of times, but not once to a Southern audience, despite my efforts to do so. Though the book has received excellent reviews and though the presentation has always been well received, I have been told that my evidence is circumstantial (as if that were a weakness; it isn't), that the highly educated and super-refined Southern aristocrats who were the Confederate government leaders and upper-level Secret Service operatives would never even dream of committing such a heinous act as regicide and certainly would have nothing to do with such low lifes as Booth, Powell, Herold, Atzerodt, Arnold and O'Laughlen, and even that my arguments were "destroying a culture". Why, then, do I persist, especially when we consider that we are many generations removed from the events of that fatal and fateful night and that they therefore have little or no relevance now? Because one can say that about any historical event that is generations removed from our time. Why bother studying history at all if we are going to use contemporary relevance, and only contemporary relevance, as justification to do so? As historians, we are, or in any case we should be, in thrall to that elusive will-o-the-wisp known as truth. If we are not, then we should find something else to do--a different vocation or avocation. Recall that it was Lincoln himself who said that history isn't history unless it is the truth. So let us carry on in spite of intimidation and in spite of arguments about the nature of the evidence, the scruples of political leaders, the destruction of cultures and contemporary relevance.

It sometimes happens that compelling evidence for a postulate is in front of our eyes, and has always been in front of our eyes, but is nevertheless overlooked or ignored. The postulate, of course, is that the Confederate government and its Secret Service were complicit in the assassination and attempted assassinations of Lincoln and the other Federal officeholders previously named. The evidence I refer to is in the transcripts of the trial of the conspirators that was held in May and June, 1865, coupled with knowledge we have of the Confederate response to the Wistar and Dahlgren-Kilpatrick Raids against Richmond in February and March, 1864. I have known about this evidence for a long time, but I realized its significance and its relevance to the postulate only recently. Here is the evidence, which, in my judgment, rises to the level of proof that Confederate leaders would not shrink from diabolical deeds if they offered them any chance of winning the war, including regicide.

After the Wistar and Dahlgren-Kilpatrick Raids, which the Confederate leadership laid at Lincoln's feet, based upon Wistar's and Dahlgren's orders, especially the latter's, which called for the assassination of Davis and his cabinet and which were obtained from Dahlgren's corpse, a series of high-level meetings were held in Richmond to consider an appropriate response. The minutes of these meetings are apparently lost, but it is known that the meetings were attended by the highest levels of both the political and military leadership of the Confederacy.

What followed, *inter alia*, was the appointment by Davis of three men for service with the so-called Canadian Cabinet, already established in Montreal and other Canadian cities, i.e. members of the Confederate Secret Service who were there because they were beyond American jurisdiction and could therefore carry out their work with relatively little organized opposition from the United States government. The men were James P. Holcombe of Virginia, Clement C. Clay of Alabama

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and Jacob Thompson of Mississippi. They were sent to Montreal with drafts for \$1 million in gold (about \$2.2. million in United States greenbacks) for the purpose of carrying out duties "already entrusted" , but not specified in writing, and "such instructions as you have received from me (i.e. Davis) verbally , in such manner as shall seem most likely to conduce the furtherance of the interests of the Confederate States of America".

Now bear in mind that these were Davis's men, following his instructions and being financed by him, and that everything they did, therefore, must have been known to Davis and must have been approved by Davis. It is inconceivable that they would have carried out activities that had not been approved by Davis, that were unknown to Davis or that were contrary to Davis's wishes. With that in mind, consider the testimony of one Godfrey Joseph Hyams, who testified, under oath, at the trial of the conspirators, that he had been hired by Dr. Luke Pryor Blackburn, another member of the Canadian Cabinet, for the purpose of "disposing" (i.e. selling) of clothing which had been "infected" with yellow fever, small pox and other contagious diseases, throughout the North, for the purpose of spreading pestilence in the North. The clothing had been obtained by Blackburn from Bermuda, where there had been a yellow fever epidemic, and had been transported to the United States, and was being stored in trunks. Blackburn, of course, despite being a doctor, did not know that yellow fever could not be spread by clothing, but that is beside the point. Part of this diabolical scheme involved sending "infected" shirts to the Executive Mansion as a gift to Lincoln from an anonymous benefactor. Most significantly, Hyams testified that he not only met repeatedly with Blackburn, for the purpose (Blackburn, incidentally, promised him at least \$100,000 for his services, and possibly "ten times that amount"), but also with Holcombe, Clay and Thompson, who promised him that another reward for his services would be that he would become a "gentleman for the future instead of a working-man and a mechanic". (Hyams said he also met with Bennett H. Young, leader of the Confederate raid on St. Albans, but this is not relevant.) According to Hyams, the men "seemed perfectly to understand the business in which I had been engaged". It was Thompson who paid him (though not much) and it was Thompson who told him that he had met with Blackburn, that he had discussed the matter with him and that he had received his authority to pay Hyams. Hyams also stated that Blackburn and Holcombe had told him that the Confederate government had appropriated \$200,000 for the purpose of carrying out the scheme. Needless to say, Hyams never received more than a small percentage of the compensation that had been promised him, despite having distributed some of the clothing, though he does say that he had a further meeting with Holcombe and Clay before he put the matter behind him. Hyams adds that he afterwards heard that the valise that contained the "infected" shirts "had been sent to the President". Hyams's testimony was never impeached.

If there are still those who are disposed to argue that it is possible that Davis knew nothing about the yellow fever plot and, specifically, the plan to assassinate Lincoln with "infected" shirts, consider that there is a letter in existence, which survived the flames, from Confederate Secret Service agent Kensey Johns Stewart (also a member of the Canadian Cabinet) to Jefferson Davis, in which Stewart mentions Hyams and the yellow fever plot and pleads with Davis to desist from the same on the grounds that it could not possibly find favor with God. A copy of the letter is set forth below.

with Davis to desist from the same on the grounds that it could not possibly find favor with God. A copy of the letter is set forth below.

Couple these facts with the fact that when John Surratt was asked by fellow Papal Zouave Henri Beaumont de Ste. Marie, in Italy, whether or not Davis had had anything to do with Lincoln's assassination, Surratt answered: "I am not going to tell you", which, of course, is as good as an affirmative answer, and what conclusion shall we draw? Is there anyone who still believes that Davis, and therefore Benjamin, his right hand, were not complicit in Lincoln's assassination. If so, I would like to hear why.

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To His Excellency

Jefferson Davis President C.S.A.

Toronto C. W.,

Dec. 12th '64

Box 660

Dear Sir:

As I conceive that the reasons for fulfilling the work undertaken still exist and are even more cogent, I wish to advise you notwithstanding the miserable failures of many late enthusiasts, and the vigilance and anxiety occasioned thereby, our own plans can be carried out upon two conditions: 1st sufficient time: 2nd that you will put a stop to all these comparatively useless annoyances which do not produce a desire for peace so much as a thirst for revenge. Your Excellency is aware that when a negro is slightly chastened, he hates you, but a just and thorough whipping humbles him. I am aware that temporary vigilance and consequently diversion of forces from other plans, has been occasioned; but not only is this temporary, but it tends to increase the centralization of power in the hands of our enemy, who thus finds us playing into his hands, indeed, when I have seen the character of agents employed, and the impious nature of their work, I have taken the liberty of saying that you have not ordered, and will not endorse the work of these men. For I cannot regard you as capable of expecting the blessing of God upon, or being personally associated with instruments & or plans such as I described below. As our country has been and is entirely dependent upon God, we cannot afford to displease him. Therefore, it cannot be our policy to employ wicked men to destroy the persons & property of private citizens, by inhumane & cruel acts. I name only one. \$100.00 of public money has been paid here to one "Hyams", a shoemaker, for services rendered, by conveying & causing to be sold in the city of Washington at auction, boxes of small-pox clothing. As I mean this not for injury of the well meaning party who planned it, nor of the person who paid the money, I wish no other notice taken of it, than that such things be discouraged. There can be no doubt of the causes of the failure of such plans. It is only a matter of surprise that, God does not forsake us and our cause when we are associated with such misguided friends.

I regard it as a kind and merciful Providence that has delayed my own actions by causing the check for \$120,000 (?) I sent by the signal corps to fall into the enemy's hands, for otherwise I should have been endangered by these abortive attempts of others. Col. F has acquired much information and adopted excellent plans, but God has been against him. Everything has failed by Divine intervention. If God is against me, I will not succeed. But until you withdraw from me the confidence you have seen fit to repose in me, or I see some other reasons than such as now exist, for discouragement, I must continue to urge upon you the importance of measures which must induce an early peace, and to promise that by God's help I will do the work thoroughly and as speedily as practicable.

It is impossible for Col. F to sit here in Toronto & manage such difficult things in the states. He has truly said to me nothing is going on ___?___. He is a true man, & a shrewd one. But he does not see the cause of these failures. If you can find someone better suited to the work, send him out (?). If not, I will do it by God's help. I enclose my memo, in detail, upon other issues than those agreed on. May God hand down your administration to the future, , with its past and present, lights untarnished, as the glory of a noble but suffering people.

Truly yours & c

A true copy)

B. Wells)

A. P. Tasker)

(Marginal note): Original filed with Jefferson Davis papers and letters from K. J. Stewart

Nov & Dec /68 (?)

rel to ___?___ from abroad

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JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT MEETING

March 14, 2018

Program: To the Bitter End-the Surrender of the Confederacy

Speaker: Robert "Bert" Dunkerly

Speaker: Drinks @ 6pm, Dinner @ 6:40 Judson Manor

East 107th St & Chester

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Lee's Daughters (part 5 of 6) by David A. Carrino

Mildred Childe Lee



Mildred Childe Lee, who was born on February 10, 1846, was the fourth daughter and the seventh and youngest child of Robert E. and Mrs. Lee. Mildred was named after Robert E. Lee's younger sister, Catherine Mildred (Lee) Childe. At a young age, Mildred displayed such a lively and effervescent personality that Lee nicknamed her Precious Life. Even when Mildred became an adult, Lee referred to Mildred in his letters as Precious Life or sometimes simply as Life. Like her older sisters, Mildred was born at Arlington. At the time of her birth, Lee was stationed at Fort Hamilton in New York City, and he remained there after Mrs. Lee and the children went to Arlington for Mildred's birth. In a letter that Lee sent to his wife shortly after the family left Fort

Hamilton, he wrote about his feelings of separation. "I am very solitary, & my only company is my dog & cats." Lee did not see his youngest child until several months later when he went to Arlington to rejoin his family. Lee had only a few days to spend with the family's most recent addition before he departed for Mexico and his first experience in combat.

Mildred's first two years of life were spent at Arlington, while her father was serving in the Mexican-American War. After Lee returned from Mexico, he was assigned to oversee renovations of the defenses in Baltimore. He left for his new assignment without his family, who remained at Arlington and then joined him in late 1849 when Mildred was three years old. In a letter to a friend that was written shortly after Mildred's third birthday, Mrs. Lee said that her youngest daughter had "become quite a little woman" and "sings a great many songs." Mrs. Lee jokingly described young Mildred as "a most finished coquette." During the summer of 1850, Mrs. Lee's mother visited Baltimore, and both women spent the summer with the two youngest children, Rob and Mildred, while the older children lived elsewhere. After enduring the heat and humidity of a Baltimore summer, Mrs. Lee decided that she would go to Arlington with the children for the following summer. This left Lee by himself until September, when Mrs. Lee, Mary, Rob, and Mildred returned. Eldest son, Custis, was a cadet at West Point, Rooney stayed in Virginia to attend school, and Annie and Agnes remained at Arlington with Mrs. Lee's parents and were schooled by their tutor. Mildred and Rob contracted whooping cough, but recovered in time for the trip to Arlington for the family's Christmas celebration. Mildred received a doll as a Christmas present, which was a welcome gift because her current doll was in a sad state of disrepair.

Soon after the return to Baltimore in early 1852, Mildred and Rob contracted measles. Within a short time after their recovery, Lee received a new assignment as superintendent of West Point. Lee was not enthusiastic about this, in part because he felt that he was not qualified for the position, and also because he felt that his work on the Baltimore defenses could be completed in another year and he wanted to see the project through. But the decision was out of Lee's hands, and the family returned to Arlington to make preparations for Lee's new position. After a short stay at Arlington, Lee went to West Point, and a few weeks later Mrs. Lee, Mary, Rooney, Rob, and Mildred joined him, while Annie and Agnes continued to live at Arlington with Mrs. Lee's parents. Both Mary and Rooney soon left West Point to attend school, Mary at a school near New York City and Rooney in the city. Mildred and Rob, ages six and nine, respectively, lived with the family at West Point and attended the post school.

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After living the first three years of her life at Arlington, Mildred spent the next five years of her young life, two in Baltimore and three at West Point, away from her Arlington home, except for short stays there in the summer and at Christmas. Beginning in the spring of 1855, Mildred made Arlington her home until the family was forced to leave in 1861. During the first year of this period, Mildred and also Rob were schooled by their older sister, Mary, the task for which Lee had advised his eldest daughter to "exert her self control & ingenuity" in order to avoid making the instruction overly burdensome for her younger siblings. Regarding the schooling of Mildred and Rob, Lee also advised his eldest daughter, "Any one can *insist*, but the wise alone know how to desist." Sometime later Lee may have come to feel that Mary was not wise enough to know where to draw the line between insistence and desistance. This was made evident in a letter that Lee sent to Mildred a few years later, in which Lee not only pointed out that Mildred had misspelled "Satturday" in her letter to him, but also intimated that Mary had not been sufficiently firm in her schooling of Mildred.

In January 1857, while Lee was still in Texas, Mildred, who was one month shy of 11 years old, received another letter from her father, in which he advised his youngest daughter with the kind of counsel that is not unexpected from the man whose life was lived with an unwavering devotion to duty. Lee wrote to Mildred, "Try hard to be a truly good, as well as wise girl, & rigidly obey your parents & tutors. I hope you will be particularly attentive to your Mother. Now that she is in pain & trouble, it is more than ever your duty to assist & serve her, & on no account to add to her distress." As Mildred's future life demonstrated, she took these words to heart, much to the detriment of her later years. In a letter that Lee sent to Mildred a couple of months later, he again displayed his attitude toward conscientiousness and suggested that his youngest daughter adopt a similar attitude. Writing about Mildred's new piano teacher, Lee advised his daughter that "you will like neither the teacher or the subject unless you practice diligently & learn to play, *well*.... We are always *fond* of what we *do well*." Clearly, Lee was trying to instill in Mildred the same sense of conscientiousness and responsibility that were a principal part of his customary behavior.

Perhaps these strong admonishments had been sent to Mildred because of an interest that she had developed a few months before this, an interest toward which her father was decidedly unenthusiastic. Mildred's older sister, Agnes, described Mildred's new interest in a letter to a friend, in which Agnes also noted that her ten-year-old sister no longer saw herself as the little girl whom Agnes and Annie had left at Arlington when they departed for their first year at the Virginia Female Institute. In that letter, which Agnes wrote during the summer of 1856, Agnes said of her younger sister, "Miss Milly is *quite* a young lady in her *own* estimation." It is not at all surprising that a girl, who had reached the age of ten and who had three older sisters to emulate, no longer considered herself a little girl, but a young lady. To add to her image as a young lady, and perhaps fostering that image, Mildred had taken to, in Agnes' words, "reading *love* tales." In other words, young Mildred had become engrossed in romance novels. In a letter to his wife, Lee voiced his disapproval of his youngest child's pastime. Lee disparaged such books as portraying "beauty more charming than nature" and of causing the readers "to sigh after that which has no reality, to despise the little good that is granted us in this world & to expect more than is given." Lee showed in these disdainful comments that he had no use for fanciful distractions from the pragmatic reality that he believed should occupy his entire dutiful attention and, moreover, that he felt that such distractions are dangerous in that they lead a person to become dissatisfied with the tangible things that comprise real life. Lee's comments jibe with his statements in the letter that he sent to his eldest daughter, Mary, at the first Christmas of the Civil War, in which Lee included some violets as a present to Mary.

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Lee's description of those violets, their "rare beauty and sweetness, which could not be fabricated by the expenditure of a world of money," even though the violets, themselves, possessed no monetary value, is a clear indication of Lee's deep appreciation of "how God provides for our pleasure" within the real world without the need "to sigh after that which has no reality." Lee's disdain for Mildred's infatuation with romance novels was simply concern that Mildred remain grounded in and devoted to only that which would lead her to a total commitment to becoming the most accomplished person that she was capable of becoming. This is what Lee always demanded of himself, and he saw Mildred's interest in romance novels as diverting her attention away from this singular and most important personal cause. Regrettably for both father and daughter, Mildred, later in her life, became focused on both Lee and the Lee image, and this diminished not only Mildred's accomplishments, but also Mildred's contentedness.

Life at Arlington was not all stern guidance for Mildred during her youth there. When Mildred was well into her adulthood, she wrote fondly about her childhood at Arlington and of "my favorite hiding place," which was a "wooden bench, almost hidden by a drooping branch of seringa." When Mildred was at the age at which she became interested in romance novels, she had also become old enough to be a playmate with her older sisters, Annie and Agnes, and this made her time at Arlington even more enjoyable. Like the rest of the family, Mildred grieved when her grandfather, G.W.P. Custis, died in October 1857, and she was happy when her father returned home from Texas as executor of G.W.P. Custis' will. But Mildred's serene life of home-schooling, playing with her sisters, and reading romance novels came to an end several months after Lee returned to Texas early in 1860. Both Lee and Mrs. Lee felt that Mildred's education at the hands of her older sister was terribly inadequate. Lee expressed this opinion in a letter from Texas that he sent to his wife in June 1860, in which he wrote that his youngest child needed to attend a school where she would be able to "*learn & improve* herself." As a result, Mildred was enrolled in an all-girls boarding school in Winchester, Virginia. During the summer of 1860, the time when 14-year-old Mildred needed to prepare to leave for school, Mrs. Lee, Mary, and Agnes were all away from Arlington. Annie, who was at Arlington that summer, was tasked with preparing Mildred to leave for Winchester in the fall.

The school that Mildred attended, Mr. and Mrs. Charles L. Powell's Female Seminary, had been in existence for only four years when Mildred became a student there in the fall of 1860. Nevertheless, the school promised its students "harmonious development of all the faculties of the mind." In addition to overseeing the school's operation, the Powells also taught at the school. The music teacher, Professor E. Falk, taught piano and also "instruction in pure Musical Composition." French was taught by "a French lady," Mademoiselle Vaucher, and she employed a technique to reinforce the language instruction, specifically, to "converse with her pupils in her native language." Tuition, including room and board, was \$200 per session, and there were fees for Latin and drawing. There was also a laundry fee of \$1.25 per month, provided that the number of dresses that were washed per student was less than 12.

There is no record of whether or not Mildred and her classmates devised a derisive nickname for their school like the "Staunton Jail" moniker that Agnes wrote in her journal for the Virginia Female Institute, the boarding school from which she and Annie had graduated three years before Mildred left for school in Winchester. Although Mildred missed Arlington, she enjoyed her time at boarding school. One letter from her father, which she received shortly after she began her time at school, gives evidence of this. Lee wrote from Texas, "I am glad that you are comfortably located, & that the prospects before you are so pleasant." Lee went on in typical fashion to advise Mildred to learn to play the piano "well enough to take pleasure in your own performance...& to impart true

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pleasure to those who hear you....I want you to grow in size, strength, & wisdom, & at the same time to be an accomplished & useful woman." That Christmas Mildred returned to Arlington in spite of the cold winter and the turbulent times. Not all the members of the Lee family were able to travel to Arlington that Christmas, but all four daughters did so. While those family members who were at Arlington were enjoying their final Christmas holiday there, South Carolina made the decision which precipitated the war that resulted in the Christmas of 1860 being the last one that the Lee family spent at their home.

Mildred returned to Winchester in January and informed her mother that she had arrived safely. By the time Mildred received a reply from Mrs. Lee, three more states, Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama, had joined South Carolina as former members of the Union. In her letter to her youngest child, Mrs. Lee wrote about how despondent she was "viewing constantly the sad state of my country." Mrs. Lee also wrote about her feelings of helplessness regarding the situation. "We must be more earnest in supplication to that Almighty Power who alone can save us. That is all we poor women can do." Mrs. Lee's final statement expressed an intriguing point of view about her perception that women did not have the opportunity to influence the events of that time, and the only recourse for women in troubled times was to pray that a higher power would intervene to resolve the dire situations that were brought on by the other gender.

In April 1861 Mildred, who was 15 years old, was still at school when her father made the momentous decision that irretrievably altered the family's future. The following month Mildred was finishing her first year at boarding school. Because she was not at Arlington when the family received the news of the impending seizure by Union forces, Mildred was not involved in the effort to remove the family's belongings, and she did not experience the firsthand sense of loss that accompanied the departure from Arlington. It was during this time that Mildred received the stern letter from her mother, in which Mrs. Lee chastised her daughter for complaining about her need for more clothes at a time when "her home (was) in danger of being trampled over by a lawless foe." In late June, Mildred, who by this time had joined her mother in the place to which Mrs. Lee had moved from Arlington, received a more pleasant and very heartfelt letter from Lee, in which he urged his daughter to continue her studies, however that had to be done within the present circumstances. In that letter, which opened with the greeting "My Precious Life," Lee wrote, "You have finished your first year at school, & I hope have derived much benefit in every way. Whether you will be able to resume your studies or when, no one can now say. I am glad that you have had even a partial opportunity to improve yourself, & what ever may happen, hope that you will not consider your education, which has hardly been begun, completed. But that you will continue your studies, alone if necessary, & commence with them a system of reading which will be very beneficial....These are calamitous times, & we must conform to them & make the most of the opportunities afforded us." Lee's warning, which applied not just to Mildred, but to all people in the fractured country, was that even with a war going on, everyone, as much as was possible, had to find a way to continue the important pursuits that did not pertain to the war. Lee ended his letter to Mildred by writing, "Kiss your mother for me & believe me always your affectionate father."

Before Mildred left Winchester, she packed her books for storage there in the event she was able to return for her second year of school. Mildred also had her first wartime experiences as Confederate troops passed through Winchester, and the town's residents cheered the troops on their way to the battles that were expected to win independence for the Confederacy. But it was in July 1861 that Mildred experienced a far less festive feature of war, the part of war which most clearly and gruesomely conveys the true cost of combat. The place at which

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Mildred, her mother, and her older sister, Mary, were staying close to the location of the first battle of Bull Run. Mildred, Mrs. Lee, and Mary were able to hear some of the sounds of the battle, and they were happy to learn that the Confederates were victorious. When a hospital was set up at an estate near to where the Lee women were staying, Mildred and Mary joined many other women in serving as nurses for the wounded, and they saw with their own eyes the kind of suffering that led Mary to say late in her life that "war is a terrible alternative, and should be the very last." Another volunteer nurse at the hospital wrote after the war that she recalled Mildred being asked if anyone from her family was in the war. According to this nurse, Mildred simply replied that her father was in the war, but another volunteer said what Mildred did not say, that "her father is General Lee."

Shortly after the first battle of Bull Run, Lee was sent from Richmond to northwestern Virginia to coordinate the Confederate forces there that were opposing the Union invasion into what was to become West Virginia. In a letter to his wife, Lee wrote that he rode part of the way to his new assignment along a road that he had traveled more than 20 years earlier on his way to Arlington from St. Louis, where, in a time that no longer seemed to have existed, Lee had supervised improvements to the harbor with his assistant, Montgomery Meigs. Lee wrote of his trek along that road to his assignment in western Virginia, "If any one had then told me that the next time I travelled that road would have been on my present errand, I should have supposed him insane." In September 1861, the month after Lee sent this letter, Mildred returned to boarding school in Winchester. Two months later, after Lee's mission in northwestern Virginia had ended in failure and he had been sent on a new assignment, Mildred received a letter from her father, who again urged her to "labour at your books & gain knowledge & wisdom." Lee's efforts in northwestern Virginia had ended in failure in part due to infighting among the Confederate officers, in part due to the inability of the inexperienced Confederate soldiers to execute Lee's intricate battle plans, and in part due to a lack of cooperation by the weather. But Lee informed Mildred that he had gained something while he was on his failed assignment. He acquired something that has become inseparably associated with him, particularly to those who are unfamiliar with pre-Civil War Robert E. Lee: "a beautiful white beard." Lee wrote about the recent addition to his face, "It is much admired. At least, much remarked on." Lee also told Mildred that he had arrived at his new assignment in the southeastern Confederacy to oversee reinforcement of the coastal defenses, and he disconsolately characterized his new assignment as, "Another forlorn hope expedition. Worse than western Virginia." At this early point in the war, Lee was dissatisfied with his role as a roving military advisor to President Davis and felt unfulfilled by it. It was not until seven months later, when Lee assumed command of an army, that he was not only able to contribute effectively to the Confederate war effort, but also to feel that he was making important contributions to the war effort.



At Christmastime of Mildred's second year at school, she was unable to join the family for the holiday. She was understandably disappointed about this, but this was something that Lee had told Mildred in a letter that she had to do in order to "conform to" the "calamitous times" in which they were living. Two months later Mildred was cheered by a letter from her father for her 16th birthday. Lee wrote to his youngest child, "Are you really sweet sixteen? That is charming, and I want to see you more than ever. But when that will be, my darling child, I have no idea. I hope, after the war is over, we may again all be united, and I may have some pleasant years with my dear children, that they may cheer the remnant of my days." Most likely Lee's dream to have the remnant of his days cheered by his children meant a post-war life together at Arlington.

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But future events in the Civil War made clear that that was never to be. Lee went on in his letter to Mildred with a typical comment about her education and with an expression of his affection for her. "I am very glad to hear that you are progressing so well in your studies, and that your reports are so favorable....I love you just as much as ever, and you know how great a love that is." Shortly after Mildred's 16th birthday in February, her entire school in Winchester was dismissed before the end of the term. With Union troops invading the Shenandoah Valley, the schoolmaster was worried about the safety of the students. As a result, all of the students were sent home, although Mildred had no home to go to, since Arlington had been taken from the Lee family. Mildred managed to travel to White House plantation, where her mother and her sister, Annie, were residing. Shortly thereafter, Mildred, along with her mother and Annie, became trapped behind the slowly advancing Army of the Potomac. Not long after that, Mildred's father became commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, and several days later Mildred, Mrs. Lee, and Annie were given passage through the lines and entered Richmond.

For Mildred and her mother and sisters, the rest of the spring and summer of 1862 was occupied with fretting about the possibility of Richmond's capture by the massive Union army that was just outside the Confederate capital and then watching the Confederate army that was under the command of their father and husband first throw back the Union army from the vicinity of Richmond and then off the York-James Peninsula, and then follow this with another triumph on the same battlefield that had produced the casualties whom Mildred nursed over a year earlier. Later in the summer Annie, Agnes, and Mildred traveled to Jones Springs in North Carolina for the mineral spring there. In September Mildred decided to enroll at St. Mary's Academy in Raleigh. Returning to school in Winchester was no longer an option for Mildred because of the military situation in Virginia. Mildred was not enthusiastic about St. Mary's, in part because she did not know anyone who attended that school and in part because the school was much larger than the school that she had attended in Winchester, whose smaller size more comfortably fit Mildred's preferences. However, the students at St. Mary's were excited about the daughter of General Lee becoming a student at their school, although the matron of one of the school's dormitories worked to squelch the perceived celebrity of the incoming student by telling the current students that their new classmate was "no more than an ordinary mortal like the rest of us."

It was not long after the start of the school session that Mildred became profoundly unhappy with her new school. The living arrangements consisted of a large dormitory room for ten students. Each student had a small alcove on the room's perimeter. In each alcove were a shelf to accommodate a bowl and pitcher for bathing, a small closet, and only enough room for the student's trunk. Ten beds were in the middle of the room and separated from the alcoves by curtains. There were classes in Biblical history, music, art, Latin, and French, and the daily routine consisted of breakfast, walking for an hour, morning classes, midday dinner, afternoon classes, tea, evening study, and bed at 10:00 p.m. In letters that Mildred sent to Agnes, she wrote about her feelings of loneliness and unhappiness. Then, a month into Mildred's first term at St. Mary's came the horrific news in a letter from Agnes about the death of their sister, Annie, the terrible loss about which Agnes expressed her disbelief with the words "I cannot realize it." Grief-stricken, miserable, and homesick, Mildred struggled through the first months of school and then requested permission from her parents to join the family in Virginia for Christmas. But after his wife and two of his daughters, including Mildred, had already been caught behind enemy lines during McClellan's advance up the York-James Peninsula, Lee was not about to risk it happening again, and he was adamant that Mildred's Christmas excursion was not to be allowed. As a result, Mildred's Christmas of 1862, the Christmas when Agnes had her secluded meeting with Orton Williams, was spent in North Carolina. In spite of Lee's attempt to avert another episode of a daughter being trapped behind Union lines, Lee's daughter Mary,

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who was staying at an estate on the Potomac River during the winter of 1862, found herself in just this situation when the Army of the Potomac's latest commander, Ambrose Burnside, moved that army toward Fredericksburg.

Mildred felt better about her situation during the spring term, perhaps because she had become acclimated to St. Mary's and made friends there. Her parents were encouraged about the positive reports that they received regarding Mildred's studies. In a letter to his wife dated March 27, 1863, Lee expressed gratification about a recent area of study in which Mildred was engaged, because he had likewise enjoyed it. "I...hope she will derive the pleasure I enjoyed in the study of Astronomy. I think it afforded me more pleasure than any other branch of study." In another letter to his wife a couple of weeks later, Lee noted that Mildred's most recent grade report was very good, and he commented on the wide array of subjects that she was studying. "I hope she may understand them all." In a third letter to Mrs. Lee dated May 31, 1863, Lee mentioned his desire to see Mildred. "I should indeed like very much to see Mildred on her return from school, both for the pleasure it would give me, & also that I might better form an opinion as to her future course." It is remarkable that Lee expressed a desire to meet with Mildred at this time in order to help plan her "future course," because not only was this letter written during the early stages of the summer campaign, it was written in the aftermath of the death of Stonewall Jackson, when Lee was planning the "future course" of his army after it had been deprived of Lee's most able subordinate. In spite of the vast amount of thought and attention that Lee must have realized he needed to expend for the task of planning the "future course" of his army without Jackson's services, and the vast amount of time and effort needed to oversee the execution of that "future course," Lee nevertheless wanted to meet with Mildred in order to "form an opinion" regarding his daughter's "future course," even though there was a war going on, and any "future course" for Mildred was acutely clouded by the uncertainties of that war. While it may seem to those who study the Civil War that the war, itself, occupied the entire being of those who fought in it, Lee's letters reveal that, while the war was foremost for those who were engaged in the war, there were other concerns that occupied the attention of the war's combatants. Sadly, more than 600,000 of those who were engaged in the war never had the opportunity to become closely involved in those other concerns. As for Mildred's immediate future in late spring of 1863, after the end of the school session, she went to Richmond to live with her mother and sisters, and the meeting with her father to plan her "future course" never took place.

Mildred's stay in Richmond was brief, because she made the decision to return to St. Mary's for school, and classes began near the end of July. Mildred's trip back to Raleigh for her second session at St. Mary's occurred not long after her father brought his defeated army back to Virginia following the disastrous venture into Pennsylvania. Near the end of July, Lee sent a letter to Mildred in which he told her of his disappointment that he was not able to see her during the summer, and he also wrote, "I hope you will be able to learn a great deal this year & by the next that there will be peace over the land & that we shall all be together." Lee's wish for peace and for a reunion with his family did not occur in the next year as he hoped, and when peace and a reunion with his family did occur almost two years after this letter was written, the peace and reunion happened under circumstances that were quite unfavorable for Lee. A subsequent letter that Lee sent to Mildred, which is dated September 10, 1863, included a great deal of fatherly advice. To encourage Mildred to continue her studies even in the face of the ongoing war, Lee wrote that "the more you know, the more you find there is to know in this grand & beautiful world."

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It is only the ignorant who suppose themselves omniscient." Lee added comments that embody his own attitude toward responsible behavior. "The struggle which you describe you experience between doing what you ought & what you desire, is common to all. You have only always to do what is right. It will become easier by practice, & you will always enjoy in the midst of your trials, the pleasure of an approving conscience." This is the kind of advice that parents give to their children, and Lee's words to Mildred about the "pleasure of an approving conscience" echo the words that Lee said to the men of the Army of Northern Virginia in his farewell order to them exactly 19 months later on the day after Lee's meeting with Ulysses Grant in the McLean House. "You will take with you the satisfaction that proceeds from the consciousness of duty faithfully performed."

Mildred finished the fall term at St. Mary's, but decided not to return to the school in 1864. She went to Richmond shortly before Christmas of 1863 and lived there with her mother, Mary, and Agnes for the remainder of the Civil War. Like the rest of the Lee women, Mildred worked at knitting clothing for Confederate troops, watched as the grueling war ground the Confederacy into defeat, agonized while the Richmond fires burned toward their home, and saw Union troops enter the Confederate capital. Mildred, along with her mother and sisters, welcomed her vanquished father when his participation in the war ended and he arrived at the house where they had stayed for the previous 15 months. During the post-war time that the Lee family lived in Richmond, Mildred often accompanied her father on long walks in the devastated city. In June Lee, Mrs. Lee, Mildred, Mary, Agnes, and Custis moved from Richmond to Derwent, the cottage on the James River that had been offered to them as a residence. It was here that Mildred nursed Agnes back to health after Agnes contracted typhoid fever, the disease that had claimed the life of their sister, Annie. Because of Agnes' illness, Mrs. Lee's infirmity, Mary's departure, and Mildred's capacity and willingness to contribute greatly to the efforts needed to live at Derwent, Lee called Mildred his "only reliance and support" during this time. Thus began for Mildred her role in the family as a provider of household service. Mildred held this role for almost all of the rest of her life, and it caused her to feel increasingly unhappy and unfulfilled. It was during the time at Derwent that Mildred began a steady decline into despondency, if not outright depression. Shortly after the family's arrival at Derwent, Mildred wrote in a letter to a friend, "I am sometimes lonely here, but that is not often the case. I read almost all day long." In that same letter, Mildred gave her friend the melancholy advice to "enjoy yourself while you can. When you get *my age*, when your heart and hopes have been withered as mine have been; when where your heart once *was*, *there* remains only a *heap of ashes*, *then*, & *not till then*, will you believe that life is all 'vanity and vexation of spirit.' " Mildred was only 19 years old when she wrote those gloomy words, but after all she had lost, she felt that she had endured much more distress than should have been crammed into her short life.



The move to Lexington, after Lee became president of Washington College, did not alter Mildred's feelings of isolation and loneliness. A few months after Mildred moved to Lexington, she wrote in a letter to a friend, "I believe it was you who told me Lexington was such a delightful place. I disagree with you in toto. I am dreadfully lonely, know no one well in the whole town." Mary was away for much of the time, and Mildred had only Agnes for close companionship. Moreover, Mildred's and Agnes' household and social responsibilities in the president's house occupied much of their time. However, there were some enjoyable experiences for Mildred. Mildred frequently went on horseback rides with her father, who rode Traveller. In the summer of 1869, Lee and Mildred went for a three-day excursion to the Peaks of Otter, a group of mountains 35 miles from Lexington, and had a pleasant

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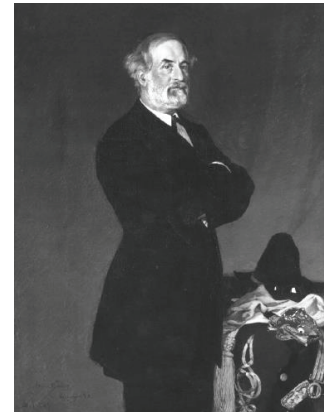
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and peaceful time riding on horseback through the mountains. An especially enjoyable event for the Lee family was the visit by renowned Swiss painter Frank Buchser. Buchser was sent to the U.S. in 1866 by the Swiss government to do a prodigious painting of the American Civil War to display in the Swiss Parliament. Buchser never did the painting that he was commissioned to do, but during his five years in the U.S. he painted portraits of Andrew Johnson and William Tecumseh Sherman. Buchser traveled to Lexington in September 1869 to do a portrait of Robert E. Lee, and the staid, dignified Lee surprisingly took a liking to the free-spirited, flamboyant Buchser, which perhaps was a case of opposites attracting. Mary, Agnes, and Mildred, who were all living with their parents at that time, thoroughly enjoyed the charming Swiss painter, whose talents included playing the piano and singing in six languages. Buchser's initial idea for the portrait was for Lee to pose in his Confederate uniform, but Lee refused to pose in this way, because he insisted that he was no longer a soldier. Lee did agree to pose with his uniform on a table behind him, and this portrait is the last that was done of Lee during his life. (A brief description of Buchser's life is in the history brief of February 2012, which is archived on the web site of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable (http://www.clevelandcivilwarroundtable.com/articles/comment/history_briefs12.htm).)

Even though there were some enjoyable times for Mildred in Lexington, the drudgery her routine and tedious life no doubt came to wear on her, and it had to be difficult for Mildred to see her young adulthood slipping away with no prospects for an independent life. These feelings were likely reinforced as Mildred saw how her older sister, Mary, came and went as she pleased.

Mildred's situation began to change drastically five years after her move to Lexington. It started with the death of her father on October 12, 1870. Mildred recorded years later that immediately after Lee died, Mrs. Lee, perhaps overcome by grief, made a harsh request of Mildred by beseeching her daughter to "be kind to me now!" as if Mildred, who had already done so much for her family, needed to be reminded to do that and had not done that in the past. Mildred also recorded her feelings about her mother's request. "Oh my heart aches at the memory of those words—& the need for them." The Lees' eldest son, Custis, was named to succeed his father as the college's president. Custis, who remained unmarried his whole life, had no wife or children to live with him in the president's house, which allowed Mrs. Lee, Agnes, and Mildred to continue to reside there. Three years after Lee's death, Mildred lost her mother and her sister, Agnes, within the span of less than a month. In addition to the grief that she felt, Mildred was also bitter toward Mary, who was in Rome at the time that Agnes and Mrs. Lee died. As a result, Mary was not in Lexington to share in the grief that Mildred and Custis were enduring or to be a part of the difficult task of sorting through Agnes' and Mrs. Lee's belongings. Mildred wrote to one of her cousins, "Mary you know is still abroad, and Custis and I have to bear our sorrow alone—and together—in a house once so happy, but now so desolate." A few months after the deaths of Agnes and Mrs. Lee, Mildred wrote, "The winter has glided by, teaching me to bear the stillness and coldness of my present life." Mildred also wrote about living with Custis that winter in an "emptied silent house, where every room echoed with dead voices." Mildred's most poignant expression of the dreary loneliness that she experienced at this time came later in her life in a letter to a friend, in which she wrote about the bleak feelings of emptiness "for those who tread the pathways of life *alone*."

After the deaths of Agnes and Mrs. Lee, both of whom Mildred had cared for in their failing health for a long time, Mildred seemed to lose her sense of purpose. Probably this was partly because nurturing and family were



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important aspects of Mildred's persona, in contrast to Mildred's sister, Mary, who was far more adventurous and independent, so that her relentless desire to visit new places gave her a sense of purpose. Any emptiness that may have entered Mary's life after the deaths of Agnes and Mrs. Lee was amply filled by her travels, while the emptiness that these deaths caused for Mildred was profound and pervasive. Mildred, who was 27 when Agnes and Mrs. Lee died, spent most of the next 24 years after their deaths either living with Custis in the president's house in Lexington or with her brother, Rob, in his residence at Romancoke, the Custis property that Rob had inherited. In Lexington, Mildred assisted the unmarried Custis as hostess during university functions. Although she did not particularly enjoy this role, she felt duty-bound to help her brother, and in spite of her unhappiness, she projected an air of cheerfulness. Mildred found her time at Romancoke much more enjoyable. Rob married after the Civil War, and he and his wife had two children, about whom Mildred wrote in a letter, "My two precious nieces occupied my entire time and heart." In a letter to a friend about her visits to Romancoke, Mildred wrote, "I was very well & very happy at Romancoke....It is always a comfort to be with Rob, who is so good to me." As much as Mildred enjoyed the time with Rob and his family, her time at Romancoke with them had to be a reminder to Mildred that she had no husband or children of her own. In fact, in a letter to a friend, Mildred wrote, "Oh, celibacy, where are the charms!" A photograph of Mildred taken during her adulthood at Lexington shows a somber, careworn face that conveys an impression of longing for all that she gave up in order to be dutiful to her family's needs. In all likelihood, Mildred remained in the unsatisfying life that she lived because she allowed herself to be entrapped in the inertia of her day-to-day existence, while the chance of finding the life that she wanted passed her by. From the perspective of the present, it seems appropriate to describe the lengthy period of Mildred's life that she spent in Lexington with a line from the song "Almost Gone," which was recorded by the rock group the Eagles: "So often times it happens that we live our lives in chains, and we never even know we have the key." It was a sad consequence of the Civil War that the joyful, effervescent child who Mildred was went on to live a despondent, unfulfilled adulthood.

During this period of her life, Mildred was able to do some traveling abroad. She witnessed Queen Victoria's jubilee and climbed the Great Pyramid of Egypt "with the assistance of 4 Arabs, who clutched & pinched me in every part of my body." But Mildred's travels did not lift her spirits, and, ironically, while she was abroad, she missed the life in Lexington that was doing so much to dampen her spirits. Mostly she missed the people in Lexington to whom she felt close. Once, when Mildred was in Venice, letters from home brought her joy, because those letters reminded her that "there are kind true hearts...who are thinking of me sometimes, & who care whether I live or die." But in spite of some moments of happiness, Mildred's mood was dominated by her feelings of emptiness. On one trip to Europe, she wrote to a friend, "I never in all the trials & sorrows of my life have suffered more than in the last 3 months—not so much physically—but in the feeling of loneliness, & helplessness." It is obvious from these words that Mildred felt that her life needed something, and she enunciated in another letter just what that need was: "the need of someone to take care of me." One of Mildred's trips to Europe included a particularly painful experience for her. When Mildred was in France on one of her trips, her older sister, Mary, traveled from England to meet with Mildred. After Agnes' death, Mildred rarely saw Mary, who was Mildred's only surviving sister, and the brief time they spent together in France was not pleasant for Mildred. Mildred wrote to a friend about her encounter with Mary, "You know she is not sympathetic with weakness or nervousness....I try to steel myself against her sharp words." It was in this letter that Mildred wrote that she felt that Mary "is always absorbed in self, first and foremost." Mildred and Mary differed in age by almost 11 years, and that difference alone was sufficient to prevent them from developing a close relationship. This age difference had led to Mary being put in charge of schooling Mildred when Mildred was very young, and this could understandably have caused their relationship not to be one of equals, but one of a superior and a subordinate, which may only

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have been reinforced by Mary's assertive personality. Further contributing to Mildred and Mary not having a close relationship was the strong difference in their personalities, as well as Mary's extreme penchant to travel and spend much time away from the family.

Late in 1896 Custis resigned as president of Washington and Lee University. For some time Custis was sorely disenchanted with his position as university president and felt that he was not effective in carrying out his duties. In fact, the incoming president considered Mildred more helpful in the transition to his assuming the presidency of the university. The university offered to let Custis and Mildred continue to reside in the president's house, but they refused. In a letter to a member of the board, Mildred explained that she and her brother were not "in want," and because of that "it would be impossible to accept so much." Mildred also noted that her father had refused to allow the president's house to become a possession of the Lee family, "& we should be guided by him." On July 29, 1897, after four months of sorting through and packing the belongings that she and Custis had accumulated during more than 30 years of living in the president's house, Mildred, who was 51 years old at the time, left the president's house and left behind the existence that had taken so much from her life. For the next several years Mildred lived at Romancoke in the spring and winter and went to the mountains in the summer. Eventually this happier life lifted Mildred emotionally, and she began to feel much better about herself.

In the spring of 1905, Mildred traveled to New Orleans for Mardi Gras. Many Confederate veterans and many alumni of Washington and Lee University lived in New Orleans, which caused Mildred to remain in that city for a few weeks for numerous visits. With all of the happy activities associated with visiting so many people, Mildred's trip to the Crescent City was very enjoyable for her, and many who visited with Mildred commented on how happy she appeared to be. When one of the visits by some former Confederate soldiers was coming to an end, and Mildred's visitors were departing, Mildred remarked, to the delight of her visitors, that she was "seriously thinking of...spending the remainder of my days" in New Orleans. Mildred's words were sadly and unexpectedly prescient. On the next morning, Mildred did not come from her room for breakfast. When Mildred did not respond to her hostess' knock on the door, the hostess entered Mildred's room and found Mildred unconscious on the floor. Attempts to revive her were unsuccessful, and on the morning of March 27, 1905, the woman who was extraordinarily and self-destructively devoted to her family was pronounced dead. Mildred, the last member of the Lee family to be born in Arlington House, was 59 years old at the time that her Precious Life came to an end half a continent away from the home that had been taken from her family. The timing of Mildred's death seems tragically unfair, coming as it did when she was on the verge of moving on from her gloomy existence in Lexington to a happy life in New Orleans. The only consolation is that Mildred died with her mind's eye gazing at the blissful, carefree life in The Big Easy that she was about to begin. Mildred's body was carried by train to Lexington, and the youngest child of Robert E. and Mrs. Lee was laid to rest in the family crypt. As had happened for the funerals of Annie and Agnes, Mary was not present at Mildred's funeral, which made complete the triplet of absences for Mary at her sisters' funerals.

Based on Mildred's writings, it is clear that she came to regret the decisions she made in her adult life and to resent and perhaps envy that her older sister, Mary, was able to do what Mildred did not have within herself to do: detach herself from the family and live her life as she wanted. Foremost in Mildred's regrets was the fact that she never had a husband or children of her own. This is abundantly clear in some of the words she wrote. In a letter to a friend, Mildred wrote longingly, "Be thankful you have your own little home. Anything can be endured if you have that." Many years after Lee's death, Mildred wrote disconsolately in her journal, "Most women when they lose such a Father replace it by husband & children. I have had nothing—" None of Lee's daughters ever married, and of all Lee's daughter Mildred seemed to be the one who most regretted that this did not happen, although she was at least partly to blame for this. Mildred wrote admiringly about her father in her journal, "To me he seems a Hero—& all other men small in comparison." Perhaps Mildred's excessive admiration of her father came about in

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in part because of the Lee cult, which was beginning to bloom during Mildred's young adulthood and was in full bloom at the time that Mildred wrote those words. Nevertheless, it is clear from Mildred's words that the unrealistically elevated stature that Mildred gave to her father probably played a significant role in Mildred never realizing the life she so desperately craved, and she put this regret into words after the possibility for that life had passed by her. It may also be that with her words comparing Lee to other men, Mildred was trying to rationalize, to the world and to herself, the failure in her life that she most regretted.

When Mildred was 11 years old, she received a letter from her father, who was in Texas at that time, in which Lee told Mildred to be "particularly attentive" to her mother's needs, and by extension to her family's needs as well. Mildred lived almost her entire adult life in accordance with that appeal from her father, and it led to Mildred restricting her life in a way that both thwarted her own happiness and fulfillment and also prevented her from enjoying the life she wanted and becoming the woman she could have been. The great tragedy of Mildred's life is that she did not just *give of* herself to her family, she *gave* herself to her family, so much so that there was little left for Mildred. But, incongruously, Mildred's greatest contribution was her sacrifice of herself for her family. Most likely, Mildred would have lived her life differently, had she been given the opportunity to do so. Many years after Mildred's death, a graduate of Washington and Lee University wrote that Mildred was "one of the brightest, most stimulating & wittiest women I have ever met." Another student, who knew Mary, Agnes, and Mildred while he attended the university, wrote that of the three women, Mildred "has more good sense than all of them." These comments suggest that Mildred had demonstrable intellectual talents that she could have put to use in worthwhile and fulfilling pursuits, and perhaps Mildred's realization that she had so severely restricted herself contributed to her feelings of emptiness and unfulfillment. Many years into Mildred's time in Lexington, a friend of hers requested that she be allowed to write Mildred's biography. Mildred declined in a letter and wrote that she felt undeserving of a biography, because she had not "done anything that the world should wish to know my face or story!" Years into her despondent time in Lexington, Mildred wrote dolefully to a friend, "Time flies & life is soon over, & in the quiet of the grave we are soon forgotten." Mildred has not been forgotten, primarily for the same reason that her sisters have not been forgotten, that is, they were the daughters of Robert E. Lee. Although Mildred did not do anything that is historically momentous, her life was so engaging and endearing and has such a unique place in history that Mildred deserves to be remembered as more than just the daughter of Robert E. Lee, and she should not be left to be forgotten in the quiet of her grave. Contrary to her remark in reply to the request to write her biography, Mildred Lee lived a life that should make the world want to know her story.



The president's house at
Washington and Lee University
Mildred lived much of her
adult life in this house.