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# "You all must do the best you can" : the Civil War widows of Brunswick County, Virginia, 1860-1920

Jennifer Lynn Gross

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**"You Must All Do The Best You Can": The Civil War  
Widows of Brunswick County, Virginia, 1860-1920**

**Jennifer Lynn Gross  
Master of Arts in History  
University of Richmond, 1995  
Robert C. Kenzer**

This study focuses upon the life experiences of the 70 Civil War widows of Brunswick County, Virginia, a rural, predominantly agricultural community. The death of a husband, particularly in a male-oriented society such as the nineteenth century South, forced his widow to cope not only with her grief but also with new household, financial, and family responsibilities as well as a new identity as a lone woman, a social category defined by the loss of the central source of identity and financial support experienced during married life. Factors such as age, family situation, community of residence, sources of emotional and financial support, education, property ownership, occupation, the presence or absence of minor or adult children, and the prospect of remarriage all affected how a widow dealt with her widowhood and are considered in this analysis of the lives of Civil War widows in Brunswick County, Virginia.

Approval Page

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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"YOU ALL MUST DO THE BEST YOU CAN":  
THE CIVIL WAR WIDOWS OF  
BRUNSWICK COUNTY, VIRGINIA, 1860-1920

By

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B.A., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1993

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty  
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for the Degree of

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## *Introduction*

"Mrs. S. E. Rawlings, known to everyone in the county as 'Grandma' Rawlings, is dead. She was the oldest person in the county, having reached the advanced age of 94 years."<sup>1</sup> Susan E. Rawlings, who was born in 1830, was a Confederate widow of the Civil War. Her husband, John James Rawlings, a private in the Brunswick Guards, one of the major Civil War Companies raised in Brunswick County, died September 27, 1864, of typhoid fever in the infamous Union prison in Elmira, New York. Susan was only 34-years-old when she was widowed and left to care for two minor children. By 1924 Susan had established herself in the community and was remembered as someone "who always had a cheery word or smile for everyone."<sup>2</sup> Though Susan was perhaps unique as the oldest Brunswick resident, she was by no means the only Confederate widow in the county.

Brunswick County supplied the Confederate armed forces with more than one thousand men, including 176 who never returned from the war.<sup>3</sup> Of those who gave

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<sup>1</sup>"Mrs. Rawlings Passed Away," The Southern Missioner, (1924), 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>A listing of these 176 men is found in the The Pritchett Papers, Brunswick County Library, Lawrenceville, Virginia. For a listing of the 72 men who left widows, see The Pritchett File as explained in the Appendix.



their lives for the cause, 72 created widows while 30 of them also left behind children.<sup>4</sup>

While the Civil War has been examined inside and out as to military strategies and politics, it is only recently that studies have emerged on the social aspects of the conflict. Even in most of these newer examinations, the experience of widows has only been cursorily analyzed. When one considers that widows comprised a fairly large portion of the surviving casualties of the war, the absence of any thorough study of them signifies a glaring omission.

In her essay examining the United States Civil War pension system, Amy Holmes asserts that "[t]he death of a spouse confronts an individual with many problems, including coping with grief, with new household, financial, and family responsibilities, and possibly the loss of an independent household."<sup>5</sup> Many other factors, including age, family situation, community of residence, and sources of emotional and financial support, affected the way that widows experienced these changes. Although Holmes' study only encompasses Union widows, the same assertions apply to Confederate widows. Moreover, when examining a widow's life experience the following additional factors

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<sup>4</sup>Although there were 72 Brunswick women who were widowed by the Civil War, two of the women, Laura Clark and Margaret Hines, died in 1865 and 1861 respectively. Thus, these two women are only included in the prewar statistics, not the postwar figures; Bureau of Vital Statistics, Deaths, 1861-1896, Brunswick County, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy.

<sup>5</sup>Amy E. Holmes, "'Such is the Price We Pay': American Widows and the Civil War Pension System," Toward a Social History of the American Civil War: Exploratory Essays, ed. Maris A. Vinovskis (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 177.

must be considered: education, property ownership, occupation, remarriage, the presence of minor children to support, as well as the accessibility of a married child's or relative's household in which the widow can reside.

Civil War widows existed in a sort of social limbo as they belonged to a social category defined by the loss of their central source of identity and financial support. Not only were they anomalies in a male-dominated and male-oriented society, they were also a painful reminder of the recent conflict that had irrevocably transformed the country. The Civil War has often been associated with a growth of "female power" in the country both in the workforce and in legal aspects such as those enacted under the Married Women's Property Acts.<sup>6</sup> Although some women may have profited from these changes, it becomes apparent from this study that in the rural county of Brunswick, Virginia, most Civil War widows were not among them.

This thesis uses quantitative methodology to re-create the life experiences of the 70 Confederate widows of Brunswick County. In addition to the factors described above, it analyzes the legal aspects of nineteenth century widowhood which the widows inevitably faced. It also answers several questions regarding Confederate widowhood in Brunswick County, Virginia. What effect, if any, did a widow's prewar situation have on her postwar life? Did her husband leave a will and how did his stipulations affect her

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<sup>6</sup>Historians who have noted the changes in "female power" include Lee Ann Whites, "The Civil War as a Crises in Gender," Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War, eds. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

life after his death? How likely were these widows to remarry? Did age, occupation, wealth, or the presence of children influence remarriage rates? What percentage of the widows were able to support themselves and what percentage had to rely upon family and friends for their subsistence? Did age, occupation, wealth, education, or the presence of children affect whether a widow maintained her own household? What significance does a widow's writing of a will have and what can be determined from it? All of these questions are central to a complete examination of Civil War widowhood in a rural Virginia county.

## Chapter 1

### *Before the War*

In 1860 Catherine and David Clary, who had been married for twelve years, and their three children, ages seven, five, and one, were living comfortably in Brunswick County. Although David, an overseer, owned no real estate, he had amassed personal property worth \$1,525 with which to support his family.<sup>1</sup> While situations varied, the Clarys were somewhat typical among the Brunswick families who would lose their husbands/fathers to the cruelties of war.

To understand the situations these 70 Brunswick County Confederate widows would face after 1865, it is necessary first to examine their circumstances before the war. Brunswick County was established in 1720 and originally included all of the land described as "between the Roanoke River and the North Carolina line."<sup>2</sup> In 1781 Greensville County was divided from Brunswick, and it became necessary to move the courthouse because it was no longer in the center of the county. When the new site of the courthouse was chosen, Lawrenceville, the community, was not actually a town yet.

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<sup>1</sup>Eighth Census, 1860, Brunswick County, Virginia Schedule I (Free Inhabitants), Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy; Brunswick County, Personal Property Taxes, 1860, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>2</sup>Ten counties were eventually formed out of the lands designated as Brunswick County which encompassed an area about the size of modern-day Massachusetts. See Gay Neale, Brunswick County, Virginia, 1720-1975 (Brunswick County, Virginia: The Brunswick County Bicentennial Committee, 1975), 35.

Not until 1814 was Lawrenceville incorporated by the General Assembly and named the county seat. As was common in the creation of towns during this early period of United States history, Lawrenceville grew up along a stage route. By the mid 1800s it had become the thriving center of the county with the courthouse, an ironsmith establishment, a general store, a harness retailer, and a tailor. Additionally, located near the courthouse was the Lawrenceville Male and Female Academy. There were also numerous other smaller towns and villages in the county. Danieltown arose primarily because of the location of Edmond's Store, which a historian of the county described as "a town within itself, consisting of a tannery, ironmongers, and a large dry goods and commercial trade."<sup>3</sup> There were other towns in the county, including Ebony, which grew up around a general store, school, and racetrack.<sup>4</sup> Also other villages within the county were situated around such commercial enterprises as a store or an ordinary.<sup>5</sup> Even so, in 1860 all of these communities, including Lawrenceville, were so small that the census takers did not bother to enumerate them separately as towns. Instead, the county was simply divided into three magisterial districts, Red Oak, Meherrin, and Totaro.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Neale, Brunswick County, 141.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 125.

<sup>5</sup>An ordinary is an inn or tavern.

<sup>6</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth Census: The Statistics of the Population of the United States; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census, Volume I (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1862). For Lawrenceville's location within the Totaro magisterial district, see Neale, Brunswick County.

In 1860 Brunswick County had an aggregate population of 14,809 residents. The white population stood at 4,992 with an additional 671 free blacks and 9,146 slaves.<sup>7</sup> This large number of slaves reflects the overall agrarian nature of the county. Like so much of Virginia and the other southern states, tobacco and cotton were the major crops of the county.<sup>8</sup> And the larger farms and plantations probably used slave labor. One historian of the county asserts that "economically, Brunswick rode on the crest of a boom of prosperity in the early days of the 1800's."<sup>9</sup> The county's planters and farmers were bringing in peak profits for their crops, and Brunswick families were clearing more land for farms and building larger homes. Hence, Brunswick County was for many a developing and prosperous community in which to get married and begin a family.

Most of the women of this time period were not employed outside the home because the social code of behavior prohibited it. Hence, women were enumerated in the census records as having no occupation or simply as "keeps house." Interestingly enough, one woman did list an occupation in 1860; Sarah F. Watkins, the wife of Thomas B. Watkins, a tailor, worked as a seamstress.<sup>10</sup> Most likely, Sarah worked with her husband in his tailoring business. She probably sewed for the women of the

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<sup>7</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, The Statistics of the Population of the United States, Ninth Census, 1870, Compiled from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census, Volume 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 68-70.

<sup>8</sup>Neale, Brunswick County, 139.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Eighth Census, 1860.

community while Thomas tended to the men's tailoring needs. Because the Watkins owned no real estate, it is plausible that they rented a dwelling in Lawrenceville which served as both a place of business and a residence for the two of them and their young child. Curiously, after becoming a widow, Sarah appears to have abandoned sewing as employment. Though she never listed an occupation other than "keeps house" between 1870 and 1920, this fact does not necessarily mean that Sarah no longer sewed to support herself and her child. Arlene Scadron found in her study of widowhood in the American Southwest that many women who performed work that was traditionally considered domestic work, such as sewing, cooking, cleaning or taking in laundry, rarely reported an occupation to census takers because they did not think of themselves as working women.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it is entirely possible that Sarah did indeed continue to take in sewing at her home to support her family. Probably, because she no longer worked in her husband's shop, she did not consider herself a "professional" seamstress.

The majority of these future widows were married to men employed in an agrarian occupation.<sup>12</sup> In fact, 37.0 percent were farmers in 1860 while an additional 16.0 percent were day laborers who were probably engaged in farm labor. Another 25.6 percent, though not directly working on the land themselves, were engaged as overseers

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<sup>11</sup>Arlene Scadron, "Preface and Introduction," On Their Own: Widows and Widowhood in the American Southwest, 1848-1939, ed. Arlene Scadron (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 305.

<sup>12</sup>A total of 78.6% of those widows' husband found in the 1860 census worked in agrarian-related employment. Agrarian professions for the purpose of this study includes farmers, day laborers, and overseers; see Eighth Census, 1860.

on one of the area plantations. The remainder of the husbands were employed as skilled laborers including carpenters, shoemakers, ditchers harnessmakers, tailors, and wheelwrights. (See Table 2.) Although most of the widows' husbands were engaged in agrarian labor, this does not signify a universal experience. The men who identified themselves as farmers varied in real estate holdings from \$0 to \$2,000. William H. Venable, a professed farmer, and his wife, "Pattie," owned no real estate in 1860, though they possessed \$11,000 of personal estate; while another couple, David and Caroline Nash, were the owners of land valued at \$2,000 with an additional \$1,025 of personal estate as well.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, those men who were laborers in 1860 were usually "land poor" necessitating that they work as laborers on other Brunswickians' farms. Though land poor, there were those among the laborers whose personal property holdings were vast. John L. Brewer and his wife, Sarah C. Brewer owned no real estate of their own; however, they did enjoy \$2,300 of personal estate.<sup>14</sup>

As the majority of the future widows' husbands were employed in an agrarian profession, many of these couples belonged to the middle, yeoman, and under classes before the war. Almost three-fourths of the widows' husbands owned no real estate in 1860. Still, nearly four-fifths did possess some personal estate. (See Table 6.) Although this seems like an extremely high proportion of landlessness, it can be explained to some

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<sup>13</sup>It is probable that since the Venables had only been married for one year in 1860, that they had not yet received their "marriage" property from their families at the time of the census. "Pattie's" given name was Martha.

<sup>14</sup>Eighth Census, 1860.



degree by both the age and marital status of the soldiers and their future widows. In 1860, almost one-fourth of the future widows' husbands were under 25, a point in one's life when few men yet owned property. Likewise, almost one-fourth were not yet married. (See Table 1.) Because young men often did not receive property from their fathers until marriage, those who were still single and residing in their father's households would likely appear to have no property of their own. For instance, in 1860 Benjamin Jones, a 19-year-old, was still residing as a single man in his father's household. Additionally, he was unemployed and possessed no real estate of his own though his father owned \$30,000 of land and \$74,000 of personal estate.<sup>15</sup> James J. Harrison was another example as in 1860 he owned only \$15 of personal estate while still residing in his father's household consisting of \$7,115.50 of real estate and \$10,000 of personal property.<sup>16</sup> While many single men did not yet own significant amounts of property, only one percent of the married men owned no property, real or personal.

Not all the future widows belonged to the yeoman and under classes, however, as a few were members of the land and/or slave owning elite. In fact, in 1860, a little over one-tenth owned real estate valued at \$1,000 or more while a little less than one-

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<sup>15</sup>Benjamin did own \$2,000 of personal property; see *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>Brunswick County, Real Estate Taxes, 1860, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia and Personal Property Taxes, 1860.

fourth possessed \$1,000 or more of personal estate.<sup>17</sup> (See Table 6.) These values represented a significant amount of land in a county where the standard acre of land was worth \$4.88.<sup>18</sup> Hence, on average, \$1,000 of real estate amounted to approximately 205 acres of land. James and Martha Huskey, one such affluent couple, owned \$2,000 of land, about 410 acres, with an accompanying \$3,600 of personal property.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to those future widows' husbands who owned substantial amounts of real estate, there were also those who owned slaves. Although the personal property tax records do not place a value on slaves, they do indicate how many were owned. In 1860, seventeen (23.6%) of the women's husbands owned slaves. In fact, William H. Venable owned nine slaves, while James G. Perkins owned seven.<sup>20</sup> In addition to these men, two future widows owned slaves. Mary E. Brown, the future wife and widow of John F. Brown, a member of the Ebenezer Grays, owned five slaves. These slaves along with one horse, fifteen sheep, one clock, four cattle, and \$50 of furniture

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<sup>17</sup>These percentages do not include the property of the parents if the soldier was still residing in their household in 1860; see Eighth Census, 1860; Real Estate Taxes, 1860.

<sup>18</sup>Personal Property Taxes, 1860.

<sup>19</sup>Martha Huskey owned an additional \$395 of personal estate as well as three slaves; see Eighth Census, 1860.

<sup>20</sup>There were also three more men whose taxes were not explained, making it impossible to know whether or not they owned slaves; however, because of the total amounts they possessed, all over \$2,000, it is likely that each did own a slave; see Personal Property Taxes, 1860.

were likely given to her by her father when she married in 1861.<sup>21</sup> Martha W. Huskey also owned a substantial amount of personal property in 1860. While her husband, James Huskey owned \$2,000 of real estate and \$3,600 of personal estate, Martha owned personal property which included three slaves, one horse worth \$100, 37 hogs and 11 cattle valued at \$45 and \$110 respectively, one \$35 wagon, \$100 of furniture, and one clock assessed at \$5.<sup>22</sup> Like Mary Brown, Martha's personal property holdings were probably part of her marriage dower. Therefore, two-fifths of these women or their husbands owned at least one slave and almost 90 percent of these slaveowners possessed two or more.<sup>23</sup>

Although there were some who were wealthy, the majority of the future widows lived in yeoman households which owned no real estate and possessed only up to \$250 of personal estate. (See Table 6.) Margaret Hine's situation before the war was typical for many of the future widows. In 1860 Margaret's husband of three years, Thomas F. Hines, an overseer, owned no real estate and only about \$100 of personal estate.<sup>24</sup>

Although most historians assert, and this study has already shown, that many of the soldiers of the Civil War were young and unmarried, there was also a significant

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<sup>21</sup>Personal Property Taxes, 1860.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.; Eighth Census, 1860.

<sup>23</sup>Personal Property Taxes, 1860.

<sup>24</sup>There is a discrepancy between the personal property tax records and the census reporting of value of his personal property. The tax records indicate \$125 while the census enumerates only \$100; see *ibid.*; Eighth Census, 1860.

number who were married before the war as well as those who were over the age of 25. The average age of the Brunswick husbands who would die in the war was about 30. In fact, one year before the war broke out, less than one-fourth of the women's husbands, who would die in the war, were between the ages of fifteen and 24. A little over half were between 25 and 34 with the remaining men all over 35. (See Table 1.) Thus, at the start of the war, most of the men from Brunswick County who would leave widows were neither particularly young nor single.

The women, of course, were comparatively younger than their husbands. While the average age of a widow before the war was about 26, many of the Civil War widows were quite young. Their ages ranged from fourteen to 48. For example, one of the youngest future widows was Laura Lambert. In October 1860 she married Marcus A. Clark, a 23-year-old physician and her next-door neighbor, when she was only fifteen.<sup>25</sup> In fact, in 1860 14 percent of the women were under the age of 20 and an additional 36 percent were over twenty but under 25. The other half of the women were mostly between the ages of 25 and 35, although there were a few women who were over 40. (See Table 9.) The oldest future widow, Mary Ann Lambert, was 48-years-old in 1860. She and her husband, John had been married for at least nineteen years and had four children, Sterling, nineteen, Thomas, fifteen, Joel, nine, and John, six.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Eighth Census, 1860; Bureau of Vital Statistics, Marriage Bonds, 1853-1935, Brunswick County, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy.

<sup>26</sup>Eighth Census, 1860.

Obviously, age and marriage were often related. The majority of these couples were already married before the war erupted. In fact, by 1860, over 75 percent of the women were already married to their soldier husbands and the majority of these were married well before the war. (See Table 3.) Additionally, slightly more than two-thirds already had at least one child. Women such as Julietta Short, who married Needham S. Cheely on October 27, 1852, began her married life when Brunswick County, Virginia, was a prosperous locale in which both the economy and the population thrived. By 1860 Needham was a successful farmer with \$900 of real estate and \$1,000 personal estate.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the Cheely family was flourishing with the birth of two children before the war.<sup>28</sup> Recently-married couples such as the Cheelys only expected their prosperity to continue and increase. Little could Julietta have expected in those early years of marriage that, by 1863, she would be a widow at the tender age of 29 with two young children for whom to provide.

In addition to those women who had married prior to 1860, nearly one-fourth were married by the end of 1861. (See Table 3.) Many of those who married right before the war were among what historians see as a pre-war marriage rush. Albert Castel has noted that many young women and future soldiers married immediately before the war partially because of the perceived drama. Thus, many couples who may have been courting prior to the war would decide to marry before the young man joined the

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

armed forces. Moreover, because they believed that the fighting would not cost many lives or last very long, couples would often push up the date of their nuptials.<sup>29</sup> The remaining 11.5 percent of the couples married during the next four years of the war.

Another interesting trait these future widows shared was a high level of literacy as compared to their soldier husbands. Over 80 percent of both the widows and their husbands were literate. While this percentage was not high in and of itself, it is interesting to note that the rate of literacy for the women was about the same as that of the men.<sup>30</sup> The women's literacy rate can be partially explained by an unusually large local interest in education. Maris Vinoskis and Richard Bernard have found that regional interest in education often contributed to the state of female education.<sup>31</sup> Brunswick County and Virginia as a whole were very active in promoting educational opportunities.

Before 1810 formal education in Virginia existed primarily for the wealthy. Poor children as well as orphans were usually "educated" within a system of apprenticeship. The laws essentially stipulated that the master should teach the apprenticed youth a trade

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<sup>29</sup>Albert Castel, "Dearest Ben: Letters from a Civil War Soldier's Wife," *Michigan History* 71 (May/June 1987): 19.

<sup>30</sup>A total of 83.3% of the soldiers who were found in the 1860 census were literate. The figure for the women is 80.5% which is based on 70 of the 72 women. Two of the women were never identified as either literate or illiterate; see Eighth Census, 1860; women's illiteracy rates were consistently higher than those of men during the antebellum period. For a broader discussion of female education, see Maris A. Vinovskis and Richard M. Bernard, "Beyond Catherine Beecher: Female Education in the Antebellum Period," *Signs* 3 (Summer/1978): 866.

<sup>31</sup>Vinovskis and Bernard, "Catherine Beecher," 862.

as well as how to read and write; however, this system was not regulated and rarely was the ideal achieved.<sup>32</sup> By 1810 it had become clear to Virginia officials that this system was not adequate or equal in its application.

The academy approach to education had prospered in Brunswick County since the American Revolution. Although these academies could be established by churches, more commonly, schools were the product of a parent or parents who desired that their children be educated. The interested person would purchase some property, announce the creation of a school and its prospective program, and enroll students, usually at a fixed tuition. Such schools were most often established in a home or in an outbuilding of a home.<sup>33</sup> It was this approach to education that most often benefitted young women.

Prior to the Civil War, Brunswick County was home to a variety of schools. Some were intended solely for the education of male children while others strictly focused on the education of young females. And it is likely that some of the subject widows attended one or more of these institutions: Sturgeonville Female Academy (1823-1830), West View Female Seminary (1853-1856), Waqua Female School (1846-1850), and Lawrenceville Female Seminary (1838-1845). Additionally there were numerous schools begun and run in the homes of parents concerned with the education of their

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<sup>32</sup>W. McCaddin Pritchett, "A History of Secondary Education in Brunswick County, Virginia, 1715-1938," (M.A. Thesis, University of Virginia, 1939), 21.

<sup>33</sup>Neale, Brunswick County, 150.

daughters such as those run by Richard K. Meade, Rev. John C. Claiborne, N.W. Stith, Charles Turnbull, a boarding school run by Mrs. Tucker in Clifton, and a school run by Dr. John Field. There were also several co-educational schools such as a Lawrenceville Academy (1818-1833), Diamond Grove Academy (1823-?), and a two-branch school, one per sex, which was established at the Brunswick Mineral Springs and run by Mr. and Mrs. Bobbitt (1826-1841).<sup>34</sup> Most of the above schools were conducted between the 1820s and 1850s, which spans the period in which these widows were school age.<sup>35</sup> In fact, of those widows who had been of school age during the 1850s, only one-fifth were illiterate. The same is true for the widows who had been of school age during the 1840s.

While many of the future widows were educated, those who were from poor or less-privileged backgrounds had been at an obvious disadvantage in obtaining an education because the previously-mentioned schools generally charged tuition. Although this is true, Virginia and Brunswick County employed various methods to overcome the barrier that tuition created.

Since the early 1800s, Virginia had taken steps to create a sort of public education system. With the Separation Acts of 1802 in which the church and state become completely divorced, lands known as glebe or parish lands which had previously been

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<sup>34</sup>Pritchett notes that many of the dates given for these schools are not certain as their existence is largely determined by advertisements that were placed in the papers. It is possible that some of the schools continued after the supposed closing date and also that they had been around prior to the date given for their opening.

<sup>35</sup>School age, for the purpose of this study, is between five and fifteen.



set aside for the support of a church were confiscated by the counties and sold for the benefit of the poor; often the funds went toward education. This sale took place in 1818 in Brunswick County. In addition to these glebe funds, schools were sometimes supported by private endowments. More commonly, however, was the use of a lottery to fund a school. The Lawrenceville Male and Female Academy adjacent to the county courthouse was financed by this means from 1818 to 1833.

In 1810, the state passed an act which provided for the establishment of a Literary Fund which became the foundation of state involvement in education. It appears that Brunswick County took advantage of the literary fund almost immediately. William Pritchett's examination of education in the county reveals that, by 1825, fifteen schools instructed 68 "poor" students, nearly half of those county children determined unable to pay for schooling.<sup>36</sup>

The public school system as established in Virginia in 1818 was only moderately successful as is evidenced by the short run of many of the above-listed schools. Not until 1840, did the drive for common school education legislation occur in Virginia. Pritchett assesses the two legislative acts of 1846 regarding public education as the greatest pinnacles of the ante-bellum educational effort. The first act provided for a new system

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<sup>36</sup>This low percentage was likely the result of the parents' choice to keep a child at home rather than be identified among the poor, or other parents who simply thought it more useful for the child to work rather than be educated. This last reason is one commonly associated with farming communities in that school attendance was erratic depending upon the time of the year and the progress of the harvest. See Neale, Brunswick County, 112-120.

of county superintendents to supervise the schools in each county.<sup>37</sup> The schools were to continue to rely upon the Literary Fund for support. The second act essentially created an opportunity for Virginia counties. It provided that "all white children, male or female residents of the districts, shall be entitled to receive tuition at said schools free of charge"; however, acceptance of this opportunity would have necessitated a county-wide tax.<sup>38</sup> There is no indication which counties, if any, accepted this proposal, and it appears as though Brunswick County did not, most likely because it would have necessitated higher taxes.

Even so, it appears that progress was made within the county. In 1855, the county commissioners reported that

‘the benefit derived from the appropriation of the school funds of this county, though not as great as it might be under different circumstances, is still such as to afford the means of education to many of the destitute, and also to contribute to the establishment and maintenance of schools in many localities where they could not be obtained without the assistance of the school fund.’<sup>39</sup>

Thus, the period in which many of the subject women were school-age, the county was actively promoting education both for the wealthy and the poor and both for males and females. When the Civil War broke out, the General Assembly voted in secret session

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<sup>37</sup>In March 1819, Brunswick County had established the first school board to standardize and inspect the county's numerous local schools; see *ibid.*, 150. This act essentially made the educational system in the various counties uniform.

<sup>38</sup>Pritchett, "History of Education," 125.

<sup>39</sup>As quoted in *ibid.*, 126.

to confiscate the monies in the Literary Fund for the defense of the state therefore ending the first run of "public education" in the state.

Although the county actively promoted education, it is particularly interesting to note that the educational opportunities for female education were neither abundant nor long-running. It is further noteworthy that the majority of schools available to girls were those begun by parents rather than formal academies like many of the schools for young men during this period. Thus, women were more at the mercy of whether or not their parents deemed it necessary or appropriate that they be educated.

These future widows and their husbands came from a wide variety of socioeconomic backgrounds before the war. It cannot be said that they belonged either entirely or even predominantly to one age group, occupation, or social class. Taken as a whole, however, these couples exhibited the diversity that characterized most of the South during the antebellum period. The one thing they would all share in common was the Civil War and its devastating implications for their married lives.

## Chapter 2

### *Those Who Went to War*

In 1860 John J. Smith, a 23-year-old laborer, was still residing with his parents, W. W. and Mary Smith. Sarah C. Glidewell was only 17 and living with her widowed mother, Betsy. On June 3, 1861, only 49 days after the firing on Fort Sumter, John and Sarah were married. The newlyweds spent barely three days together before John enlisted in Company F of the 12th Virginia Infantry. The men of Brunswick County, like John Smith, were quick to join in the fight for "the Cause." Southerners generally believed that even if the North chose to fight the secessionists, the conflict would be a short one. Yet, regardless of the length of the war, most men of the South and of Brunswick County wanted to be a part of it.

Brunswick County supplied slightly more than 1,000 men who promoted the Confederate cause in some capacity between 1861 and 1865.<sup>1</sup> Most of the men served in one of the four volunteer infantry companies from the County: the Brunswick Blues, Brunswick Guards, Brunswick Grays, and Ebenezer Grays. All four volunteer infantry companies were organized in the spring and early summer of 1861 and mustered into the

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<sup>1</sup>This total includes the men who served in the Brunswick Blues, Brunswick Guards, Brunswick Grays, Ebenezer Grays, 44th infantry, 12th infantry, Coleman's Artillery, 3rd Calvary, and the militia reserves as specified in The Pritchett File. The official army designations of the units from Brunswick County were determined by consulting Lee A. Wallace, *A Guide to Virginia Military Organizations*, Revised 2nd Ed. (Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1982).

Confederate Army by July, 1861. Another significant company from Brunswick County, the artillery company known as Coleman's or Neblett's Artillery, was mustered into service March 1, 1862.

The majority of the Brunswick County troops enlisted voluntarily in the Confederate army. In fact, 96 percent were enlisted men rather than conscripts with a little over half of them enlisting in 1861.<sup>2</sup> This is not to imply that conscripts were necessarily shirkers. Conscripts were often those who had been previously exempted either because of illness or work as an overseer for a widow. One such exemptee, William Burch Short, known to his friends and family as "Sambo," had been exempted on March 15, 1862, because of a chronic stomach condition; however, he was conscripted February 9, 1863, as the Confederacy's need for manpower grew urgent. He died the following September 8th from scorbutus in a Federal prison after being captured during the battle of Gettysburg. He left behind his 34-year-old wife of only two years, Babie.

The soldiers from Brunswick County saw action in numerous battles during the war. Because the companies were assigned to different regiments, the men's battle

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<sup>2</sup>These figures are based solely upon those 472 men for whom dates of enlistment or conscription were available. The years for enrollment in the army were as follows:

	no date	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865
enlisted	1	239	119	74	19	1
conscripted	14	0	2	2	2	0
100.0%	3.2%	50.5%	25.6%	16.1%	4.4%	0.2%

experiences were varied; however, they all experienced the hardships of a soldier's life.

On June 1, 1861, the Brunswick Blues assembled at Trotter's Store before their departure for Richmond.<sup>3</sup> A large crowd had gathered to wish them well, and, as was customary, a company flag was presented by the ladies of the county to the Captain of the Unit. No doubt women such as Mary Kennedy and Mary Tucker were present during the ceremony to say goodbye to their husbands for what would turn out to be the last time.

Upon mustering into the Confederate army on June 3, 1861, the Brunswick Blues joined the 20th Infantry Regiment Company I, Virginia Volunteers. They were ushered into immediate active duty in the mountains of West Virginia, where they participated in the failed Confederate attempt to hold Rich Mountain in what would become the new state of West Virginia. The Blues left Rich Mountain only suffering minor losses due largely to exposure and an outbreak of the measles.<sup>4</sup>

After their Rich Mountain experiences, the Blues were transferred to the 46th Virginia Infantry as 3rd Company D under General Henry A. Wise. Within a few

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<sup>3</sup>The Blues were the second company to leave for Richmond. They were preceded by the Brunswick Guards on May 4, 1861. Trotter's Store was a local store and gathering place for the county because it was located at a crossroads. See Neale, Brunswick County, 166. For statistical information concerning the Brunswick Blues, see Compiled Confederate Service Records, 20th Regiment, Virginia Infantry, 59th Regiment, Virginia Infantry, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy; Darrell L. Collins, 46th Virginia Infantry (Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1992); The Pritchett File.

<sup>4</sup>None of those soldiers who died were married.

months they were re-designated as Company I, 20th Infantry. This re-designation would last only a month, however, as they were reassigned once more as 3rd Company B, 59th Infantry of the Army of Northern Virginia. Most of their time until 1863 was spent on guard duty between Richmond and Williamsburg.

In 1863 the Blues, along with the rest of the 59th and the other regiments in Wise's Brigade, were ordered to report to the command of General P.G.T. Beauregard in South Carolina. By this time Joseph H. Daniel, the husband of Mary E. Daniel, had enlisted and joined the Brunswick Blues. Joseph and the other Blues spent much of their time in South Carolina building fortifications around Charleston. They also travelled to parts of Florida and Georgia but were eventually ordered to return to Petersburg, Virginia, to assist General Robert E. Lee's forces in defending the city during the last years of the war.

This was probably the bloodiest and most severe fighting the company saw. The Brunswick Blues remained in the Petersburg trenches until March, 1865. During the extensive skirmishes around the city, Mary Daniel and Mary Tucker were widowed as both Joseph H. Daniel and William H. Tucker were killed by Union gunshots. During the retreat from Petersburg, many men were wounded, killed, or captured. Among those who were captured were James Brough and Leonidas A. Jackson, both of whom survived the war and returned to Brunswick County and are noteworthy because they eventually married the widows of Brunswick men who were not so fortunate as to survive the war

to become veterans.<sup>5</sup> Although the Brunswick Blues' losses were relatively light because of the extensive time they spent in Florida and South Carolina, three of their deaths created widows as well as fatherless children.

The Ebenezer Grays, also from Brunswick County, did not fare as well as the Blues during their service in the Confederate army.<sup>6</sup> The Grays were mustered into service July 10, 1861, after their organization and training on the grounds of Ebenezer Academy which closed when the war began. Upon their arrival in Richmond they became Company E of the 56th Virginia Infantry.

The Grays first saw action in February, 1862, during an unsuccessful Confederate effort to hold Fort Donelson in Tennessee. The 56th Virginia found itself the victim of Confederate poor planning. After winning a surprise attack against the Union forces and opening up an escape route for the troops at the fort, Confederate Generals Gideon J. Pillow, John B. Floyd, and Simon B. Buckner could not agree upon what to do next. Hence, when the Union counterattacked the following day and closed the escape route, General Buckner was left at the fort with most of the 56th Virginia and Company E to surrender unconditionally to General Ulysses S. Grant. Thirty-four of the Grays were

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<sup>5</sup>They married Elizabeth Matthews, widow of Henry J. Matthews and Amanda Perkins the widow of James G. Perkins, respectively; see Marriage Bonds, 1853-1935. Henry J. Matthews died of typhoid pneumonia March 31, 1862, while James G. Perkins, a member of the Ebenezer Grays, died in a Federal prison of bilious fever also in 1862.

<sup>6</sup>For statistical information concerning the Ebenezer Grays, see William A. Young, Jr. and Patricia C. Young, 56th Virginia Infantry (Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1990); The Pritchett File.



captured at Fort Donelson and became prisoners of war at the federal prison, Camp Morton, Indiana. As was often the case during the Civil War, many men died in an enemy prison as a result of poor conditions and rampant disease. Among those who died at Camp Morton were Richard O. Short, Giles B. Slate, James G. Perkins, Alexander Dean, and Hamlin H. Lewis, all of whom left behind widows and, in some cases children.<sup>7</sup>

After the surviving Grays who were in prison were exchanged and rejoined the Army of Northern Virginia, the 56th Virginia participated in the Battle of Gaines Mill on June 27, 1862, which was a part of the Seven Days' Battles. Among the casualties at Gaines Mill was Williamson C. Thomas. Because his wound was so severe, he was allowed to return to his home in Brunswick County. There his young wife, Indiana V. Thomas, and two small children were able to say goodbye to their husband and father before he eventually died from his injuries on July 12, 1862.<sup>8</sup>

As a part of the Army of Northern Virginia, the Ebenezer Grays participated in the major battle of 1863 at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, between July 1 and July 3. As it did for many companies, this battle proved incredibly devastating. Of those many men who lost their lives at Gettysburg, seven Grays, William A. Blick, James E. Epperson,

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<sup>7</sup>The Grays also lost James W. Wilmouth who succumbed to yellow jaundice in May 1862. He was survived by a widow and three children.

<sup>8</sup>Additionally, during 1862, the Grays lost six men to disease, among them James Coleman Maitland to typhoid and William J. Blanks for an undisclosed disability. Both left behind widows and children.

Richard A. Martin, William B. "Sambo" Short, Charles W. Williams, Thomas A. Williams, and William Jesse Williams, were all mourned by widows who were forced to face the rest of their lives without their husbands. Another Gray, Needham S. Cheely, was discharged because of illness after the battle and spent the remaining days of his life with his wife Julietta in their home in Brunswick County.<sup>9</sup>

During the fighting that occurred throughout 1864 and part of 1865, two more Grays died and left widows. Sterling J. Williams was mortally wounded in the fighting that took place around Chester Station in the early part of 1864. And in April, 1865, James H. Dean was taken prisoner at Amelia Courthouse and later died at Point Lookout, Maryland.

Another Company from Brunswick County that saw some of the same action as the men of the Ebenezer Grays, particularly along the retreat route during 1865, was Coleman's Artillery.<sup>10</sup> Unlike their infantry counterparts from the county, this artillery company was known by a name rather than a letter. The company was known as Neblett's Artillery early in the war and Coleman's Artillery during the later years of fighting. Both names originated in the honored names of their company's two commanders, James M. Neblett and Wiley G. Coleman. Most of the men who were part

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<sup>9</sup>It is unknown how many days Needham survived after his discharge; however, his date of discharge and of death were both within the year of 1863.

<sup>10</sup>For statistical information concerning Coleman's Artillery, see Compiled Confederate Service Records, Coleman's Artillery, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy; The Pritchett File.

of this company had been members of Brunswick County's militia, the 96th Regiment, Virginia militia.<sup>11</sup>

Coleman's Artillery was organized March 1, 1862, in the southern part of Brunswick County. It was mustered into Confederate service March 17, 1862, and was assigned to Norfolk, Virginia; however, soon thereafter Confederate forces were withdrawn from the Norfolk area to protect the Confederate capital from an impending Federal attack by General George B. McClellan. Coleman's Artillery was stationed at Drewry's Bluff overlooking the James River a few miles south of Richmond.

The unit spent the remainder of 1862 as well as 1863 and 1864 defending the city of Richmond intermittently from atop Drewry's Bluff. Not until General Lee ordered the retreat did the men of the company leave what had become for all intents and purposes their battle station. As the members of Coleman's Artillery headed westward, they participated alongside the Ebenezer Grays in the Battles of Amelia Courthouse and Sayler's Creek. James Huskey, of Coleman's Artillery, was captured during the Battle of Sayler's Creek and died in a Federal prison leaving behind a grieving widow, Martha.

As may be assumed because of their position behind the infantry during battles, artillery companies lost more men to disease than they did to wounds from the enemy. Thus, during the years of 1862, 1863, and 1864, three members of Coleman's Artillery died from disease. In 1862, Alfred J. Wray succumbed to measles while George H.

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<sup>11</sup>Since the Revolution, many states had maintained county militia units. Some were more active than others; however, many of the men who filled the ranks of the Confederate army had initially been members of their local county militia.

Edmunds died of an undisclosed disease in 1863. Additionally, Napoleon B. Taylor fell ill in 1864 and was sent home to Brunswick County and died soon thereafter.<sup>12</sup> All three men left behind widows.

Not all of the men of Coleman's Artillery who were absent at General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse were dead or captured. Many of those who participated in the retreat escaped both capture by the Federal forces and surrender. Men such as Hugh Holloway simply saw the war as a lost effort and returned to his home in Brunswick County. Nine years later, Hugh married Martha Baird, the widow of fellow Brunswickian John J. Baird, a member of Company F, 12th Virginia Infantry.

The men of the Brunswick Guards, another infantry company from Brunswick County, enlisted into Confederate service May 4, 1861, as Company A, 5th Infantry Battalion.<sup>13</sup> Though the 5th Battalion saw little action during its brief existence, losses were incurred largely as a result of disease. Of those Brunswick County men of the 5th Battalion who died, only Marcus A. Clark, William Hagood, William Peebles, and William H. Venable were married. All four men were the victims of the poor conditions and inadequate medical facilities which plagued both sides during this war.

A little over a year after enlistment, the 5th Battalion was disbanded and those

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<sup>12</sup>Napoleon Taylor's illness is unknown.

<sup>13</sup>For information concerning the Brunswick Guards, see Compiled Confederate Service Records, 5th Battalion, Virginia Infantry, 53rd Regiment, Virginia Infantry, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy; The Pritchett File.

members between the ages of 18 and 35 were transferred on September 6, 1862, to the 53rd Infantry Regiment as Company H. The 53rd was assigned to Pickett's Division and from their transfer into the regiment until Lee's surrender at Appomattox they took part in many of the major battles of the Civil War.

The Guards' first engagement as members of the 53rd came during Lee's invasion into Maryland in September, 1862. They participated in the defense of Crampton's Gap, Fisher's Gap, and the other passes to allow Lee's army to reunite before what would be known as the Battle of Sharpsburg/Antietam. Following the army's re-entering of Virginia, the 53rd regiment participated in the Battle of Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862. More fighting occurred around Suffolk before the 53rd rejoined the rest of Lee's army after the victory at Chancellorsville.

The next major encounter with the enemy took place July 1 through 3, 1863 in the Battle of Gettysburg. Although the losses to the regiment were heavy as they were participants in Pickett's charge, none of the men from the company who were killed or subsequently died were married. One Guard, Benjamin A. Stith, would survive this infamous battle as well as capture and a stay in a Federal prison to return to Brunswick County. After the war, Stith married Babie Short, the widow of William B. "Sambo" Short. Stith and Short had both been captured at Gettysburg, however, Sambo had died of scorbustus in the prison hospital. Apparently Short and Stith knew each other and had

resided quite near one another before the war.<sup>14</sup> In several of his letters to Babie, Sambo mentioned Stith. In fact, in what would be his last letter home, he noted Stith specifically, "I left Ben Stith at Fort Delaware wounded but getting well."<sup>15</sup> From the text of the letter, it appears that Short knew he was going to die. All of his previous letters had closed with the entreaty that she write soon; however, he concluded this letter, "Farewell, you all must do the best you can and if we never meet on this earth again I hope we may meet in heaven."<sup>16</sup> It is likely that because Short knew of his impending death, he and Stith had discussed Babie and her situation as a widow and possibly the prospect of a marriage between Babie and Stith. At any rate, Babie and Benjamin Stith were married shortly after the war.<sup>17</sup>

The Guards' next engagement took place at New Bern, North Carolina, in an unsuccessful attempt to regain control of the port. Soon they were recalled to aid in the defense of Richmond. In May, 1864, the Guards joined their fellow countymen, the members of Coleman's Artillery, atop Drewry's Bluff and participated in the repelling of a Union force. From here they moved on to various spots around Richmond and Petersburg but only saw fighting once before the retreat as along the

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<sup>14</sup>In the 1860 census Stith and Short lived in the same magisterial district at the same post office; see Eighth Census, 1860.

<sup>15</sup>Neale, Brunswick County, 183.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>The specific date of their marriage is unknown.

Richmond/Petersburg Turnpike the Federals and Confederates engaged each other in battle. One of the Guards mortally wounded during the fighting, Thomas J. Hines, was the husband of Margaret Hines and the father of two young children.

Only one other Guard loss involved a married man from Brunswick County. During the fighting along the retreat route, William H. Michael was captured at Sayler's Creek and subsequently died of cholera on June 18, 1865, in the Federal prison, Johnson's Island, Ohio. His wife Sarah was left to depend upon their three sons, George, William, and J. Albert, ages nineteen, seventeen, and fifteen respectively, for her support.

The other volunteer company that originated in Brunswick County at the beginning of the war, the Brunswick Grays, enlisted in the Confederate army on July 2, 1861, in Richmond and became Company G, the 21st Virginia Infantry.<sup>18</sup> These Grays would see both severe fighting and heavy losses during their service in the Confederate army. They were sent to the western part of the state almost immediately after their enrollment. Once they reached Valley Mountain on August 6, 1861, they were joined by General Lee who was to coordinate their operations. Although the Grays had seen no fighting as of yet, they had already lost men to what for some became the most dangerous enemy. Numerous Grays fell ill during the hard marching and encampments, including Private Thomas R. Trotter, 40, who died October 1, 1861, from diarrhea and

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<sup>18</sup>For information concerning the Brunswick Grays, see Susan A. Riggs, 21st Virginia Infantry (Lynchburg: H.E. Howard, Inc., 1991); The Pritchett File.

pneumonia. He was survived by a wife, Mary, 33, and nine minor children.

After being removed from their duty in western Virginia, the Grays were placed under General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's command and remained with him until his death at Chancellorsville in 1863. They had participated with him in various skirmishes in the Shenandoah Valley during 1862 before joining Lee's army in the defense of Richmond against General McClellan. Several Grays were claimed by disease during this period. Among them were Benjamin L. Baird, John L. Brewer, and David M. Clary, all the husbands of Brunswick women. The Grays also took part in the Battle of Second Manassas where Lazarus C. Parish was killed in action. Lazarus's wife, Margaret, and her five young children probably had to rely to a large degree upon the support of her adult son, George, and two adult daughters, Susan and Mary.

The next combat the Grays faced was Lee's first northern invasion. They fought predominantly in a supportive role and suffered no losses at Sharpsburg/Antietam. Following their return to Virginia, they were engaged by the Federals in the Battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. During neither engagement did the Grays lose men to the rigors of battle, although Benjamin J. Mosely, who had been discharged because of illness, died about this time in the home in Brunswick County that he shared with his wife, Caroline, and their two children, both under eight-years-old.

By July, 1863, the Grays were on their way to Gettysburg with the rest of Lee's army. Here their losses were restricted to unmarried men. Following Gettysburg, the Grays participated in the Battle of the Wilderness and eventually entered the trenches at



Petersburg before the retreat that culminated in the surrender at Appomattox. Although the Grays' losses during the war were significant, relatively few of the men who died were married.

A number of Brunswick County men belonged to other regiments in the Confederate army such as Company C of the 44th Virginia Infantry, Company I of the 12th Virginia Infantry, and Company F of the 14th Virginia Infantry.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, Thomas B. Jones was a member of Company B of the 34th Virginia Infantry. He was killed by a sharpshooter near Petersburg in 1864 leaving his 26-year-old wife, Martha, a widow.<sup>20</sup>

The 44th Virginia was organized November 3, 1863. Probably only one-third, more or less, of Company C were from Brunswick County. The 44th Virginia spent the majority of its active duty guarding railroad stations until the Retreat. They, like the Ebenezer Grays, Brunswick Grays, Brunswick Blues, Brunswick Guard, and Coleman's Artillery were involved in the final major battle of the war which took place at Sayler's Creek. None of the Brunswick County men who fought with the 44th Virginia and died

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<sup>19</sup>For statistical information concerning the 44th Infantry, see Compiled Confederate Service Records, 44th Regiment, Virginia Infantry, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy; The Pritchett File. For statistical information concerning the 12th Infantry, see Compiled Confederate Service Records, 12th Regiment, Virginia Infantry, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy; The Pritchett File. For information concerning the 14th Infantry, see Compiled Confederate Service Records, 14th Regiment, Virginia Infantry, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy; The Pritchett File.

<sup>20</sup>The Pritchett File.

during the war were married, including John C. Myrick who escaped death to surrender with General Lee at Appomattox, return to Brunswick County, and marry Martha E. Blick, the widow of William A. Blick, one year after the war's end.

Nevertheless, the married men of the 12th and 14th Virginia Infantry were not so fortunate. Three Brunswick County men from each regiment died during the war. Richard H. H. Connelly and John J. Smith, both of the 12th Virginia, died from disease in 1862. Additionally, Charles G. Green was killed in action at Crampton's Gap in 1862 during Lee's first northern invasion. The fates of the three men from the 14th Virginia are similar except that two men, James J. Epperson and David H. Nash, were killed in action at Five Forks in 1865 and Howlett's Farm picket line in 1864, respectively. The third soldier, Berry W. Reed, was the victim of an undisclosed disease in 1864. None of these six men had the opportunity of seeing their wives and children before they died.

Although the soldiers from Brunswick County shared the experience of war, their situations during that experience were quite varied.<sup>21</sup> Overall, Brunswick County soldiers experienced a relatively low death rate. Moreover, because the majority of the soldiers were young and unmarried, the number of Civil War widows as compared to the number of men who served from the county is low as well. A total of 63 Brunswick County soldiers were killed in action during the four years of the Civil War. An additional 59 men died of disease or in a hospital; while 25 died in Federal prison

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<sup>21</sup>For all statistics on the deaths of the future widows' husbands, see Table 7.

hospitals and 24 more died of unspecified reasons.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the total deaths for the county was 177 men. The statistics for those 72 men who died during the war and left behind widows are similar to the overall county rates. A total of 25 percent were killed in action or died later from the wounds they received.<sup>23</sup> An additional 12.5 percent died of unspecified causes. And the remaining 62.5 percent died from various diseases. The largest number of men succumbed to either measles/rubeola or typhoid fever, about 22 percent each.<sup>24</sup> An additional nine percent died as a result of typhoid pneumonia or camp fever which may be related to typhoid fever. Also, two men who died from disease were described as having suffered from a combination of causes one of which was severe or chronic diarrhea.<sup>25</sup>

It is apparent from these figures that disease was the largest claimant of life, at least among the 72 married Brunswickians. This was due primarily to three factors. One, the living conditions in which many of them had to exist were extremely poor. For Confederate soldiers, inadequate clothing and shelter and a lack of nutritious food were

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<sup>22</sup>These men's records revealed simply that they "died in service."

<sup>23</sup>This figure does not include John J. Rawlings who died from his wounds and the complications of small pox.

<sup>24</sup>Rubeola was the term used by doctors to refer to a severe case of measles.

<sup>25</sup>Because medicine at the time was not as advanced as today and not well-administered, particularly during the war, it is likely that some of the attributions of death to certain diseases were not completely accurate. Also several of the men were recorded as having died from several different diseases depending upon which source or record was examined.

for the most part the norm of their lives during the war. This greatly contributed to a weakened ability to resist disease. Additionally, in the unsanitary conditions of communal residence, disease spreads more quickly. The second factor, their previous lack of exposure to certain diseases, gave few soldiers immunities. In fact, three-fourths of the soldiers who died from disease were from the rural parts of the county rather than the towns where previous exposure to disease was more likely.<sup>26</sup> This was particularly true in the case of diseases such as smallpox and measles. Similarly to what Robert Kenzer notes in his examination of Orange County, North Carolina, most of these men had probably never ventured outside of Brunswick County before the war and unless their communities had experienced an outbreak of a disease, they would have had no opportunity to develop natural immunity.<sup>27</sup> These two factors combined with a third factor, a predominant lack of proper and timely medical treatment, rendered the soldiers much more susceptible to becoming ill and contributed significantly to the high rate of death from disease.

It goes without saying then, that men who were captured and imprisoned were extremely likely to become ill or die from wounds they incurred before capture. Of the 191 total men from the county who spent time in a Federal prison, 25 died while

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<sup>26</sup>Of the married Brunswick County soldiers who died from disease, 73% were from rural areas while only 27% were from one of the small towns or villages within the county. See Eighth Census, 1860.

<sup>27</sup>Robert C. Kenzer, Kinship and Neighborhood in a Southern Community: Orange County, North Carolina, 1849-1881 (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 71.

incarcerated. Of those men who left behind widows, sixteen were prisoners-of-war at least once while two of those sixteen were prisoners a second time. A variety of prisons were involved in these incarcerations, the most infamous being Elmira, New York, Johnson's Island, Ohio, and Point Lookout, Maryland. All three of these prisons had high mortality rates. Thirteen men died in prison on their first visit, and disease was the largest claimant of life among them. Of the thirteen men who died, almost three-fourths perished as a result of disease.<sup>28</sup> According to William Best Hesseltine's study of Civil War prisons in both the North and South, neither side was interested in providing clean and safe conditions for prisoners of war. The Confederate Surgeon-General viewed the conditions in northern prisons as an "unworthy attempt to subdue or destroy our soldiers by pestilence and disease."<sup>29</sup> Conditions ranging from "pestilential cells," overcrowding, inadequate clothing, unwholesome food, and poor water conditions all contributed to the unhealthy atmosphere of the prisons on both sides resulting in countless deaths due to disease or illness.<sup>30</sup>

While the soldiers from Brunswick County had considerably varied experiences during the Civil War; they made little difference to the wives and children who were left

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<sup>28</sup>Of the fifteen men who died in prison, eleven succumbed to disease and two more died of undisclosed reasons. The latter two quite possibly could have died from disease as well.

<sup>29</sup>In William Best Hesseltine, Civil War Prisons: A Study in War Psychology (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1930), 183.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

behind. As the postwar period began, it was not the cause of death but rather the effects which would shape the surviving spouse's and children's lives.

## Chapter 3

### *Coping on the Homefront*

In 1862 when Julietta Cheely's husband, Needham, left to join the Ebenezer Grays, she was saddled with the responsibility of maintaining their farm, managing their four slaves, and providing for her two children.<sup>1</sup> Julietta was only 28-years-old when her husband left for war. Needham's death left Julietta to deal with the permanency of her new responsibilities as well as her grief.

Although none of the Brunswick County wives experienced the war first-hand as did their soldier-husbands, they endured their own unique war experiences. The homefront of any war is a trying place; however, it takes on special meaning when the homefront is also the battlefield. The residents faced the solitude and isolation caused by the war and the absence of loved-ones as well as such trials of war as scarcity of foodstuffs, lack of money, impressment, enemy raiding, and the dislocation of populations caused by enemy occupation. Additionally, those on the southern homefront faced the tribulation of dealing with an increasingly hostile, enslaved population within its own borders. As the war wore on, the slave population became more and more restless as its hopes for freedom came closer to realization. Such were the difficulties with which the wives of Brunswick County soldiers had to deal.

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<sup>1</sup>The Cheelys owned at least four slaves according to the Personal Property Taxes, 1860; Eighth Census, 1860.

Historians have acknowledged that war often presents women with a widened spectrum of opportunities and responsibilities than would otherwise be available to them. Drew Faust has noted that "the exigencies of war thus weakened the role prescriptions that had denied white women remunerative labor outside the home and had directed that only black women should work the land."<sup>2</sup> Many women took over the management of family farms in their husbands' absence. These women were forced, often under more trying conditions than usual, to perform both their assigned wifely duties as well as those of their absent husbands. While many wives were very successful, the farm was more often than not a responsibility they would just as soon relinquish.

Many of the letters written by husbands and wives during the war were concerned with the family farm. Often, soldiers would advise their wives on planting, harvesting, the purchase of supplies and the sale of products, as well as the management of the labor. Yet for all intents and purposes the women were running the farms. In his letters to his wife, Babie, Sambo Short frequently asked questions about the farm and his mill in addition to offering advice as to their management. On April 27, 1863, Sambo wrote, "Let me hear how they are getting on at home with the mill and whether they have lost any stock. Tell Charles to stick to the mill and hold the keys tight. I mean my

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<sup>2</sup>Drew Gilpin Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War eds. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 185.



keys, the crib and granary keys. The mill key should be put in the house at night."<sup>3</sup>

A month later Sambo inquired,

How does the wheat look? How does the water hold out at the mill? The dam must be fixed if it begins to get too low, though I would rather it should not be done until they are through laying by corn as it would bother them about working the crop; though ut must be done if necessary as Ma would lost custom if the water was to get too low and I know she needs the custom. They must use the feed to the best advantage. I don't want them to buy any more than they are compelled to have. It is so high and taxes so high and everything else.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps, Sambo had good reason to advise Babie as it is not clear whether or not she was doing a satisfactory job of managing the family's agricultural operations. At any rate, his practice of using his letters home as a means of issuing instructions and advice regarding the farm was not an unusual custom among soldiers.

Although running a farm was certainly a difficult task, managing the slave labor often proved to be a greater challenge. The peculiar institution which had for so long supported the South's way of life came to be a liability during the war. With so many of the men absent, slaves took greater liberties with their "new" masters. Women from the slave-owning classes were forced to take on a responsibility which both they and the slaves regarded as "not rightfully theirs." Because the slave system was based on the patriarchal assumption that the white male was the "Master" of both the black slave and the white woman, it was a natural consequence then that the slaves would become

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<sup>3</sup>William "Sambo" Short to Babie Short, April 27, 1863, in Neale, Brunswick County, 179.

<sup>4</sup>William Sambo Short to Babie Short, May 20, 1863, *ibid.*, 182.

rebellious and recalcitrant.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the feeling that the South was moving toward defeat, along with the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation, contributed to their hopes for freedom and their "misbehavior." For most women who found themselves in this new role, slavery's emerging problems often transcended any tangible benefits they felt they received from slave labor. Sambo Short's mother, Martha, was, in his opinion, the victim of several rebellious slaves. In a letter to his wife, Babie, Sambo declared, "I was truly sorry to hear Ma had lost her steers and hogs. I wish to know which they were. Tell her it is no one else that is stealing her geese and chickens but her own negroes. She must have them properly thrashed and tell Cousin Cince to lay down the law to them."<sup>6</sup>

Because of the necessities of war, women were often called to do more than just give their menfolk to the "Cause." Faust asserts that the totality of the war, particularly in the South, created the need for a major "mobilization of women, not for battle, but for civilian support services such as nursing, textile and clothing production, munitions and government office work. . . ."<sup>7</sup> In many ways the war served to bring into the spotlight the everyday household work of women. They were called upon to extend their domestic labors of sewing, cooking, and tending the sick, into the public arena of war

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<sup>5</sup>Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice," 183-184.

<sup>6</sup>William Sambo Short to Babie Short, April 27, 1863, in Neale, Brunswick County, 180.

<sup>7</sup>Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice," 172.

by sewing uniforms, providing meals for travelling soldiers, and nursing the wounded. Soldiers' letters home to their wives were full of requests that clothing, food, and other necessities be sent to them. Sambo asked his wife for such things as a hat, calico shirts, pants, a coat, a "small pocket looking glass," soap, a portfolio in which he could carry paper and envelopes, her "likeness if [she could] get it," as well as a small ham and some salt, "if it [could] be bought."<sup>8</sup> Thus, soldiers often relied upon their wives or mothers for the necessities which the Confederate government failed to provide. Perhaps, never before were the women's abilities as seamstresses and cooks as important to their husbands as they were during the war.

The war also opened up numerous opportunities for women in previously closed professions. The teaching profession often became the responsibility of the women left on the homefront. Emma Prescott of Fort Gaines, Georgia, was one woman upon whom this duty fell. In a letter to her husband she reflected that "the school teacher in the village left for the army & without solicitation, most of the scholars were sent to me Monday morning. . . . before I had time to think about almost - I was teaching."<sup>9</sup> In 1864 the President of North Carolina's Davidson College declared, "Our females must engage in the work of teaching; for there is no other alternative."<sup>10</sup> The feminization

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<sup>8</sup>William Sambo Short to Babie Short, April 27, 1863, in Neale, Brunswick County, 178-180.

<sup>9</sup>Camille Kunkle, "It is What it Does to the Souls': Women's Views on the Civil War," Atlanta History 33 (Summer 1989): 166.

<sup>10</sup>Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice," 187.

of the teaching profession had occurred before the war in the North; however, not until the war took all the men preparing for and/or already in the teaching profession did the South resort *en masse* to female teachers. Although the entrance of women into teaching was by no means universally supported, it was argued by proponents as not only a necessity of war but also a fitting use of women's natural and moral qualities.<sup>11</sup> Although there is no specific documentation that any of the Brunswick widows took up teaching during the war, the fact that two of them, Mary L. Thomas and Susan Seward Dunn, were employed as teachers years after the war suggests that they might have also taught during the war.<sup>12</sup>

Nursing was another profession that previous to the war had been reserved for men. Although the feminization of the nursing profession was much more widespread in the North, southern women did act as nurses during the war. The debate revolved primarily around the providence of exposing southern womanhood to the gruesome aspects of hospital work. In fact, it was deemed by many to be unacceptable behavior for a lady. This belief, however, did not stop many women of various social strata from volunteering their services in numerous Confederate hospitals. Indeed, it is very probable that Sarah Maitland, a nurse in the 1880s, received her medical training during

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<sup>11</sup>Drew Faust briefly discusses the issue of women in the teaching profession in "Altars of Sacrifice," 186-187.

<sup>12</sup>Mary Thomas and Susan Seward Dunn were both designated in the 1880 census as teachers; see Tenth Census, 1880, Brunswick County, Virginia, Schedule I, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy.

the war.<sup>13</sup>

The Civil War provided women with both opportunity and hardship. Because most of the war was fought on southern soil, those on the homefront faced the added problem of occupation by enemy forces. Although Brunswick County was not the site of any actual battles or major confrontations between the armies, residents did have to deal with the presence of raiders on a somewhat regular basis. Additionally, after the end of the war, General William T. Sherman's troops marched through the county, camping at a local church on their way to Washington D.C. And as legend has it, Sherman's troops used all the fence rails along the route for their cooking and camp fires.<sup>14</sup>

There are many tales in the South of the women's ingenious methods of secreting their belongings from Yankee invaders. Mrs. Stella Mosely of Brunswick County relates the following story:

And I heard mother said that her mother, my grandmother, you know, she wore big long skirts, you know, down to the floor, and said when the northern soldiers were coming through, they would destroy so much that the southern people had that she took her silver and just sewed it up in the deep hem of her skirt, and she was just sitting down when they came,

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<sup>13</sup>Sarah Maitland's occupation listed in the 1880 census was nursing; see Tenth Census, 1880. This fact will be elaborated upon later in this thesis.

<sup>14</sup>Interview with Betty Hicks McVay, July 9, 1974, in Neale, Brunswick County, 176.

cause she was afraid they'd get it when they came through.<sup>15</sup>

No specifics are known about any troubles that the subject women might have had with Yankee raiders; however, it is likely that they had an experience similar to Stella Mosely's grandmother.

Because of the shortages and other hardships on the homefront, communities often joined together in an effort to alleviate the worst of the suffering. Walter Trattner asserts that "like all wars, the War between the States created enormous relief problems--problems which could not be blamed on the individuals or families involved."<sup>16</sup> Such was the case in Virginia as a whole and in Brunswick County in particular. The war essentially changed the course of aid to the poor as it became public rather than private. The states and local communities took on much of the responsibilities while private groups such as churches continued to give aid as well.<sup>17</sup> Virginia was the only southern state that regarded the problem of providing for the poor as solely the responsibility of local agencies and resources.

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<sup>15</sup>Although it is not known whether or not this grandmother was one of the widows, it is a wonderful example of how necessity is the mother of invention; see Neale, Brunswick County, 177-178.

<sup>16</sup>Walter I. Trattner, From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America (New York: The Free Press, 1974), 68. Unfortunately, there are no book-length studies dedicated specifically to poor relief in Virginia during the Civil War.

<sup>17</sup>Trattner asserts that previous to the war, poor relief had been considered the responsibility of private citizens, such as families, friends, or churches. The war made relief a public issue. Also in many ways, the war took away, at least for the period of the war, the stigma of being poor; see *ibid.*, 68.

The General Assembly decided that the responsibility for providing for Confederate citizens in need fell first upon the local government with the intention that if the problem grew worse it would subsequently be taken up by the state. Although the state government eventually extended some assistance, it was inadequate and belated, and the majority of the burden of raising and distributing money and/or food among the poverty-stricken families of soldiers was handled by local agencies.<sup>18</sup> Eventually, as the war wore on, the Confederate national government had to face the problem as well. William Zornow cites two reasons for the Confederate government's intervention concerning the southern economy. First, the scarcity of goods and rampant inflation of prices was a constant source of hardship for Confederate citizens, particularly women whose husbands, sons, and fathers were in the service. Second, the ever depressing general economic condition of the homefront was reflected in an ever increasing rate of desertion.<sup>19</sup>

The County Commissioners of Brunswick began to act upon the potential problem at the outset of the war. On May 27, 1861, the justices ordered that at the next meeting they would "consider the propriety or expediency of making provision for the families of such persons as have been called into military service who are in indigent

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<sup>18</sup>William F. Zornow, "Aid for the Indigent Families of Soldiers in Virginia, 1861-1865," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 68 (October 1958): 458.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 454.

circumstances."<sup>20</sup> At the following meeting the justices determined that \$5,000 should be appropriated "for the benefit of the wives and children and families of the soldiers that have volunteered . . . who are in indigent circumstances."<sup>21</sup> Less than a year later they had to appropriate another \$5,000.

By November 23, 1863, the Commonwealth determined that it was no longer expedient to leave this matter of aid to the judgment of local courts and ordered the installation of a new plan for administering aid. This new plan defined those eligible to receive aid as "soldiers or sailors who had been disabled, widows and minor children of soldiers or sailors who had died in service, and the indigent families of men then in service."<sup>22</sup> Then, each county was to create a list of the qualified. Brunswick County entered the new plan in its Order Books as follows:

Ordered that the Sheriff of this County make a list of all indigent soldiers enlisted from this county in the Confederate Service or State Service, who have been or may be disabled or honorably discharged and of their families and of the families of those who may be now in service and of the widows and minor children of each as may have died in the service and said list shall be returned to the next term of the Court; and it is ordered that the Justices report a list of said persons and families in their respective districts to the next term.<sup>23</sup>

The order further detailed how to raise money and the propensity of impressment

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<sup>20</sup>Order Book 38 / 1851-1865, Brunswick County, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Zornow, "Aid for Indigent Families," 456.

<sup>23</sup>Order Book 38, Brunswick County.



for poor relief while it also appointed agents to buy, or if need be, impress relief supplies for the poor on the list. The county obtained a \$50,000 loan from its residents to finance this project. Two Addenda to the list were written January 25, 1864, and February 22, 1864. These Addenda included four of the subject widows and it is likely that others of the widows were among those on the original list.<sup>24</sup> These women who were counted among the impoverished in the county during the war generally remained in the ranks of the poor after the war as well.

Among those on the list was Mary Jane Taylor, whose husband Napoleon B. Taylor died of illness in 1862. Before the war the Taylors had been relatively poor holding only \$55 of personal estate and no real estate. Though Mary Jane received aid during the war, apparently she was never able to overcome her poverty which only increased after the loss of her main support. Though she applied for and received a Confederate pension in 1888, she could not afford to maintain an independent household after her husband's death. While in 1870 she and her nine-year-old daughter, Pocahontas, resided with her late husband's parents, by 1880, they had moved in with her brother, Bassett Rawlings, and his family. Apparently, Mary Taylor never recovered from the economic hardships which she incurred as a result of the war and was forced to rely upon others for her support.

Elizabeth Connelly faced a somewhat similar situation as she too was on the

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<sup>24</sup>Unfortunately, the original list of families is not extant as it was written on a separate sheet of paper rather than actually transcribed into the Order Book.

county's list for poor relief during the war. Moreover, she was also the recipient of a Confederate widow's pension beginning in 1888. Richard Connelly, a 21-year-old laborer with \$185 of real estate, had been married to Elizabeth for only three years when the war began.<sup>25</sup> Though she received assistance during the war, she was not able to hold onto the family's real estate holdings. While she maintained an independent household in 1870, the following years were spent either in her parent's household or in her sister and brother-in-law's home as a dependent.

Jane Epperson was yet another widow who received aid from the county. She had married James E. Epperson January 7, 1863, and was widowed within the year. Jane remarried a year after the war's end. Her new husband, William Sledge, was ten years her senior and was a moderately successful miller. Together they had three children and lived modestly. Thus, as was common among widows, particularly young widows like Jane, she used remarriage as a means to improve her situation.

The fourth widow on the indigent list, Nancy Drake, also encountered difficulties supporting herself both during and after the war. Before the war, Joel Drake was a wheelwright with only \$30 of personal estate.<sup>26</sup> Though Nancy had trouble supporting herself and her two children, Sarah, age nine, and Louise, age four, during the war, by 1875, she had acquired 12 acres of real estate in Brunswick County valued at \$24 and

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<sup>25</sup>Eighth Census, 1860.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

she and her daughters were residing in Chesterfield County.<sup>27</sup> It is likely that Nancy rented out this property since she lived in another county.

In addition to the aid given to the its indigents, Brunswick County also used price-fixing as a means to alleviate some of the suffering within its borders. In November, 1863, the county court set the following prices: bacon \$2.25/lb., corn \$45/barrel, wheat \$10/bushel, flour \$60/barrel, beef \$.65/lb., pork \$1.50/lb., and syrup \$10/gallon.<sup>28</sup> Only a half a year later the prices set on bacon, corn, flour and wheat had more than doubled. This jump in price reveals the intense effect that inflation had on prices and consequently on the southern standard of living. It has long been noted by historians that the economic situation in the South contributed to the Confederacy's defeat. Many areas of the Confederacy suffered privation and economic decline regardless of the position of the Union army or the proximity of the fighting.

In 1864 the state government found it necessary to appropriate funds for aid for the poor.<sup>29</sup> On February 20, 1864, an Act which appropriated one million dollars for the care of families of Confederate soldiers and sailors who resided in counties which were controlled by Federal armies as well as so-called "neutral territor[ies]" was passed by the General Assembly. This was deemed necessary because in these areas the county courts could not perform as was specified in the previously discussed Act of 1863. The

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<sup>27</sup>Real Estate Taxes, 1875, 1880, and 1885.

<sup>28</sup>Order Book 38, Brunswick County.

<sup>29</sup>Zornow, "Aid for Indigent Families," 457.

state acted further when it passed a law on March 9, 1864, providing for the purchase and sale of raw cotton, cotton yarns and cloth, and cotton cards to all persons who were in need, rather than just the families of Confederate servicemen. Zornow asserts, however, that neither of these two laws were meant to challenge or usurp the existing responsibility of the county in providing aid for its poor citizens, and presumably, the county continued its efforts to alleviate suffering within its borders. These two statutes were simply a recognition that because of the exigencies of the war, a county was not always able to provide adequate relief without the assistance of the national Confederate government.

One particular product, salt, was recognized as being of prime importance by the soldiers and their families as well as the state government. As was mentioned previously, salt was one of the necessities that Sambo Short requested from his wife in one of his letters. The General Assembly enacted several laws regarding the manufacture, distribution and sale of salt in Virginia during the war. In May, 1862, the legislature authorized the county courts to purchase as much salt as they deemed necessary for consumption by their citizens. The salt was to be purchased with money obtained by county levies or loans and was to be sold to the people at cost. Only a few months later, \$500,000 was allocated to be utilized by the government to produce salt for disbursement among those in need. By March, 1863, the office of superintendent of the salt works was established. He was licensed to manufacture, impress, and distribute

salt to the counties to be sold to their citizens at cost.<sup>30</sup>

Both soldiers and women and children suffered hardship and affliction because of the war.<sup>31</sup> Though their situations were often different, both the women and men of Brunswick County were victims of the war in one way or another. Those men who returned from battle faced the challenge of rebuilding their families and lives. This was also the task of the widows and children of the husbands and fathers whose lives were claimed by the war. Although their task was essentially the same, their experiences of the period after the war were extremely different.

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<sup>30</sup>For information regarding the Confederate Government's control of salt, see *ibid.*, 457-458.

<sup>31</sup>Unfortunately, no record of a county newspaper from the war period exists which might provide more insight into the everyday life of those on the homefront.

## Chapter 4

### *A Widow's "Thirds" and*

### *Her Feme Sole Status*

When Richard O. Short joined the Ebenezer Grays on July 10, 1861, the possibility of death must have seemed too remote to warrant the writing of a will. He probably assumed that the war would be a short affair with few casualties. Unfortunately for his wife Harriet and their three children, he was mistaken. In 1860 Richard Short had been a prosperous farmer with \$1,000 of real estate and \$1,500 of personal estate which included four slaves.<sup>1</sup> When, in 1863, he succumbed to typhoid fever in Petersburg, his estate was inventoried at \$4,884.50 of which Harriet received only her dower "thirds" with which to support herself and their three children.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Harriet was only awarded about \$1,628 of her deceased husband's estate, merely a small portion of their prewar wealth.

Although there were many factors that affected the experience of widowhood, the legal ramifications involved in the distribution of the husband's estate were often vast. Whether a husband died intestate or testate and, if he died testate, what his will specified could govern his widow's options and decisions throughout her widowhood. Only five

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<sup>1</sup>Eighth Census, 1860; Personal Property Taxes, 1860.

<sup>2</sup>December 1, 1863, Will Book 18 / 1860-1865, Brunswick County, Brunswick County Courthouse, Lawrenceville, Virginia, pages 662 and 663.

men left wills whereby to govern the disbursement of their estates. The other 66 husbands left no record as to how they wished their property distributed leaving their widows, including Harriet Short, to rely upon the law to determine their portion of their husband's estates. For these women, this usually meant only their dower "thirds."

Since 1662 Virginia statute law provided that when a husband died without a will, his widow was entitled to a dower portion of his property. From 1790 until about 1890 this constituted a full one-third life interest in any real estate and a one-third interest in any personalty that he owned during their marriage if there were children with the children receiving equal portions of the remaining two-thirds of the property.<sup>3</sup> If there were no children, the widow still received only a one-third life interest in the real estate as well as one-half of the personal estate.<sup>4</sup> A widow was never entitled to all of her husband's estate unless there were no legal kin.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>A widow's portion of the personal estate varied according to the number of children. If there were two or fewer children, she received a full one-third. If there were three or more children then the personal property was divided equally among her and all the children; see Carole Shammas, Marylynn Salmon and Michel Dahlin, Inheritance in America from Colonial Times to the Present (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 64.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 65.

<sup>5</sup>Regarding the remaining two-thirds of real estate after a widow was given her dower, common law dictated that inheritance pass as follows: the eldest brother of the deceased received the entire two-thirds; if there were no brothers, it was divided equally between any sisters of the decedent; if there were no siblings at all, the inheritance passed to the "issue of the decedent's paternal grandfather, the eldest male of the nearest degree succeeding first." With regard to personal estate, the line was identical except that the decedent parents were considered the first heirs, before the siblings, if the decedent had no children; see *ibid.*, 37.

The rules and regulations regarding the dispersal of dower varied throughout the nineteenth century; however, in its creation was the original intention of establishing a means whereby a widowed woman could support herself and her children without having to rely too heavily on community aid. Dower rights gave a widow only the use of the dower real estate during her lifetime which meant that she did not have the power to sell or give away the property or to alter it in any way.<sup>6</sup> Even so, as Joan Hoff maintains "unless there was considerable wealth in the family, the value of land or money obtained through dower rights was not usually adequate for the family's support."<sup>7</sup> And unfortunately for many of these widows, one-third of their husband's property was not nearly enough to support themselves and any children from their marriages. Of the estates that were even substantial enough to warrant a recorded inventory, only 34.6 percent were valued at \$1,000 and above. One-third of \$1,000 was not nearly enough to maintain the lifestyle which a widow had experienced with \$1,000 of property. In fact, because they inherited only a portion of a farm or business, widows were often unable to maintain them as a viable means of income. As Marylynn Salmon asserts, an

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<sup>6</sup>If a widow altered the dower property, even if it was in an effort to increase profits, this was considered by law to be wasting another person's property. See Marlene Stein Wortman, ed., Women in American Law, Volume I, From Colonial Times to the New Deal (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1985), 17.

<sup>7</sup>Joan Hoff, Law, Gender, and Injustice: A Legal History of U. S. Women (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 107.



inherent aspect in the concept of dower was the "enforced dependency of widows."<sup>8</sup> She argues that the laws made a wife dependent upon her husband during marriage because he had the legal obligation to support her; however, when the husband died, the law set the amount a widow was entitled to for her support at far less than was necessary to maintain the standard of living which she had enjoyed while married.<sup>9</sup>

Although the rights of dower varied throughout the nineteenth century, they were consistently upheld, though within more stringent confines as the century progressed. Throughout the early part of the nineteenth century, state and federal governments, though they acted in the purported interest of widows, actually succeeded in limiting the benefits of dower. As the country entered the industrial revolution and an age of increasing development, dower became seen as "a dormant incumbrance on a title."<sup>10</sup>

Joan Hoff outlines several nineteenth century landmark cases in which courts upheld dower rights but within "ever-narrowing boundaries."<sup>11</sup> In *Braxton v. Codeman*, Virginia, 1805, *Ayer V. Spring*, Massachusetts, 1812, and *Thompson V. Morrow*, Pennsylvania, 1819, the courts ruled that "a widow could not claim dower rights in

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<sup>8</sup>Marylynn Salmon, Women and the Law of Property in Early America (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 183.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Hoff, Law, Gender, and Injustice, 107.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 108.

improvements on land sold by her husband that were otherwise 'dowable'.<sup>12</sup> What this meant was that though a widow could claim interest in land that her husband had sold without her consent, if any improvements were built on that land such as a sawmill or cotton ginnery, she could not claim any interest in those improvements. In *Greene v. Greene*, Ohio, 1824, widows lost the power to claim an interest in any lands purchased in partnership if they were needed to pay off debts. This was just one instance of the loopholes which abounded in court decisions in which creditors' rights were given priority over widows' rights. Other such decisions were *Davidson v. Frey*, North Carolina, 1831, and *Conner v. Shephard*, Massachusetts, 1818. In *Davidson*, the court ruled that "land which was in the process of being sold at the time of the husband's death fell outside the wife's dower claims."<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the court decided in *Conner* that "'waste' land that had not been brought under cultivation before the husband's death was...not dowable."<sup>14</sup> All of these rulings had the effect of rendering dower less effective as a legal means of preventing widows and orphans from becoming destitute. In effect, dower was considered expendable when it conflicted with modern conditions.

Virginia statutory law also provided a woman whose husband did leave a will an option if he tried to deprive her of her minimum third. Linda Speth asserts that "if the wife was unhappy or dissatisfied with the bequest her husband left her, she could appear

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

in court, renounce the will, and claim her common-law 'thirds.' The justices of the county court would then appoint a commission to divided the testator's estate and ensure that the wife received her dower."<sup>15</sup>

As was previously mentioned, only five of the widows' husbands left wills specifying how they wished their property to be divided. This fact is fascinating in two regards. One, it can be interpreted as a reflection of the cavalier feeling of many soldiers on both sides when they went off to war. They expected a quick fight which would end after the other side gave up. Two, it indicates that perhaps few of the widows' husbands thought of themselves as wealthy enough to warrant the writing of a will.

Of those men who did write wills, there are some interesting similarities. All five of the testators were literate. Additionally, three of the men each owned property worth more than \$8,000. (See Table 15.) However, the most striking similarity is perhaps that all five wrote their wills no more than five months before they entered the Confederate army.<sup>16</sup> In fact, James E. Epperson's will is dated one day after his enlistment in the

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<sup>15</sup>Linda E. Speth, "More than her 'Thirds': Wives and Widows in Colonial Virginia," *Women and History* 1 (1982): 10.

<sup>16</sup>Five months is possibly a long estimate. The specific date of Needham Cheely's conscription into the Confederate army is unknown except that it occurred in 1862. He wrote his will August 4, 1862 and presumably, he was conscripted after the writing of his will leaving the rest of August, September, October, November, and December in 1862. The other three, William Blick, Richard Connelly, and William Short, wrote their wills six, twenty-four, and eleven days, respectively, prior to their induction into the Confederate army.

Ebenezer Grays. In 1860, James, a 31-year-old farmer with \$100 of personal estate, was still residing in his mother's household.<sup>17</sup> On January 7, 1863, James married Jane Lewis. Only a little over a month later, February 9, 1863, he enlisted in the Ebenezer Grays. When he wrote his will one day later, he stipulated that at his death all of his property, both real and personal, was to go to Jane.<sup>18</sup>

Interestingly, James Epperson was the only testator of the five to appoint his wife as executrix of his estate. Suzanne Lebsack's study of testators in Petersburg found that the husband's appointment of his wife as an executrix was directly related to his wealth in that the richer the testator, the less inclined he would be to assign his wife the responsibility of executing his estate. This, apparently, was due to the belief that the role of executrix stretched the wife's competence or undermined her status as a lady.<sup>19</sup> She also found that age was taken into consideration by a number of testators in Petersburg: "Men seem to have taken the wife's ages into account as well, apparently believing that women in their twenties were too inexperienced to assume the executor's responsibilities."<sup>20</sup> This notion takes on added importance when one considers that most of these men's motivations for writing their wills was that they might die in the next few

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<sup>17</sup>Eighth Census, 1860.

<sup>18</sup>February 10, 1863, Will Book 19 / 1858-1872, Brunswick County, Brunswick County Courthouse, Lawrenceville, Virginia, pages 45 and 100.

<sup>19</sup>Suzanne Lebsack, The Free Women of Petersburg, Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984), 121.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

years of war. Thus, they most certainly would have considered their wives' ages at the time. In fact, Jane Epperson, the wife of James, was only 24-years-old when he wrote his will, and they had only been married for about one month. It therefore stands to reason that according to age, James would not appoint Jane as his executrix; however, the fact that the Eppersons were not wealthy could explain his decision to appoint her regardless of her age.

In instances where the testator specified no executor, as in the case of Richard H. H. Connelly, the wife had the option of accepting or refusing the task.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly enough, Connelly did own a somewhat substantial amount of real estate; the 1860 tax records of the county reveal that he owned 96 acres of real estate valued at \$186. Connelly's will was very straightforward in that he stipulated only that all his assets were to go to his wife, Elizabeth, for use during her lifetime and at her death were to be divided equally among their children.<sup>22</sup> Thus, he might have felt no need to appoint an independent executor upon the assumption that Elizabeth would accept the task because it was a relatively simple one. Also true, however, is that Elizabeth Connelly was only 20-years-old when Richard drafted his will. Thus, it is conceivable that he did not intend for her to become the executrix at all and simply had no one specific in mind. Therefore, he may have been relying upon the court to appoint a competent individual whom he probably assumed would not be Elizabeth.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Will Book 18, March 3, 1861, page 461.

No evidence was found as to whether or not Elizabeth accepted the role of executrix; however, Lebsock outlines several factors which were involved in a woman's decision to accept or refuse such a task. She contends that the estate's condition may have been the most important component in a widow's decision regarding the administration of her husband's estate.<sup>23</sup> Additional factors included the widow's age, health, and literacy. Also whether or not the widow was originally from the county in which she and the deceased husband lived was a factor. For example, if a widow was from neighboring Dinwiddie County, she might choose to leave the administration of her Brunswickian husband's estate to a native resident of the county so that she could return to Dinwiddie to be with her family. Other factors included a widow's willingness to take on new ventures, the amount of spare time she had, and the presence or absence of some trusted friend or relative upon whom she could rely for assistance. And one of the most important elements a widow had to consider was her previous experience with finances. Often women who had no experience in managing financial dealings would choose to forego the frequently confusing fiscal responsibilities of the executorship.

None of the other three soldiers appointed their wives as the executrices of their estates. According to Lebsock's assertions as noted previously, this is possibly related to the amount of property involved in the estate. All three soldiers' estates were inventoried as at least \$8,047.92 each, an amount significantly larger than either James Epperson's or Richard Connelly's estates. Consequently, all three appointed male friends

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<sup>23</sup>Lebsock, Free Women of Petersburg, 123.

or relatives as their executors.

Another important facet of examining these husbands' wills is their specific stipulations concerning their wives and the use of their property. Often a husband's will placed constraints upon his widow's decisions after his death. Each of the five men made very specific provisions regarding their widows and their property and none were identical. William Blick, whose property was inventoried at his death at a value of \$15,470, specified that his entire estate was to go to his wife until his son, William Blick, Jr. came of age or married. Additionally, his wife's portion was to be decreased to a one-third life estate if she remarried with the remaining two-thirds to go to his son. It is interesting to note that he then declares that if he "dies childless" the remaining two-thirds should go to his two brothers and one sister. Thus, when William Blick wrote his will, it is likely that they had no children but that perhaps Martha was pregnant.<sup>24</sup>

Needham Cheely's will was similar to William Blick's in that he intended that his entire estate go to his wife, Julietta, with the condition that she not remarry. If she remarried, she would only be entitled to one-third during her lifetime while the remaining two-thirds would be divided among his children. Needham further specified that after Julietta's death all the property was to go to the children. Essentially then, Needham's bestowal to Julietta is a life estate though he never clearly states it as such. Furthermore, it is not clear whether this last "for life" stipulation is applicable only if she remarries, or if it also pertains to the original gift of his entire estate if she remained single.

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<sup>24</sup>Will Book 18, July 4, 1861, pages 565, 634, and 677.

Another interesting aspect of Needham's will is that it includes specific instructions for Julietta regarding the sale of some of their land. It is possible that this topic is something they were discussing prior to the writing of his will.<sup>25</sup> It is also an indication that Needham recognizes his wife's capabilities regarding the management of their property--a fact which becomes apparent when one examines her property holdings. At the end of the war, Julietta owned 124.5 acres of land, fee simple.<sup>26</sup> Five years later, she had acquired another 90.5 acres of land, fee simple.<sup>27</sup> She maintained ownership of this property until after 1890, when it appears that she sold or gave away a 34 acre tract. Not only had Julietta and Needham been among the elite before the war, Julietta was able to retain her social status after his death and was, in fact, the wealthiest of the Brunswick County widows after the war.

Richard Connelly's will continues along the same vein as Needham's except that he makes only one stipulation--that his entire estate go to his wife during her lifetime to be divided equally among their children after her death.<sup>28</sup> He makes no mention of remarriage whatsoever which could be either because he did not think her remarriage should affect her control of their marital property, or conceivably, because he assumed that she would not remarry anyway.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., August 4, 1862, pages 563, 630, and 632.

<sup>26</sup>Real Estate Taxes, 1865.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 1870.

<sup>28</sup>Will Book 18, page 461.



Another testator, William Short, put a unique twist in his will. If there were no children, then Babie received everything for life. After her death everything was to be divided among his mother, siblings and his siblings' heirs. If William and Babie had children, then the heir collected one-third of the estate while Babie retained a two-thirds life estate portion.<sup>29</sup> Thus, Babie acquired more than the traditional one-third specified by the rules of dower. Also, as in the case of Richard Connelly's will, Blick did not mention the issue of remarriage in his will. Thus, as was discussed in Chapter Two, perhaps William intended for Babie to marry Benjamin Stith if he did not survive the war which might explain Short's failure to include any stipulations regarding remarriage in his will.

James E. Epperson also willed everything to his wife, Jane, though with conditions. He specified that if she remarried, Jane would receive nothing and everything would go to his unmarried sister, Mary, and his married siblings' children.<sup>30</sup> Though two of the other four men may not have wanted their wives to remarry and basically indicated this in their wills by reducing the amount of inheritance, none wrote them out of their wills upon remarriage as harshly as did James Epperson.<sup>31</sup>

Guardianship was another area in which a husband could exercise control from

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., January 27, 1863, pages 568, 661, and 703.

<sup>30</sup>Will Book 19, page 45.

<sup>31</sup>Whether or not these five women remarried after their husbands' deaths will be discussed in Chapter Five.

beyond the grave. Common law granted the husband sole control of any children from a marriage. Upon his death, guardianship did not automatically pass to the wife. Though the courts generally awarded the rights of guardianship to the mother, if the husband specified in his will that a third party be appointed as guardian, the courts typically followed the husband's instructions. Although none of the testators chose to appoint a third party guardian, all of them indicated in their wills that the bestowal of property to the wife be used for the support, maintenance, and education of any children.

Though women were generally relegated to the private sphere, in widowhood, some women were able to exercise a substantial amount of personal control and responsibility. According to Virginia law, single women, including widows, were *feme soles*. This meant that theoretically they possessed all the same legal privileges as men. In fact, a *feme sole* could enter into contracts, bring lawsuits against her debtors, convey her property by deed, and plan for the disposal of property after her death by executing a will.<sup>32</sup> Only one of the Brunswick County Confederate widows appears to have engaged in a legal action other than property conveyances or executing a will. On September 22, 1866, Narcissa Faris filed a petition with the County Court of Brunswick requiring that W. A. Faris repay a bond to her late husband, Peter A. Faris's, estate in the amount of \$325.60 with interest assessed at \$97.68 totaling \$423.68.<sup>33</sup> Narcissa's action indicates that though Peter left no will, she chose to accept the responsibility of

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<sup>32</sup>Speth, "Thirds," 8.

<sup>33</sup>Will Book 19, September 22, 1866, page 216.

administering his estate. There was no further legal action implying that Narcissa was successful in collecting this debt to her husband's estate.

Another legal right that several of the widows, as *feme soles*, exercised was executing a will. Because widows enjoyed the same legal rights as men, unlike married women they were able to write their own wills and dispose of their property as they deemed appropriate. Among the women who wrote wills, property holdings varied considerably with only one testator, Susan Dunn, holding a substantial amount of property, \$2,211.25 of real estate. None of the others owned more than \$700 of total property. (See Table 16.) Historians have noted the differences between those wills written by women and those written by men. On average, women were much more specific about the dispersion of their belongings and very often played favorites with their heirs, whereas men generally subscribed to broad general formulas.<sup>34</sup> Nine of the 70 widows executed wills, and all but one of their wills were very specific. For example, Sarah F. Watkins specified that her large feather bed, hair mattress and silver spoons were to go to her son, A. S. Watkins, while two other feather beds and silver spoons would belong to her grandson, Ben W. Watkins. The rest of her possessions she intended to be divided equally between the two of them.<sup>35</sup>

Women often chose to use their wills to make a point rather than simply convey

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<sup>34</sup>In Chapter Five of Free Women of Petersburg, Suzanne Lebsack outlines the differences she found in the wills of women and men.

<sup>35</sup>February 1, 1894, Will Book 22 / 1887-1896 Brunswick County, Brunswick County Courthouse, Lawrenceville, Virginia, page 720.

property. Martha A. Baird stipulated that her brothers, E. L. Mosely, J. J. Mosely, and John Mosely, as well as her sisters, Martha J. Reed, Indie A. King, and Caroline E. Mosely, each receive \$.01 only. This was probably Martha's way of thumbing her nose at some injustice she attributed to them. She then devised all of her real property which amounted to 83 acres of land valued at \$215.80 to her nephew J. E. King and her personal estate consisting of one horse worth \$50, and \$20 of furniture to another nephew, B. F. King and her niece, Lucy J. Jones, to be divided equally between them.<sup>36</sup>

Suzanne Lebsock found that women also used their wills to benefit other women relatives or friends.<sup>37</sup> Martha J. Johnson was one such devisee. Her will, dated September 9, 1893, stipulated that 38 acres of land called the "old homestead" go to Annie May Vick along with two cows and one bed.<sup>38</sup> Martha further specified that all her remaining real estate, 60 acres and a house, go to her brother, Charles Jones Bottom, as a loan during his lifetime. At his death it was to be given to Sarah Elizabeth Vick.

Narcissa Faris also used her will to benefit other women. She designated that all her real estate and her bed go to her sister, Susan R. Stone, for life, with the real estate to be divided upon Susan's death between two of Narcissa's daughters, May E. Gunn and

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<sup>36</sup>December 31, 1912, Will Book 23 / 1896-1925, Brunswick County, Brunswick County Courthouse, Lawrenceville, Virginia, page 538.

<sup>37</sup>Lebsock, Free Women of Petersburg, 142.

<sup>38</sup>The relationship between Annie and Martha is unknown.

Sarah A. Daniel and their heirs. The bed was to go to Narcissa's other daughter Addie H. Kennedy when Susan died. Obviously, Narcissa chose to play favorites among her three daughters.

Narcissa was unique among the testators because she used her estate in a specific way to empower another woman. Lebsock contends that many women began their "independent economic careers" as an executrix.<sup>39</sup> Possibly because Narcissa had herself enjoyed the responsibility of administering an estate, she chose to nominate her sister, Susan, for the task. Thus, not only did Narcissa bestow property upon Susan, she also offered her an opportunity to gain legal and financial experience.

Mary L. Thomas is unusual in that she used her will to benefit both her son and her daughter-in-law. She left her plantation, "Church View," to her daughter-in-law, Mary Eva Thomas, with the specification that her son, David Carson Thomas, manage it for life. Upon their deaths, it was to pass to their children. Her other plantation, consisting of 100 acres, was to go to her son, David Carson, with \$200 from her account in the Bank of Lawrenceville to pay off the mortgage on the property. The remainder of her money was to go to Mary Eva Thomas "for the benefit of her children." It is interesting how Mary L. included her daughter-in-law in the will. It implies, perhaps, an understanding on Mary L.'s part of the helpless position in which wives often found themselves. She might also have divided her property this way as a means of security. It was not uncommon for property to be placed in the name of the wife as a means of

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<sup>39</sup>Lebsock, Free Women of Petersburg, 120.

protecting it from poor economic decisions made by the husband, or from creditors if the family was facing financial difficulties. Of course, Mary L. may have included her daughter-in-law for the simple reason that she liked her, particularly as she had no daughters of her own.<sup>40</sup>

Although its possible to analyze these five men's wills, the majority of the widows' husbands did not actually leave wills. Because the majority of the couples had not been wealthy before the war, many of the widows' situations after the war would have been marginal regardless of whether or not their husbands wrote a will. And though several of the widows took advantage of their *feme sole* status, for most of the them, economic concerns were more important than legal status.

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<sup>40</sup>Will Book 23, August 28, 1900, page 201.

## Chapter 5

### *Picking up the Pieces after the War*

Emma Green was only 21-years-old when her husband of three years left her and her two daughters, Martha and Susan, to join the Confederate army.<sup>1</sup> Neither Charles nor Emma could have foreseen that within two years, Emma would face life as a young widow and single mother. Among the Civil War's many casualties were the widows and children of deceased soldiers. The war irrevocably altered life in the South with the end of slavery, destruction of much of the southern heartland, and the immeasurable loss of life. Women who had been recently married in 1860, were now young widows often with small children.

Not surprisingly, the 70 women who faced life in postwar Brunswick County as widows did not all experience widowhood the same way. Arlene Scadron cites several factors which affect how a woman copes with becoming a widow including class, previous work experience and skills, age, presence or absence of dependent and adult children, availability of family, kinship, and other support networks, and the nature and timing of the spouse's death.<sup>2</sup> Because all of these Brunswick County women were widowed by the Civil War, there were some similarities in their situations; however, the

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Green, who served with Company I, 12th Infantry, died September 14, 1862, at Crampton's Gap; Confederate Records, 12th Virginia Infantry; The Pritchett File.

<sup>2</sup>Scadron, On Their Own, 1.

above variables contributed to and varied their overall experiences of widowhood.

Before the war at least one-fourth of the women belonged to the slave-owning classes, while a little less than nine-tenths owned personal property. Yet in 1870 this situation was somewhat reversed as less than one-half possessed personal property. (See Table 10.A.) This change is related to three factors. One, the southern economy was devastated by the Civil War; the widespread destruction of the southern homefront, Confederate impressment, and Yankee raiding all took their toll resulting in the decimation of southern personal property holdings. Two, a loss of property and/or income usually follows the death of a husband. Linda Speth asserts that widowhood was often a time of intense economic hardship. If a family was landless or extremely poor, the death of a husband and the consequent loss of his labor and support usually resulted in a marginal existence for his widow.<sup>3</sup> However reasonable these first two explanations are, the third, the end of slavery, probably best explains this widespread loss of personal property. In 1860, about one-third of the women and their husbands owned over \$500 of personal estate which probably included slaves, yet by 1870 no single women held that much personal property. (See Tables 6 and 10.B.) With the end of slavery, obviously, came a complete loss of investments in slaves which caused a consequent decline in personal property holdings. Before the war David and Caroline Nash were prosperous farmers with \$1,025 of personal property which included at least two slaves.<sup>4</sup> By 1870,

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<sup>3</sup>Speth, "Thirds," 31.

<sup>4</sup>Personal Property Taxes, 1860.



however, Caroline no longer owned any personal property.<sup>5</sup> The Blanks are another example of this pattern. In 1860 William and Sarah owned \$4,000 of personal property including at least two slaves.<sup>6</sup> By 1870 Sarah owned only \$100 personal estate.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the precipitous decline in personal property holdings, there was an increase in the real estate ownership of the women. In 1860 only a little more than one-fourth of the women and their husbands owned any real estate. By 1870 more than one-half of the widows fell into that same category. This increase in landholding women reflects the changing economy of the county. For example, in 1860, David and Catherine Clary had been married for twelve years and borne three children: Ellen, William and Saluda, ages seven, five, and one. David supported his family by working as an overseer, and though they owned no real estate, they did possess \$1,525 of personal estate.<sup>8</sup> In 1870, Catherine had converted some of their personal property wealth into real estate as she now owned \$500 of land and only \$50 of personal estate.<sup>9</sup> Another success story belongs to Emma Green. In 1860 she and her husband, Charles,

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<sup>5</sup>Ninth Census, 1870, Brunswick County, Virginia Schedule I, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy; Brunswick County Personal Property Taxes, 1866 and 1870, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>6</sup>Personal Property Taxes, 1860.

<sup>7</sup>Personal Property Taxes, 1870.

<sup>8</sup>The personal property tax records of 1860 indicate that the Clarys possessed \$25 of furniture and \$1,500 in cash; see Personal Property Taxes, 1860.

<sup>9</sup>Ninth Census, 1870.

owned only \$15 of personal estate, yet, by 1870, Emma had acquired \$40 of real estate.<sup>10</sup> Whether these increases in land holdings came by gift conveyances, inheritance from family members, or were acquired outright, they represented a shift toward a more even distribution of wealth among the widows.

While it is true that some of the women's economic situations changed with the end of the war, the majority of the women retained the same social status they had before the war. In both 1860 and 1870 most of the women belonged to the yeoman or under classes. In 1870, almost one-half of the widows owned between \$100 and \$999 of real estate. Also, over one-third had personal property valued between \$100 and \$999. (See Table 10.A) Sarah Barrow, a 30-year-old farmer, was somewhat typical among the widows. In 1870 her \$500 of land and \$200 of personal property placed her among the yeoman ranks.<sup>11</sup>

Though a fairly large percentage of the widows owned some property, there were also those who owned none. In 1870 a little less than one-half of the widows owned no real estate while a little over one-half owned no personal estate. (See Table 10.A.) For those women who owned little or no property, widowhood was the most difficult. With the death of a husband/father, the family lost its main source of economic support. Without any real estate, widows had to find a non-agricultural means of income which

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<sup>10</sup>In 1860 Charles Green was a day laborer; Eighth Census, 1860; Ninth Census, 1870.

<sup>11</sup>Ninth Census, 1870.

was not an easy task in a predominantly agricultural community in the nineteenth century South.

Although the war had opened up some new occupational opportunities for Southern women, the options were by no means vast. As was noted in Chapter One, women did not always think of themselves as employed if they performed domestic tasks such as taking in sewing or laundry. Consequently, throughout the period of 1870-1920, the most commonly-cited occupation among the widows was "keeps house," or "none." (See Table 8.) While this designation may seem to indicate that they were employed outside the home as domestic servants, it actually meant that they were "keeping house for their own families or for themselves without any other gainful employment."<sup>12</sup> This status is clarified when one examines the enumeration of Elizabeth Connelly. In 1870 she appeared in the household of her parents, Joseph and Lucy Drumwright, as a 38-year-old whose occupation was "house work."<sup>13</sup> In 1870 and 1880, census takers were instructed to use the term "housekeeper" to indicate a woman who received wages for performing house work outside the home.<sup>14</sup> Although Elizabeth is cited as "house work" rather than "housekeeper," her enumeration still represents a very specific

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<sup>12</sup>Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Women in Gainful Occupations, 1870-1920: A Study of the Trend of Recent Changes in the Numbers, Occupational Distribution, and Family Relationship of Women Reported in the Census as Following a Gainful Occupation, by Joseph A. Hill, Census Monographs IX (Westport: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1978), 3.

<sup>13</sup>Ninth Census, 1870.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

differentiation from the other women who were cited as "keeps house" and thus, probably indicates that she was a domestic laborer.

Because very few of the widows were wealthy enough after their husbands' deaths to have remained unemployed, the percentage of widows who professed no gainful employment is staggering. Between 80 and 100 percent of the widows claimed one of the above non-occupations during the years 1870-1920. (See Table 8.)<sup>15</sup>

While some of the women probably had no real occupation, it is unlikely that this was actually the case for such a large percentage. Proof that many of the women did indeed work outside the home emerges when one examines specific women's "occupations" on successive census rolls. For example, in 1870 Mary Jane Martin was a 32-year-old widow employed as a "laborer" with no property and two children, ages fourteen and nine.<sup>16</sup> Yet, by 1880, she was boarding with John and Mary Lucy and professed to have no occupation. It is probable that rather than having no employment, Mary Jane was "employed" by Mary Lucy in the home, perhaps in exchange for room

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<sup>15</sup>The enumeration of the widows in the years 1910 and 1920 as "none" is probably accurate as they would have been old women by then; see Thirteenth Census, 1910, Brunswick County, Virginia Schedule I, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy; Fourteenth Census, 1920, Brunswick County, Virginia Schedule I, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy.

<sup>16</sup>"Laborer" was an occupation commonly identified with men. It usually signified a person who worked on someone else's farm or plantation. It is not indicated what kind of work Mary performed in 1870; however, it is possible that she was engaged in agricultural labor.

and board.<sup>17</sup>

Margaret Parish was another widow who was not as unemployed as the statistics portray. Not until 1900, when she was 80-years-old, did Margaret identify herself as being employed as a farmer even though she had controlled 151 acres of land in a life estate as well as 265 acres in fee simple title since her husband's death at the second Battle of Manassas in 1862. It seems plausible that Margaret had actually been farming all along.

In addition to the above-described widows, several others were employed outside the home at various times after the war. Susan Rawlings was a tailoress/seamstress in the years after the war. She continued this work through 1900 and apparently retired by 1910.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, Mary Thomas supported herself and her son David Carson Thomas by working as a mattress-maker in 1870, which was probably work she engaged in before she became a widow. By 1880, however, Mary Thomas had abandoned mattress-making in favor of the teaching profession which probably paid more as she was able to acquire a substantial amount of property by 1900.<sup>19</sup> It is possible that she was

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<sup>17</sup>Mary Jane was among those widows who received Confederate pensions; however, the pensions did not begin until 1888.

<sup>18</sup>The year 1910 was the first year that Susan Rawlings appeared to have no occupation; see Thirteenth Census, 1910.

<sup>19</sup>Mary Thomas's Will dated August 28, 1900, in Will Book 23, at Page 201, includes bequests of a plantation known as "Church View," which she probably inherited from her parents, William and Lucy Harrison, and another 100 acre tract of land in addition to substantial personal property and a bank account with at least \$200 in it. Her will was discussed at length in Chapter Four.

employed by the new public school system. One other woman was also employed as a teacher after the war. As was mentioned in Chapter Three, Susan E. Dunn, formerly Susan E. Seward, taught school during the 1880s.<sup>20</sup>

Sarah Maitland was another widow who was employed in an occupation, nursing, after the war. Before the war, nursing had been largely restricted to men; however, the necessity of war often breeds opportunity, particularly for women.<sup>21</sup> Sarah was one of the many women who took advantage of these opportunities. It is particularly interesting to note that Sarah was illiterate. Because her illiteracy would have prohibited her from obtaining a formal nursing education, it is more likely that her experience during the war rather than any conventional training fostered her nursing career.

The fact that several of the women changed their occupations throughout the postwar period indicates two patterns. One, the labor market was not particularly favorable to women. Wages in the South were the lowest in the country for the period 1860-1880, and typically, men's wages were about three-fourths more than women's.<sup>22</sup> Thus, for a widow with little or no property with which to support herself, it was often necessary to change occupations in an effort to receive higher wages. Two, although it was acceptable for widows to work, it seems likely that the former slaves residing in the

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<sup>20</sup>Susan E. Seward married Joseph E. Dunn in 1873; see *Marriage Bonds, 1853-1935*.

<sup>21</sup>Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice," 185-186.

<sup>22</sup>Clarence D. Long, *Wages and Earnings in the United States, 1860-1890* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 79.

county were more attractive employees because employers could generally pay them lower wages and also because of the social and political environment of the South. Although slavery ended during the war, southern whites still attempted to keep southern blacks in subservient positions in society by exploiting them and their labor.

One other traditionally male occupation was utilized by the women after the deaths of their farming husbands. Though women often found it difficult to farm on their own because it involved negotiating and bargaining within a culture which decreed that such activities were performed only by men, several of the widows who owned substantial amounts of real estate became farmers in their own right.<sup>23</sup> Although married women had gained some rights after the Civil War, largely a result of the Married Women's Property Acts, their ownership of property was limited to the establishment of separate estates. As a widow, however, a woman enjoyed the same legal status as a man with relation to property ownership. Thus, women such as Julietta Cheely and Martha J. Johnson were able to amass considerable amounts of real estate after the war.

In 1870 Julietta owned \$3,076 of real estate, and the real estate tax records reveal that she owned 90.5 acres of land worth \$362 in fee simple which she acquired from her father's estate. Additionally, the record reflects that she owned another 34 acres also in

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<sup>23</sup>Jacqueline Jones, "The Public Dimension of 'Private' Life: Southern Women and Their Families, 1865," A New Perspective: Southern Women's Cultural History from the Civil War to Civil Rights eds. Priscilla Cortelyou Little and Robert C. Vaughan (Charlottesville: The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, 1989), 35.

fee simple title which she apparently sold after 1890.<sup>24</sup> As previously discussed, Needham Cheely's will stipulated that Julietta should get all of his property if she did not remarry. He further specified, however indirectly, that she should only hold it for life in that he stipulated that it should be divided equally among their children after her death. Yet Julietta never appeared in the tax records as holding any property as a life estate. Therefore, it may be assumed that Needham's property passed to her in fee simple title rather than as a life estate because he did not specifically state "life estate" in his will.<sup>25</sup>

Julietta was also one of the few widows who was able to increase her property holdings after the war. The county tax records reveal that by 1870 she had bought another 90.5 acres of land worth \$543. Julietta's personal property holdings also grew. In 1870 she owned one horse, three cattle, two hogs, \$5 of farm implements, and \$50 of furniture. Ten years later, she possessed another horse, four more cattle, a carriage or wagon, and \$5 worth each of gold and guns. Another decade and she had acquired nine more hogs and another carriage or wagon.<sup>26</sup> Thus, unlike many of the widows, Julietta prospered in her widowhood.

Martha J. Johnson also improved her lot after her husband's death. Before the war, William and Martha Johnson had owned \$300 of real and estate and \$185 of

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<sup>24</sup>Real Estate Taxes, 1870, 1880 and 1890.

<sup>25</sup>Will Book 18, August 4, 1862, page 563.

<sup>26</sup>Personal Property Taxes, 1870, 1880 and 1890.



personal estate.<sup>27</sup> Because William did not leave a will, Martha probably only received her dower thirds.<sup>28</sup> In 1875, Martha owned only her dower which was 38 acres of real estate valued at \$95. Ten years later she had increased her land holdings with the acquisition of 151 acres valued at \$377.50.<sup>29</sup>

Yet not all the women were able to increase their wealth after their husbands died; in fact, many were able only to support themselves and their children. And then there were those who could not even do that without the help of others. Although almost 60 percent of the widows were the heads of their own households in 1870, another fifteen percent resided with their parents or in-laws or as boarders in someone's home.<sup>30</sup> (See Table 11.) Included in this group were Mary Jane Taylor and her nine-year-old daughter, Pocahontas. In 1870 they resided with her deceased husband's parents, John W. Taylor, a 73-year-old retired carpenter, and Eliza, his 64-year-old wife, who, it is interesting to note, owned no real or personal estate.<sup>31</sup> In 1880, it appears that the elder

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<sup>27</sup>Eighth Census, 1860.

<sup>28</sup>The issue of dower was discussed at length in Chapter 4.

<sup>29</sup>Real Estate Taxes, 1875; Real Estate Taxes, 1885.

<sup>30</sup>This represents quite an increase from 1860 when only three of the widows and their soldier husbands, who were married, resided in households other than their own and all three of their situations seem to be employment-related. William and Sara Hagood resided with the Baugh family, for whom William was probably an overseer. Richard and Mary Jane Martin lived with the Kirkland family, who likely employed Richard as a day laborer. Giles and Virginia Slate stayed in the Williams household. Giles probably worked as a day laborer on their plantation; see Eighth Census, 1860.

<sup>31</sup>Ninth Census, 1870.

Taylors had probably died as Mary Jane and Pocahontas now resided with Mary Jane's brother, Bassett Rawlings, a 45-year-old farmer, and his wife and children. Mary Jane and Pocahontas never appear in their own household.<sup>32</sup>

For several of the women, residing in the households of others was a temporary necessity. In 1870 Caroline Nash, resided with Lucretia Rawlings who owned real estate worth \$1,125 and \$400 of personal estate.<sup>33</sup> By 1880, Caroline was the head of her own household consisting of 182.5 acres of land worth \$421.25, with her daughter, Nancy, also residing.<sup>34</sup>

By 1880, the number of widows residing as members of households other than their own had increased to 35 percent. Of these the largest number lived either with their parents/in-laws or with their adult children.<sup>35</sup> As the widows entered old age, more of them came to rely upon members of their family, usually their children or grandchildren, for their residences. (See Table 11.)

Beginning with the 1880's, many of the widows took advantage of a particular source of income available to them. Although the United States government had a pension system for Union soldiers and their families from the beginning of the war, the

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<sup>32</sup>Tenth Census, 1880.

<sup>33</sup>Real Estate Taxes, 1870; Ninth Census, 1870.

<sup>34</sup>Caroline's maiden name is Rawlings, so it is possible that Lucretia is a relative though no such relationship was indicated on the census; see Personal Property Taxes, 1880.

<sup>35</sup>An equal percentage, 12%, lived with each.

eleven former Confederate states did not institute any form of pension for its former combatants and their families until the 1880s. After 1880 all eleven states created state-level pension systems. Virginia's first pension law was enacted in 1888 with subsequent laws in 1900 and 1902 broadening the scope of those who were eligible to receive a pension. According to the 1888 statute, any widow of a Confederate soldier who had died in the war, as long as her income was less than \$300 a year and she owned no more than \$999 of property, was eligible to receive a Confederate pension.<sup>36</sup> This first law set the pension at \$30 or less.<sup>37</sup> A total of 33 widows applied for and received pensions.<sup>38</sup> Excluding remarried women because they were ineligible, 65 percent of the

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<sup>36</sup>Confederate Pension Records, 1888, Brunswick County, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy.

<sup>37</sup>This base amount rose every few years so that by 1926, one of the widows, Pattie Venable, was receiving \$85 a year; see Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, Roster of Confederate Pensioners of Virginia, 1908-1926, 13 Volumes (Richmond: Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, 1908-1926).

<sup>38</sup>A total of 31 of the subject widows who applied for pensions did so in Brunswick County, while two, Harriet Ann Short and Nancy Drake, applied in Petersburg and Chesterfield County respectively. Although 33 Brunswick County widows applied for pensions, only 32 widows applied in 1888, the first year that pensions were available. One more, Marinda L. Hawthorne, did not apply until 1900; see Confederate Pension Records, 1888, Brunswick County, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy; Confederate Pension Records, 1888, City of Petersburg, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy; Confederate Pension Records, 1888, Chesterfield County, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy; Confederate Pension Records, 1900, Brunswick County, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy.

widows received a pension.<sup>39</sup>

For women such as Mary Ann Baird, Elizabeth Connelly, and Marinda L. Hawthorne, who owned no property, the pensions were an important source of income. In fact, about two-thirds of the women who received pensions owned no property. Yet there were those pension recipients who did own property in substantial amounts. Margaret M. Parish, the widow of Lazarus Parish, was a prosperous farmer with \$854.50 of real estate during the mid-1880s.<sup>40</sup> More commonly, though, were women such as Julietta Cheely and Martha J. Johnson who owned real estate valued at \$423 and \$453.50 respectively in the 1880s.<sup>41</sup>

The pensions were a very important source of income for many of the women even though the payment was certainly not enough to live on. Confederate pensions were not only limited to the disabled or needy former soldiers and/or their families, they were also not substantial enough to provide for more than just a portion of the support necessary for the widows.

In addition to their property holdings, occupations, and the pensions, the women's ages also shaped their experience of widowhood. Amy Holmes suggests that

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<sup>39</sup>A total of 21 widows remarried; therefore, only 51 were eligible to apply. This figure includes all the Brunswick County widows who applied for pensions either in Brunswick County or any other Virginia County; Confederate Pension Indexes, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy.

<sup>40</sup>Real Estate Taxes, 1885.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

"widowhood is often thought of as a transition into old age."<sup>42</sup> Yet as was shown in Chapter One, most of the women were young when they were widowed. In 1870 none of the widows were over 50-years-old. In fact, almost 60 percent were under 35. Thus, for Civil War widows, for many years widowhood was not representative of old age. (See Table 9.)

Widowhood is also not generally associated with the presence of minor children, yet many of these 71 widows did have young children when their husbands died. Only twelve percent of the women had no children by their soldier husbands. In 1870 almost two-thirds of the women had two or more children from their first marriages. Of the widows who had children, about two-fifths of the children were between the ages of one and ten while only one-fifth were sixteen and older. (See Table 5.)

Remarriage was another aspect of widowhood for some of the widows. Of those Brunswick County widows who remarried, 30 percent of them did so before the end of the war. And interestingly enough, 29 percent of them married Confederate veterans from Brunswick County. There were many factors which influenced a widow's decision to remarry including age, social status, property ownership, and the presence of dependent children.<sup>43</sup> According to Linda Speth a woman's decision whether or not to remarry was a reflection of "a tangled component of need, opportunity, and desire."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Holmes, "Such is the Price We Pay," 184.

<sup>43</sup>For all statistics concerning the widows who remarried, see Table 13.

<sup>44</sup>Speth, "Thirds," 27.

As was discussed earlier, not all of the women were able to remain financially independent and the heads of their own households. For some, remarriage was an appealing alternative to residing with parents or former in-laws. In fact, thirty percent of the 70 widows remarried after the war.<sup>45</sup>

Very often widows who chose to remarry did so for financial reasons. This is not to imply that they were all "gold-diggers"; however, many of them did improve their living conditions and those of their children through remarriage. In 1870, of the second husbands of those widows who had remarried, three-fourths owned real estate and four-fifths owned personal property; whereas, of those widows who remained single, only one-half owned real estate and one-third possessed personal property. (See Table 10.B and 10.C.) Thus, those widows who remarried were more likely to live in households with property.

Although it was frequently to the widow's advantage to remarry, it could also be to her disadvantage. Suzanne Lebsock found that "the wealthier the widow, the less likely she was to remarry; widows generally did not remarry if they could afford to remain as they were."<sup>46</sup> Therefore, widows with property often chose to remain single

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<sup>45</sup>This percentage is based on 70 widows, The percentage of widows who remarried based only on those widows who were found in the postwar records in Brunswick County is 36%. Of course, some of the widows who were never found in the postwar records of the county could have remarried outside the county and therefore, would not be included in this percentage which indicates that 36% is possibly a small measure of the rate of remarriage.

<sup>46</sup>Lebsock, Free Women of Petersburg, 26.

and retain control of their wealth rather than remarry. Further, Linda Speth asserts that because most wills of the day specified that a widow would lose some of her bestowal if she remarried, most widows did not contract a second marriage unless the prospective spouse's wealth offset the loss of bestowed property.<sup>47</sup> Thus, a widow like Julietta Cheely decided against remarriage possibly on the basis that she could support herself. It is interesting to note, however, that Martha Blick, Jane Epperson, and Babie Short all chose to remarry even though they had been left substantial estates by their husband's wills. Moreover, two of them, Martha Blick and Jane Epperson, relinquished a portion of their inheritances because they remarried. In fact, Jane gave up everything she received after James' death to marry William A. Sledge only one year after the war's end and three years after her husband's death in a Federal prison.<sup>48</sup>

Lebsock maintains that another factor which influenced a widow's propensity for remarriage was her age. She contends that the younger the widow, the more likely she was to remarry. Furthermore, for women in their thirties, remarriage was less likely than for those in their twenties, and among widows over forty, it was particularly rare.<sup>49</sup> Linda Speth adds that "only widows who were relatively young contracted second marriages. Widows who were older or who were at least old enough to have

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<sup>47</sup>Speth, "Thirds," 27.

<sup>48</sup>Will Book 19, February 10, 1863, page 45; for an analysis of James Epperson's will, see Chapter Four.

<sup>49</sup>Lebsock, Free Women of Petersburg, 26.

adult children tended not to remarry."<sup>50</sup> Of those Brunswick County widows who remarried, 40 percent were between the ages of 20 and 29; however, another 40 percent were between 30 and 39.<sup>51</sup> It is important further to note that twenty percent were in their forties when they remarried. Moreover, of those widows who remained single, almost one-half were in their twenties when the war ended and less than one-fifth were over 40. Thus, it appears that while Lebsock may be right concerning widows and remarriage during the first half of the nineteenth century, the Civil War most definitely was an agent in the above stated contradictions. As Kenzer notes regarding Orange County, North Carolina, because the war left so many more women widowed than would normally be the case, there was perhaps more competition among them for the diminished male population.<sup>52</sup> It is also important to keep in mind that many of the returning soldiers were older and might look for a wife among those women who were in the same age group.

Another factor which may have affected a widow's decision to remarry was the presence or absence of children from the first marriage. Of those women who remarried 55.6 percent had children from their first marriage while 44.4 percent did not. The closeness between these figures seems to suggest that the presence of children was not

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<sup>50</sup>Speth, "Thirids," 28.

<sup>51</sup>These calculations are figured on only 20 of the Brunswick County widows who remarried because there is no date of remarriage available for Mary Brown who married William Davis.

<sup>52</sup>See Chapter Four of Kenzer, Kinship and Neighborhood.



a determinant in a woman's decision whether or not to remarry.<sup>53</sup> Yet when one examines those widows who did not remarry the picture becomes more clear. Of the widows who did not remarry, 78 percent had children while only eight percent were childless.<sup>54</sup> Thus women who had no children were about four times more likely to remarry than women with children. It is interesting to note that those women who were childless and remained single were all in their twenties when the war ended thus placing them in the age group of widows which Lebsack maintains were the most likely to remarry. Thus, it becomes apparent that the presence of children most likely did affect the decisions of those women who did not remarry.

While the fact that 30 percent of the 70 widows remarried is not unusual in and of itself, it is interesting to note that almost 30 percent of them remarried by the end of 1865. Virginia Harrison, Mary Jane Wilmoth, and Babie Short all married their second husbands in 1865. Virginia Harrison, the widow of James J. Harrison, who died in 1862, married John R. Browder, a 29-year-old veteran of the war.<sup>55</sup> Virginia's decision to remarry was probably affected by several of the above-described factors. One, she was only 33 when the war ended. Her youth made her more likely to remarry and also

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<sup>53</sup>There were three women, 14.3%, for whom insufficient information was found as to whether or not they had children from their first marriage.

<sup>54</sup>It is unknown whether or not seven of the women, or 14%, who remained single, had children from their first marriages.

<sup>55</sup>John R. Browder was a member of the Brunswick Blues. It is unknown with which company James J. Harrison fought; John Browder was four years younger than Virginia Harrison when they married in 1865. See *Marriage Bonds, 1853-1935*.

probably made her financially a relatively attractive marriage partner. Virginia's decision was also affected by the fact that she had no children from her first marriage. Although the Harrisons were married for a full seventeen years, they were childless. Additionally, John R. Browder was a relatively economically attractive husband. He was a carpenter who owned 50 acres of land and \$105 of personal property.

Mary Jane Wilmoth, another widow who remarried the year the war ended, was only 25-years-old when she was widowed. She had been married to James W. Wilmoth for only two years and had conceived three children. In her case, it is possible that the presence of such young children compelled her to remarry in order to provide for them. James Wilmoth was not wealthy and consequently, upon his death, did not leave Mary Jane with much support. Therefore, Charles Thompson, a prosperous 48-year-old farmer with a 444 acre farm, was an attractive marriage partner for a widow with three young children.<sup>56</sup> In fact, during their marriage, the Thompsons had nine more children.<sup>57</sup>

Babie Short also remarried in 1865. Like Virginia, she had no children from her first marriage which lasted only three years.<sup>58</sup> Babie was also relatively young, only 36, when she remarried. As was mentioned in Chapter Two, Babie married Benjamin Stith, who was a friend of hers and her first husband's. Benjamin Stith was nine years

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<sup>56</sup>Real Estate Taxes, 1875.

<sup>57</sup>A total of 75% of the widows who remarried had children with their second husbands.

<sup>58</sup>William Burch Short died of scorbutus in 1863.

younger than Babie when they married. Though somewhat young, he was a prosperous farmer with \$700 of real estate making him a financially attractive spouse.<sup>59</sup> Another contributing factor was that her first husband, Sambo, had not specified a reduction in the amount of property that she could receive from his estate if she chose to remarry. Thus, Babie would lose none of her bestowal and gain another source of support through her new husband.

As was made evident by these three examples, another factor in a widow's decision to remarry was the financial attractiveness of the prospective second husband.<sup>60</sup> About two-thirds of the second husbands were farmers while the other third were employed in skilled professions such as milling, carpentry, bricklaying, or as wheelwrights. It is interesting to note that these statistics are fairly similar to the widows' first husbands which signifies the enduring agricultural and rural nature of the county both before and after the war. Although over half of the men owned no property, some of the them were fairly wealthy. John H. Dunn, the second husband of Susan E. Seward, was one of the wealthiest of the widows' second husbands. At the time of their marriage, he was a prosperous farmer who owned 920 acres of land valued at \$2,300 as well as three horses valued at \$300, ten cattle worth \$80, seven sheep, 32 hogs, one carriage or wagon, \$60 of farming implements, one watch and one clock valued at \$10

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<sup>59</sup>Benjamin Stith was 28-years-old, six years Babie's junior when they married in 1865 in *Marriage Bonds, 1853-1935*; Ninth Census, 1870.

<sup>60</sup>For information about the widows' second husbands, see Table 14.

and \$5 respectively and \$140 of furniture.<sup>61</sup> John's wealth may have been a major factor in Susan Seward's decision to remarry as she had received only \$210.50 from her first husband's estate.<sup>62</sup>

Another interesting quality among the widows' second husbands was their ages in relation to the ages of their wives. While one might assume that there would be unusual age differences between the widows and their second husbands because the number of men eligible for marriage was diminished by the war, this was not the case among these widows. The differences in age between the widows and their second husbands were somewhat similar to those between the widows and their first husbands. (See Table 14 and 17.) For example, fewer than one-third of the first husbands were one to four years older than their wives while fewer than one-fourth of the second husbands fell into the same category. Notwithstanding, there is a striking increase in large age differentials among the widows and their second husbands. Almost half of the second husbands were ten or more years older than their wives while fewer than one-tenth of the first husbands fit that description. In fact, the largest age difference between the widows and their first husbands was only twelve years, yet among the second husbands 30 years was the greatest age difference. James A. Brough was a 70-year-old farmer when, in

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<sup>61</sup>Real Estate Taxes, 1875; Personal Estate Taxes, 1870.

<sup>62</sup>Inventory and Accounting of R. M. Seward Estate, Will Book 18, December 19, 1862, pages 508 and 529.

1879, he married Elizabeth Matthews, who was only 40-years-old.<sup>63</sup> Not all of the second husbands were older than the widows; in fact, 22 percent were between one and nine years younger than their brides.<sup>64</sup> John and Virginia Browder, who have been discussed previously, were one such couple. When they married in 1865, Virginia was four years John's senior.<sup>65</sup>

As the century progressed factors such as whether or not a widow remarried, collected a pension, inherited substantial amounts of property from her husband's estate, or worked in a gainful occupation became central to her strategy for survival. By 1900 all of the women were over 50-years-old and almost half were over 60. (See Table 9.) There were also older women such as Margaret Parish who was 80-years-old by 1900.<sup>66</sup> As they grew older, their options, of course, became more limited. Obviously, the possibility of remarriage was particularly remote as a widow entered old age. The range of occupations in which a widow could engage also diminished as her age increased. In fact, in 1900 four-fifths of the widows were not employed.<sup>67</sup> Of the three widows who

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<sup>63</sup>Marriage Bonds, 1853-1935.

<sup>64</sup>A total of 13.0% of the first husbands were one to four years younger than their wives and only 3.8% were five to nine years younger; see Eighth Census, 1860.

<sup>65</sup>Marriage Bonds, 1853-1935.

<sup>66</sup>Twelfth Census, 1900, Brunswick County, Virginia Schedule I, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy.

<sup>67</sup>A total of 78.9% of the widows listed "none" as their occupation while 5.3% cited "keeps house"; see *ibid.*

claimed an occupation, two were farmers, Margaret Parish and Sarah Watkins, and one, Susan Rawlings, was a seamstress.<sup>68</sup> By 1920, the number of widows who were employed had dwindled down to one, Sarah Barrow, a farmer.<sup>69</sup>

Moreover, as the widows grew older their numbers declined correspondingly. Between 1880 and 1900 many of the widows died. Those who remained faced greater difficulties in supporting themselves and consequently, most relinquished their independent households in favor of residing with their adult children or grandchildren. In 1900 almost half of the widows lived with adult children. For example, Martha F. Cheely, 68-years-old, stayed in the home of her son, Jeff, his wife, Inda, and their four children.<sup>70</sup> Other widows, such as Marinda Hawthorne whose children had died, relied upon her sister, Bertha Peace, for a home.<sup>71</sup> In fact, by 1920 only one-fifth of the remaining widows were either able to or chose to maintain their own households. (See Table 11.)

While many of the widows were unable to support themselves as they grew old, others were more successful. In 1910 Susan Dunn, a 69-year-old retired schoolteacher whose second husband, John Dunn, had died, was able to maintain an independent

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<sup>68</sup>Twelfth Census, 1900.

<sup>69</sup>Fourteenth Census, 1920, Brunswick County, Virginia Schedule I, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy.

<sup>70</sup>Twelfth Census, 1900.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

household as well as ownership of her own home.<sup>72</sup> Dunn was the only widow in 1910 who was the head of her own household. Interestingly enough, she supported herself to some extent by taking in a young schoolteacher, Adrienne Adams, 25, as a boarder.<sup>73</sup> Thus, though retired, Susan maintained her connection with the teaching profession.

There is no single description of these widows after the war. They all employed different and sometimes numerous strategies of coping with their widowhood and supporting themselves and their families. Although widowhood certainly had been around for years before the war, Civil War widowhood had a unique quality to it. Because the war involved so many residents of varying ages, classes, and occupations, it is impossible to create a picture of a universal experience of either the soldiers or their widows.

Although the women's experiences of widowhood were affected by variants such as wealth, age, occupation, the presence of children, availability of kin support, income including pensions, and the possibility of remarriage, there were some trends among them. The majority of the women were fairly young when they were widowed and a large percentage of them had minor children as well. Property holdings was another area in which the widows' experiences were similar. While some of the women lost and others increased their wealth after the war, most of the widows were able to retain their

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<sup>72</sup>Thirteenth Census, 1910, Brunswick County, Virginia Schedule I, Library of Virginia, Archives Division, Richmond, Virginia, microfilm copy.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

prewar social positions throughout the postwar period. There was no one occupation which the widows favored after the war. Some of the women were able to take advantage of the changes the war had wrought by working as teachers in the new public school system or as nurses. Remarriage was another aspect of widowhood which affected certain of the widows and, as this study makes clear, a widow's decision to remarry was affected by many factors including one or more of the following: age, wealth, the presence and age of children, and the economic status of the prospective second husband.

Additionally, all of the widows shared the one particular experience--losing their husbands in the Civil War. Obviously, these women faced not only economic hardship as a result of their widowhood, but also the pain and grief associated with losing a loved one. The bereavement of these widows was perhaps exacerbated by the Confederate loss of the war, because, in effect, they had given up their husbands for a lost cause. Because the Confederacy lost the war, the widows were a painful reminder of the Confederacy's failure and the many costs it involved.



## *Conclusion*

When Susan Rawlings was a young woman in the 1840s, she could not have foreseen the many twists and turns through which her life would pass. After twelve years of marriage to John Rawlings, the Civil War left Susan a young widow with two small children. With her main support gone, she struggled to make ends meet by working as a seamstress in Lawrenceville. She was never a financially wealthy woman, yet her life experiences were rich. For over 70 years, she rented a little cottage in Lawrenceville near St. Paul's College and gained the reputation that "no one ever went to her in distress or in need of sympathy without being helped."<sup>1</sup> After her death in 1924, she was remembered by many in Lawrenceville and throughout Brunswick County as a "good angel" whose "memory [was] sweetened with the fragrance of Christian charity and many kind acts."<sup>2</sup>

Susan Rawlings was only one of 70 women who experienced life in Brunswick County as a widow of the Civil War. Although widowhood has been around as long as marriage, this study has shown several interesting trends regarding Civil War widowhood.

For most, widowhood is accepted as a consequence of old age. In fact, death itself is usually associated with growing old. Often, when a young person dies or is

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<sup>1</sup>"The Southern Missioner," 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

suddenly widowed society's opinion is usually along the lines of, "how tragic." The Civil War presents a sort of anomaly to this assessment as most of the men who died during the war were young as were their widows. The majority of the Brunswick County widows were under the age of 40 when they were widowed, and consequently many of them had young children. Hence, widowhood was not an experience of old age which would perhaps last only a few years until the widow's own death. Rather, widowhood became a permanent way of life for many of the women.

Although widowhood is never an easy experience, this study has shown that the war had a tremendous impact on the means by which these widows attempted to survive. In 1860 the majority of the widows were from households which owned some amount of personal property; however, by 1870 the women had suffered a tremendous decrease in personal estate holdings. The end of slavery combined with such difficulties of the war as impressment, raiding, and inflation all contributed to a tremendous decline in personal property wealth among the women. Obviously, the ramifications of this deterioration of wealth had a serious impact on a widow's standard of living. Without the labor and support of a husband, a widow's struggle to survive was made all the more difficult by this loss of property.

The loss of a husband was usually accompanied by a search for another means of support. This need was filled most commonly by three methods: working and maintaining a household, residing in the households of others, or remarriage. Although the majority of the widows cited "keeps house" as their occupation, this did not mean

that they were necessarily unemployed. Only a few of the women claimed "none" as their occupation implying that those women who "kept house" recognized the fact that they were indeed working, though not in occupations commonly identified as employment. Many of the women probably supported themselves by engaging in domestic tasks such as laundry or sewing which they would not have identified as a job. Though the Civil War is identified by some historians as the catalyst that opened the doors of occupations that were previously closed to women, only three of the 70 widows participated in such occupations. Thus, many of the widow's occupational experiences after the war were not much different than those widows would have encountered before the war.

A total of 40 percent of the widows resided in a household other than their own at some point between 1860 and 1900.<sup>3</sup> Considering the state of destitution in which many of the widows were left by the war, this is not an exceptionally high percentage. Additionally, most of the women who resided in the households of others did not do so for the duration of their lives implying that it was a temporary necessity which ceased when the widow was able to support herself on her own. It is also interesting to note that the majority of the widows resided in the homes of their children when they married or became adults. This may indicate that the widow was not necessarily a dependent, though she had relinquished her position as head of the household. Even so, many of

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<sup>3</sup>After 1900 most of the widows resided in others' households; however, it seems likely that this was a result as much of old age as of their status as widows.

the widows were able to maintain their own households for most of their widowhood.

For some of the widows remarriage was a means of securing their survival. A total of 30 percent of the widows remarried at some point during their widowhood. A widow's decision to remarry was influenced by a number of factors including age, the presence of children, the widow's wealth, and the financial attractiveness of the prospective husband. Often, a combination of these factors determined a widow's propensity toward remarriage. Additionally, these factors did not necessarily affect every woman the same way. For example the presence of children might be a reason to remarry for one widow; whereas, for another it was a reason not to remarry. Thus, though these common factors can be identified, there is no real definition for why some widows remarried and some did not.

The Confederate widows of Brunswick County were both different from and similar to society's conception of widowhood. Most of them employed a combination of strategies to support themselves and their children. Consequently there is no single description of Civil War widowhood in Brunswick County. The widows came from various backgrounds and pre-war experiences and almost every lifestyle was represented among them. Though they shared the communal bond of war widowhood, there was often very little else they had in common.

## TABLES

**TABLE 1: FIRST HUSBAND'S AGE IN 1860**  
(number = 55)

<15	0.0%
15-19	3.6%
20-24	20.0%
25-29	36.4%
30-34	14.5%
35-39	12.7%
40-44	7.3%
45-49	5.5%
TOTAL	100.0%

**TABLE 2: HUSBAND'S OCCUPATION IN 1860**  
(n = 54)

Farmer	34.6%
Laborer	20.0%
Overseer	20.0%
Carpenter	7.4%
Ditcher	3.6%
Doctor	3.6%
Shoemaker	1.8%
Harnessmaker	1.8%
Tailor	1.8%
Wheelwright	1.8%
None	3.6%
TOTAL	100.0%

**TABLE 3: MARRIAGE RATES AMONG SOLDIERS AND THE FUTURE WIDOWS**  
(n = 61)

Married before 1860	65.6%
Married in 1860	11.5%
Married in 1861	11.5%
Married in 1862	1.6%
Married in 1863	8.2%
Married in 1864	1.6%
Married in 1865	0.0%
TOTAL	100.0%

**TABLE 4: NUMBER OF CHILDREN FROM FIRST MARRIAGE**  
(n = 33)

None	12.1%
One	27.3%
Two	39.4%
Three	0.0%
Four	18.2%
Five	0.0%
Six	0.0%
Seven	3.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**TABLE 5: AGES OF CHILDREN FROM FIRST MARRIAGE**  
(n = 63)

1-4	6.3%
5-9	31.8%
10-14	31.8%
15-19	20.6%
> 20	9.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**TABLE 6: DISTRIBUTION OF PROPERTY IN 1860 \***  
(n = 62)

	<i>Value of Real Estate in Dollars</i>	<i>Value of Personal Estate in Dollars</i>	<i>Value of Total Estate in Dollars</i>
0	72.7%	12.9%	11.3%
1-99	3.2%	22.6%	22.6%
100-249	3.2%	30.6%	24.2%
250-499	4.8%	3.2%	6.3%
500-999	4.8%	6.5%	4.8%
1,000-4,999	11.3%	19.4%	24.2%
5,000-9,999	0.0%	3.2%	4.8%
10,000-25,000	0.0%	1.6%	1.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\* This table does not include the parent's property if the soldier or future widow still reside with them.

**TABLE 7: CAUSES OF THE SOLDIERS' DEATHS**  
(n = 72)

Killed in Action	13.9%
Died of Wounds	11.1%
Disease	62.5%
Unknown	12.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0% *</b>

\* A total of 16.7% of these died while in a Federal prison.

*Types of Diseases from Which the Soldiers Died*  
(n = 43) 62.5%

Typhoid Fever	22.2%
Measles/Rubeola	22.2%
Pneumonia	11.1%
Typhoid Pneumonia	4.5%
Camp Fever	4.5%
Rheumatism	4.5%
Combination of Causes	4.5%
Cholic	2.2%
Consumption	2.2%
Cholera	2.2%
Bowel Disease	2.2%
Bilious Fever	2.2%
Scorbutus	2.2%
Tellow Jaundice	2.2%
Small Pox & Wounds	2.2%
Unknown Disease	8.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

TABLE 8: WIDOW'S OCCUPATIONS\*

	<u>1860</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>1900</u>	<u>1910</u>	<u>1920</u>
None	98.0%	5.9%	27.3%	78.9%	100.0%	80.0%
Keeps House	0.0%	82.4%	61.3%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Nurse	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Teacher	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Seamstress	2.0%	2.9%	2.3%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Farmer	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%	10.5%	0.0%	20.0%
Laborer	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Mattress-Maker	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Domestic Laborer	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	(n=50)	(n=34)	(n=44)	(n=19)	(n=12)	(n=5)

\* NOTE: The inconsistencies in the above percentages are the result of three problems inherent in the census as a source. First, the census takers were not always careful in their enumeration of the occupations of women because women were not principally thought of as being among the employed. Second, the majority of the women failed to cite the same occupation from decade to decade. And third, the number of women found in each census varied considerably.



TABLE 9 : AGE OF WIDOWS

	<u>1860</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>1900</u>	<u>1910</u>	<u>1920</u>
> 15	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
15-19	14.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
20-24	34.6%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
25-29	20.0%	12.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
30-34	16.4%	44.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
35-39	7.3%	20.0%	19.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
40-44	3.6%	12.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
45-49	1.8%	9.0%	21.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
50-59	0.0%	0.0%	28.0%	21.0%	0.0%	0.0%
60-69	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	48.0%	17.0%	0.0%
70-79	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	21.0%	58.0%	0.0%
80-89	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	100.0%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	(n=55)	(n=34)	(n=43)	(n=19)	(n=12)	(n=5)

**TABLE 10.A: DISTRIBUTION OF ALL WIDOWS' PROPERTY IN 1870**  
(n = 36)

	<i>Value of Real Estate in Dollars</i>	<i>Value of Personal Estate in Dollars</i>	<i>Value of Total Estate in Dollars</i>
0	41.7%	52.8%	36.1%
1-99	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%
100-249	8.3%	27.7%	8.3%
250-499	16.7%	5.6%	16.7%
500-999	19.4%	5.6%	16.7%
1,000-5,000	5.6%	0.0%	13.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**TABLE 10.B: DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE WIDOWS' PROPERTY IN 1870**  
(n = 28)

	<i>Value of Real Estate in Dollars</i>	<i>Value of Personal Estate in Dollars</i>	<i>Value of Total Estate in Dollars</i>
0	46.4%	64.3%	42.9%
1-99	10.7%	7.1%	10.7%
100-249	7.1%	25.0%	7.1%
250-499	14.3%	3.6%	17.9%
500-999	17.9%	0.0%	14.3%
1,000-5,000	3.6%	0.0%	7.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**TABLE 10.C: DISTRIBUTION OF REMARRIED WIDOWS' PROPERTY IN 1870**  
(n = 8)

	<i>Value of Real Estate in Dollars</i>	<i>Value of Personal Estate in Dollars</i>	<i>Value of Total Estate in Dollars</i>
0	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%
1-99	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%
100-249	12.5%	37.5%	12.5%
250-499	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%
500-999	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%
1,000-5,000	12.5%	0.0%	37.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**TABLE 11: STATUS/LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF WIDOWS**

	<u>1870</u>	<u>1880</u>	<u>1900</u>	<u>1910</u>	<u>1920</u>
Head of Household	58.8%	39.5%	15.8%	17.0%	0.0%
Remarried	26.5%	25.6%	10.5%	17.0%	0.0%
with parents/in-law	5.9%	11.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
with siblings	0.0%	7.1%	15.8%	8.0%	40.0%
with adult children	0.0%	11.6%	47.3%	42.0%	40.0%
with grandchildren	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	8.0%	0.0%
with other relatives	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	8.0%	0.0%
with others	8.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
boards	0.0%	2.3%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	(n=34)	(n=43)	(n=19)	(n=12)	(n=5)

**TABLE 12: STATUS OF HOME OR FARM \***

	<u>1900</u>	<u>1910</u>	<u>1920</u>
Owns Farm/free	68.3%	59.0%	60.0%
Owns Farm/mortgaged	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Owns Home/free	5.3%	8.0%	20.0%
Owns Home/mortgaged	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Rents Farm	5.3%	8.0%	20.0%
Rents Home	5.3%	8.0%	0.0%
Farm/not specified	0.0%	17.0%	0.0%
Home/not Specified	10.5%	0.0%	0.0%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	(n=19)	(n=12)	(n=5)

\* These figures include the homes and farms of others when widows resided with them.

**TABLE 13: DESCRIPTION OF THOSE WIDOWS WHO REMARRIED**

Unless otherwise stated (n = 21)

***Age at Second Marriage \****  
(n = 20)

20-24	20.0%
25-29	20.0%
30-34	30.0%
35-39	10.0%
40-44	20.0%
TOTAL	100.0%

\* It is impossible to determine how old one widow was at remarriage because her date of marriage is unknown.

***Years Married to First Husband Before His Death \****  
(n = 18)

less than a year	11.1%
1 years	5.6%
2 years	11.1%
3 years	22.2%
4 years	5.6%
5-9 years	22.2%
10-15 years	16.6%
more than 15 years	5.6%
TOTAL	100.0%

\* There are three widows for whom a length of first marriage cannot be established because the date of their first marriage is unknown.

*Number of Children from First Marriage \**  
(n = 18)

no children	44.4%
1 child	27.8%
2 children	22.2%
3 children	5.6%

TOTAL 100.0%

\* It is unknown whether or not three of the remarried widows had children from their first marriage.

*Occupation of Widow at Second Marriage*

Housekeeper	42.8%
Farmer	4.8%
No occupation	38.1%
Unknown	14.3%

TOTAL 100.0%

*Total Estate of First Husband at Time of Death*

0	28.6%
1-99	19.0%
100-249	14.3%
250-499	9.5%
500-999	9.5%
1,000-4,999	4.8%
5,000-9,999	9.5%
10,000-14,999	0.0%
15,000-19,999	4.8%

TOTAL 100.0%

*Literacy of Widows Who Remarried*

Literate	90.5%
Illiterate	9.5%

TOTAL 100.0%

**TABLE 14: DESCRIPTION OF SECOND HUSBANDS**

Unless otherwise noted (n = 21)

*Occupation at Time of Marriage to Widow*

Farmer	66.6%
Carpenter	9.5%
Wheelwright	4.8%
Bricklayer	4.8%
Miller	4.8%
Unknown	9.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Age at Time of Marriage to Widow \**  
(n = 19)

20-24	5.2%
25-29	26.3%
30-34	10.6%
35-39	5.2%
40-44	5.2%
45-49	15.9%
50-54	10.6%
55-59	10.6%
60-64	5.2%
65-69	0.0%
70-74	5.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\* These figures exclude two men whose ages are never established.

**Age Difference Between Second Husband and Widow \***  
(n =19)

same age	5.2%
1-4 years older	21.0%
5-9 years older	5.2%
10-14 years older	10.6%
15-19 years older	0.0%
20-24 years older	21.0%
25-29 years older	10.6%
30 or more years older	5.2%
1-4 years younger	10.6%
5-9 years younger	10.6%
TOTAL	100.0%

\* Because two of the men's ages are unknown, age difference cannot be established.

**Total Estate at Time of Marriage to Widow**

0	57.2%
1-99	9.5%
100-249	9.5%
250-499	9.5%
500-999	14.3%
1,000-4,999	9.5%
TOTAL	100.0%

**Literacy of Second Husband**

Literate	52.3%
Illiterate	4.8%
Unknown	42.9%
TOTAL	100.0%

**TABLE 15: PROFILE OF SOLDIER TESTATORS**

	<u>AGE</u>	<u>LITERATE</u>	<u>PROPERTY VALUE</u>
Blick, William A.	22	yes	\$15,470.00 (Total Estate)
Cheely, Needham S.	33	yes	\$11,965.35 (Total Estate)
Connelly, Richard H.	22	yes	\$ 186.00 (Real Estate)
Epperson, James E.	34	yes	\$ 185.00 (Personal Estate)
Short, Willian B.	31	yes	\$ 8,047.92 (Total Estate)

**TABLE 16: PROFILE OF WIDOW TESTATORS**

	<u>LITERATE</u>	<u>REAL ESTATE VALUE \$</u>	<u>PERSONAL ESTATE VALUE \$</u>	<u>TOTAL ESTATE VALUE \$</u>
Baird, Mary Ann	no	0.00	40.00	40.00
Dunn, Susan	yes	2,211.25	0.00	2,211.25
Faris, Narcissa	yes	0.00	0.00	0.00
Johnson, Martha J.	no	451.00	90.00	541.00
Rawlings, Susan E.	yes	0.00	20.00	20.00
Stith, Baby [Babie]	yes	85.50	15.00	100.50
Thomas, Mary L.	yes	500.00	200.00	700.00
Watkins, Sarah F.	yes	250.00	0.00	250.00
Williams, Martha E.	yes	174.75	35.00	209.75



**TABLE 17: AGE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FIRST HUSBANDS AND WIDOWS**  
(n = 54)

Same age	7.4%
1-4 years older	31.4%
5-9 years older	36.9%
10-12 years older	7.5%
1-4 years younger	13.0%
5-9 years younger	3.8%
TOTAL	100.0%

## APPENDIX

### *The Pritchett File*

The Pritchett file is a collection of histories in the possession of the author which was derived from the Pritchett Papers, Brunswick County Library, Lawrenceville, Virginia. The Pritchett Papers is a collection of geneologies and personal histories researched and written by Dr. William McCaddin Pritchett. These histories were published as a series of articles in the local newspaper, The Brunswick Times-Gazette, during the 1970s. Each article recounted the family history and war experience of one soldier from Brunswick County. In all, there were over one thousand articles. The Pritchett File consists of only those 72 histories involving Brunswick County soldiers who died during the war and left behind widows.

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