

1-1-1990

A Housewife's Perspective of the Occupation of Huntsville Part II

Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society

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Recommended Citation

Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society (1990) "A Housewife's Perspective of the Occupation of Huntsville Part II," *Huntsville Historical Review*. Vol. 17: No. 1, Article 5.

Available at: <https://louis.uah.edu/huntsville-historical-review/vol17/iss1/5>

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A HOUSEWIFE'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE OCCUPATION
OF HUNTSVILLE, PART II

[Editor's Note: This segment of the Diary of Mrs. W. D. Chaddick, whose husband was the minister of the local Cumberland Presbyterian Church and also a Colonel in the Confederate Army, covers the period from May 18 through July 10, 1862. A number of events which she reports are also described in the other articles which appear in this issue. In succeeding issues, additional installments of the diary will appear.]

May 18. One of the prisoners at the church has died. Major Moore of Cincinnati permitted the prisoners to follow him to the grave without a guard or any Blue Coat except himself. A large concourse of ladies and gentlemen also followed in the procession. Gen. Mitchell and some of his staff were observed to ride out where they could view it. He subsequently told Mrs. E____, who called upon him for business, that it was a political demonstration on the part of the ladies of Huntsville.

Col. Harris, with Lt. Rhinehart and others, were assigned this week under flag of truce to effect the exchange of prisoners. They proceeded at once to headquarters. Their noble bearing produced quite a sensation among the citizens. Col. Harris told Gen. Mitchell that he could exchange them till he was ready to cry "enough!" It appears that we took 160 prisoners at Bridgeport.

Mrs. Cowan called for me to accompany her on a visit to Gen. Mitchell. Consented very reluctantly. He received us very politely, and promised to assist Mrs. Cowan in going to Corinth on his way to Memphis. Talked politics to me and complained bitterly

of the vindictive feelings entertained by Southerners toward the North.

This week also brought another horse panic. Nearly all of the carriage horses about town were taken. They called to examine Old Henry, but pronounced him too clumsy for cavalry. A great many ladies called on the general to solicit their horses back again, which in most cases was granted.

May 25. There has been some fighting at Shelbyville, between our cavalry and the forces sent up from this place, which is reported to have been disastrous to the latter. Many wounded have been brought down, but we are in ignorance as to the facts. Certain it is that there were six burials in one evening, and two or three every day for several days.

May 26. Went out with Sue (mother of John R. Fordyce, Hot Springs Ark.) to spend the day with old Mrs. Lowry. My first visit to the country since the Federals came here. The 33rd Ohio Regiment, Col. Moore, were camped opposite. Some of the men informed Mr. Lowry that Capts. Byrd and Chase were at Decatur, and that Col. Moore had been sent down to receive them.

Came home in the evening and hastened over to the college. Major McDonald and Capt. Means had heard nothing of the report, but, while sitting in the yard in conversation, Fannie D_____ came by and said the train had come in and one of the cars had a white flag on it.

In a few minutes, they rode up and, in a moment, were surrounded by a crowd of women, all asking questions about Corinth and their friends. As usual, I was doomed to disappointment, they not having seen my "better half," he having been on outpost duty

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when they visited his camp. They left my letter for him but brought no sweet solace in return.

Came home and wrote him another long letter, not guarded in speech like the former, but indulged in freedom as in days of yore. Oh, what delightful sensations were experienced as we closed the seal! But the gentlemen were on parole of honor and afraid to take it, unless i gave promise for it to be read in case of necessity. So I entrusted it to one of their servants. Wonder if he ever got it. They all left for Corinth the next day.

June 2. This morning, we were startled by the booming of cannons on the public square and learned conflicting reports as to the object. Some said Richmond and Jeff Davis were taken. But it turned out to be for the death of Major General Smith of the Federal army, who was wounded in the Battle of Corinth (Shiloh) and has since died. There has been a report that Corinth is evacuated by our troops. If true, our confidence in Beauregard leads us to believe that is all right.

June 9. There has been some cheering news from Virginia the past week. Something of the kind is needed to revive our drooping spirits, prisoners as we are. We hear no news but such as comes from the enemy, and that is rarely ever favorable to our side.

There has been some fighting the past week between Gen. Mitchell's men and our cavalry in Jackson county, the result of which is unknown to us. The Federals brought down a great many wounded men, most of whom have since died.

The smallpox has broken out in the army here in the last few days, so that we are

literally visited by "pestilence and sword." The yoke is very galling. One day we are buoyed up with hope, and the next, sunk into a state of despair, fearing that the day of deliverance is a long way off.

We heard yesterday that the enemy had gained a great victory at or near Corinth, and that our army was nearly destroyed. We don't believe it, yet feel sad and fearful.

We heard a day or two since that the Federals had burned the house of Mrs. Dillard in Jackson. A story was also circulated to us of her son. A soldier asked for some meat, and he accompanied him to the smoke-house and cut it for him.

When the soldier said it was not enough, young Dillard then gave him the knife and told him to cut it for himself. After the soldier had put down his gun for that purpose, the son seized it and told the other that he was his prisoner. The soldier sent up a loud cry for help, Dillard threatening all the time to bayonet him if he did not hush.

A struggle ensued, in which the Federal was killed and Dillard taken prisoner and carried to Stevenson. Some whisky, deeply drugged with laudanum, was given the guards by Dillard's friends. They partook of it, and naturally enough fell into a deep sleep. Dillard escaped and joined Stern's cavalry, with which he is now doing service.

Dr. Sheffey vaccinated the children and servants yesterday. We are having strange weather for June--the nights and mornings are cold enough for fires, and the days exceedingly warm. Heard this morning that Mrs. Patterson was under arrest for attempting to convey improper news to her husband.

Gen. Mitchell seems to consider his sojourn among us as permanent. He desires to rent a furnished house, and is going to bring his family here.

Mrs. Cox Turchine has been at Athens with her husband, and when the Athens ladies called upon her, she declined returning their visits, upon the ground that she was among them with her husband as an enemy. Certainly smacks of good taste on her part. They are now in Fayetteville. It is said that she takes long rides in the country every day, accompanied by a guard of soldiers and mounted upon Connie Watkins' famous riding pony.

Mrs. Col. Norton is now at Athens, her husband being provost marshal. The Athens ladies called upon her and she is delighted with the place, contrasting it very unfavorably with Huntsville, where she received little or no attention. Col. Norton was a great favorite here, always acting the gentleman in his discussions with the citizens and, had he not been here as an enemy, he would have been most hospitably treated.

June 10. Certain it is the enemy have not yet discovered the whereabouts of Beauregard since the evacuation of Corinth. Gen. Mitchell, upon being interrogated, replied that he had probably "gone up a spout." We have had a great victory at Chickahominy, near Richmond, but learn with the deepest regret of the death of my old friend, Gen. Hattose. Today, we have received the usual amount of bogus news from the Federals. Richmond, Memphis and Fort Pillow have fallen--we disbelieve the two first, but fear there is some truth in the last.

June 11. Last night, the guard discovered 50 or 60 negroes at the depot, armed with Enfield rifles, drilling. They were dispersed and some of them taken to jail. Col. Burke, the provost, seems disposed to make the negroes keep their places. Nearly all the troops here are leaving for Chattanooga. Rumor says there has been fighting there, and the Rebel troops have gained a victory.

A funeral procession is passing. 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. These 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 chief mourner, with the blankets and accoutrements of the deceased through over him, which looks inexpressibly sad.

The Federal mails were seized yesterday between here and Nashville. The mischief, as usual, was laid to Morgan and Charge.

June 16. The enemy have been driven back from Chattanooga with considerable force. There has been quite a dearth of news for the last few days, owing to the cutting off of the mails. News has reached us of a glorious victory in Virginia which is truly cheering. We are still in suspense as to the whereabouts of Gen. Beauregard's army, and the welfare of those we hold most dear to us.

The Yankees have heard some doleful news. They have some long faces today and keep very quiet. Gen. Mitchell's family have arrived--furniture, bed, table linens and piano were taken from the hotel to furnish the Lanson Clay house for their reception.

The statuary and pictures were also taken for that purpose from the Calhoun place. There was a rumor last night that Van Dorn, Price and Breckinridge were advancing on Nashville by way of Chattanooga. Heaven send it may be true!

June 19, 1862. Two nights ago, some Federal prisoners, confined in the jail, set it on fire and damaged the building considerably. They said "they would not be confined with negroes, neither did they come here to be put in jail."

Some of the enemy who came here Abolitionists seem to have had a great "change come over the spirit of their feelings." They say that the negro women live like ladies, compared to the poor women of the north, and that they outdress the better class; that 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.

In many instances, the soldiers have treated the blacks in such a manner that the latter have had quite enough of their Abolitionist friends. Others, however, are familiar with them, and some of their officers visit the kitchens and chat familiarly with the women. Many of the negroes have refused to work for their masters and are constantly going to the Federalists.

A rumor this evening that Beauregard's army has gone to Charleston. The Yankees say that he blew a bluff into the Mississippi a few days since. He is a great "boogerboo" to their army.

Great anxiety is felt by friends as to his present locality, and certain it is that

his late movements have non-plussed General Halleck and the Lincoln cabinet terribly.

Rumors of another great battle and victory by the Confederates in Virginia and General McClellan killed. When is our great suspense to be relieved and the truth to be known! What would we not give this moment to set eyes on a Rebel newspaper!

June 20. Spent the day in the country at Mr. James Robinson's. Saw a Federal regiment go up the railroad about 11 o'clock. Two others passed up the night previous. Wonder where they were going.

On my return home, found a letter from Tennessee assuring me of the health and welfare of my friends and little Davie at Lebanon--a letter! It was brought by a Yankee officer--Lt. Dick of the First Kentucky Cavalry.

This has been rather an eventful day. Miss Lallie Matthews and Miss Row Webster were arrested this morning and carried before Gen. Mitchell for having attached Confederate flags to their grace hoop and playing with them when his soldiers were passing. Quite a spirited interview took place.

The general asked Miss Matthews if she were a Rebel. She replied that she was one "over and above board." Then he retorted, "How dare you tell me this in my tent?" When the audience was over, he said to them, "Women, go home and behave yourselves. Henceforth, I shall keep an eye on you and know all that you do!"

Saw a Federal account this evening of the Battle of Seven Pines before Richmond. The slaughter was terrible. How many brave hearts have fallen! O, when will this dreadful war be over! And how many weary days,

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weeks and perhaps months will lapse before we can know who of our friends are among the slain!

We are very carefully guarded here so that we know nothing that is passing without, and very little within. All that we hear is rumor, rumor, rumor, with her thousand tongues. And we might add, a very small quantity of bacon.

June 21. The train was again fired into in Jackson county today, and 10 men killed and three or four wounded. A gentleman up there sent Gen. Mitchell word that he need not be punishing private citizens for these things, that he knew the Jackson county people had suffered too much already, and that he (Mitchell) had burned the house of a widow a few days since, and the men of Jackson intended to avenge it. He said they had formed themselves into two bands for that purpose and, as they were cut off from the army, they intended to stay there and aggravate him all they could.

When the news reached General Mitchell, he sent up a body of men with orders to burn every house in Jackson near the railroad between here and Stevenson.

They were met by the other party under flag of truce, saying that they (the Confederates) had about 50 Yankee prisoners in their hands and, for every house burned, they would hang a man. Whereupon, the general countermanded the order.

June 25. An order has been given today that, if the stockholders of the new hotel do not take the oath of allegiance to the U.S. within three days, the hotel will be taken into the hands of the Federalists. Also provisions are forbidden to be brought to

town, or passes given, except on the above conditions.

Heard today that James Dassion was killed in the battle of Richmond. Also General Martin.

June 26. This has been the most delightful morning of the season, for it has brought happenings to some. Mr. Fifer brought me news from my husband. He also brought me a letter, but, falling into the hands of the Federalists yesterday, he had to destroy it. A matter to be regretted, yet it is happiness to know that he is well and safe, after being kept so long in a state of most agonizing suspense.

As we are so soon to be cut off from provisions, ordered Uncle Tom to shell some corn and take it to the mill. He went to the provost marshal for a pass, and was told to bring an order from his master. He went to C. W. for that purpose and got one. On presenting it, he was told to tell his young master to come there.

The master refused to go, so Eddie was sent, with instructions to "state the case politely and ask Col. Burke for a pass." He was kindly received by the latter, and told to come after dinner and he should have one. In the meantime, C. W., not knowing Eddie had been and reconsidering the matter, presented himself at the office. No one was there but the clerk, who told him to sign the oath and he could get one, at the same time talking very nicely to him.

Of course the honor was declined. Dinner being over, Eddie went according to appointment, but unfortunately found no one there except the said clerk. On hearing his name, the clerk said to him, "O, yes! Your brother has been here, and I intend to report

him severely for his conduct this evening. Go home and tell him to come to me immediately." Of course, this honor was declined also.

June 28. Mr. Stone of Nashville called this morning at the request of Mrs. Elliott of Nashville. He has been sent south by Governor Johnson for refusing to take the oath and is waiting for a pass from Gen. Mitchell. Generals Buell, McCook and Johnson, with a part of their army, arrived this evening. Their destination not known, but supposed to be Chattanooga. Rumors that Gen. Buell is to succeed Gen. Mitchell at this place.

June 30. Heard today that Mr. Hope Turney had been brought in a prisoner, suffering with rheumatism and nothing to sleep on. Although an entire stranger, resolved to go and see him. Sent for Mrs. Mayhew to accompany me and we went to the courthouse to get a pass, which was reluctantly given. Found all the gentlemen glad to see me, practically all, and particularly Mr. Turney and Mr. Hollin, a relative of Sue and Jennie, and more particularly an imprisoned Yankee with whom we had a conversation, and who became a warm friend. He had been suffering with typhoid fever, had been much neglected, and a few words of kindness and sympathy won his heart at once.

News came today confirming the death of Gus Mastin, also of another great victory at Richmond.

July 1. Visited the prisoners again today, carrying them all some dinner, including the Federalist, who is from Ohio. Found Mr. Turney not so well. Came home and sent him a bed, which was kindly furnished by

Mrs. Harris. The neighbors also assisted me in providing the dinner.

Heard today of another glorious victory at Charleston. Mrs. Mayhew and Mr. Stone took tea here. The latter leaves in the morning under flag of truce for Chattanooga, having got a pass from Gen. Buell.

Gen. Mitchell left last night for Washington. It is rumored that Gen. Buell did not approve of the course he had pursued toward the citizens here and his management of things generally, and that the former had resigned and gone to Washington to be court-martialed. Wonder if it's true. News from Richmond confirmed.

July 4. All is quiet. No booming of cannon disturbed the quiet of our slumbers this morning to celebrate the National Independence. The Feds wear long faces today owing to the news from Richmond.

(Noon.) They have just fired 34 guns. And say the news is not so bad as they thought.

Miss Maria Robinson spent the day with us, bringing a nice present of apples and butter. Mr. Matt Keite made me a present of a nice load of hay. Bless his kind, generous heart!

Dr. Nedman called this morning at the request of Mr. Turney to get me to find him a private house at which to stay. Dr. Fearn has partly promised. Mr. Turney is suffering terribly from inflammatory rheumatism, and the doctor is trying to get him paroled.

(Night.) Sue and Eddie are gone out to Mr. Robinson's. A little after night, our ears were greeted with tremendous shouts from

the direction of the camps. What can it mean?

July 5. Quite sick this morning. After breakfast, Mrs. Mayhew came in to tell me that she was heartsick, that a little after the shouting last night, a Federalist came running down to her house to tell her that his colonel had just read out to the regiment that Richmond had fallen, the Rebel army was all cut to pieces and had fallen back eight miles from the city, that all the officers had been requested to read the above to the Federal regiments, posted here. Don't believe a word of it.

Such is the crying resorted to keep up the spirits of the soldiers.

Mrs. Gen. Norton called to tell me of an opportunity to write to W. D. (her husband). Eddie has come home and says there are 15,000 of Buell's troops camped on the creek back of Mr. Robinson's. Reported to be on their way to Chattanooga.

They have taken the seminary today for a hospital. Truly this neighborhood has its share of them.

The Mitchells (Gen. Mitchell's family) are left here in the care of Mrs. Judge Lane. They seem to be enjoying themselves in the enemy's country. Yesterday, they took a trip to the mountain. Dashed by here in two carriages, with Yeate Lane and Mrs. Clemens, right in front of the funeral procession of a poor soldier who was shot while on picket duty.

July 6. The bad news from Richmond is not yet confirmed. It is really tantalizing the state of suspense we have to remain in before we can get the truth. Wash Donegan brought me a letter from Dave this morning.

These letters, so rare, are getting to be priceless treasures. Little Dave is well and happy. They have not heard a word from me, although I have written some three weeks since.

July 7. Sent a letter today by Dr. Dement to W.D. Also one through the kindness of Major Moore to Cincinnati to Dave. News of the great victory at Richmond fully confirmed. Everybody looks happy except the Feds, who wear long faces. Confederate money going up. Mr. Turney has been moved to Judge Lane's, which will prevent his friends from visiting him.

July 8. Gen. Smith takes Gen. Mitchell's place here, and thus far has been more indulgent to the citizens. We went to see Mr. Turney this morning, but was refused admittance.

July 9. Dr. Hudson and Mr. Holland took tea with us. Informed us that nine houses have been burned in Jackson county today. Our cavalry in that region is annoying them dreadfully. A large amount of cotton has been taken and destroyed today between here and Fayetteville by our cavalry.

July 10. This day has been made memorable by the departure of the family of Gen. Mitchell. Joy go with them!