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# Dr. James L. White -- "History of the Confederate General Hospital Located at Farmville, VA, 1862-1865"

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### **About James L. White, M. D.:**

James Lowery White, M. D., was born May 30, 1833 in Abingdon, Virginia to James Lowery White and Margaret R. White (née Preston).<sup>1</sup> His ancestry was Scotch-Irish, his father's family having come from Pennsylvania, and his maternal hailing from Virginia.<sup>2</sup> White attended Abingdon Male Academy, then Virginia Military Institute from 1850 until his graduation in 1853, as well as University of Virginia in the 1853-54 school year.<sup>3</sup> He received his degree of Doctor of Medicine from Jefferson Medical College the following year.<sup>4</sup> In 1859, White married his first wife, Sallie Taylor Read White (née Peyton).<sup>5</sup> Sallie died in 1861 at the age of twenty-nine and was buried in the White Family Cemetery in Washington County, Virginia.<sup>6</sup>

At the beginning of the war, James L. White entered the military of the Confederate States of America (CSA) as a First Lieutenant in the 37<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Virginia Infantry, and was later promoted to Captain.<sup>7</sup> After a few months, he was transferred to perform as a surgeon in the army, participating in the Valley of Virginia Campaign in 1862 before reporting to the General Hospital in Farmville in December 1862, where he remained until January 1864.<sup>8</sup> White was relocated to Tennessee to be a field surgeon in General Longstreet's corps.<sup>9</sup> He then served in Virginia as Brigade Surgeon to Wyant's Brigade of Kershaw's Division during the Battle of the Wilderness,

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<sup>1</sup> Lyon Gardiner Tyler, LL. D., *Men of Mark in Virginia – Ideals of American Life: A Collection of Biographies of the Leading Men in the State* 5 (1909): 182. Google Books Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "Sallie Taylor Read *Peyton* White," Find A Grave, accessed July 26, 2018, [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/177706321/sallie-taylor\\_read-white](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/177706321/sallie-taylor_read-white).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> "Soldier Details: White, James L.," National Parks Service, accessed July 26, 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-soldiers-detail.htm?soldierId=2FA2ACDE-DC7A-DF11-BF36-B8AC6F5D926A>.

<sup>8</sup> Dr. James L. White, *History of the Confederate General Hospital Located at Farmville, 1862-65*, (Farmville: Martin Printing Company, 1916), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 2.

remaining at that post until the fall of 1864 when he returned to the General Hospital in Farmville.<sup>10</sup> White remained in the town through the Confederate surrender at Appomattox and experienced Union occupation there.

White continued to live in Farmville during the post-war rather than move back to Abingdon. On September 21, 1864, he married his second wife, Lelia E. White (née Jackson).<sup>11</sup> White continued to practice his profession in Farmville, including a partnership in the 1880s with Dr. George Tully Vaughan of Arrington, Virginia.<sup>12</sup> He became a member of the Medical Society of Virginia in 1873, which conflicting sources claim he presided as Vice-President in either 1875 or 1880 to 1881, and was made Resident Honorary Fellow in 1906.<sup>13</sup> Later in his life, White was also a member of several societies, including: The Order of Free and Accepted Masons, Royal Arcanum, and the Knights of Honor.<sup>14</sup> He is described to have had a personable nature and was well-loved by friends and fellow towns-people of Farmville, to the degree that stores and public buildings in the town were closed during his funeral ceremonies.<sup>15</sup>

At the age of 76, Dr. James L. White died on June 26, 1909 in his home in Farmville, following an illness that had been plaguing him for the previous eight days.<sup>16</sup> The doctor was buried in Westview Cemetery, located in Farmville.<sup>17</sup> Lelia E. White died at the age of 67 on April

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Tyler, 182.

<sup>12</sup> “Vaughan, George Tully,” *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography Being the History of the United States XVIII* (1922), 300. Google Books Edition.

<sup>13</sup> Landon B. Edwards, M. D. and Charles M. Edwards, M. D., “Obituary Record,” *Virginia Medical Semi-Monthly (Richmond.) XIV* (April, 1909—March, 1910): 168. Google Books Edition.

<sup>14</sup> Tyler, 182.

<sup>15</sup> R. H. Latane, M. D., S. T. A. Kent, M. D., and Stephen Harnsberger, M. D., *Transactions of the Fortieth Annual Session of the Medical Society of Virginia Held in Roanoke, Virginia October 5-8, 1909* (Richmond: Everett Waddey Company, 1909): 178. Google Books Edition.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> “Dr. James Lowery White,” Find A Grave, accessed July 26, 2018, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/137254262/james-lowery-white>.

9<sup>th</sup> of the following year and was buried alongside her husband.<sup>18</sup> Though his main contributions to the population of Farmville were in the medical field, Dr. White provided crucial insight to an important period in Farmville history. Because of his letter to the Farmville UDC, White provided following generations with crucial history. With the aid of his accounts, individuals now may better understand life and events in Farmville during and following the American Civil War.

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<sup>18</sup> "Lelia E. White," Find A Grave, accessed July 26, 2018, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/137254315/lelia-e-white>.