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"Life under Union Occupation:
Elite Women in Richmond, April and May 1865"

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by
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Bachelor of Arts, University of North Carolina, 2013

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Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
April 14, 2016

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank my family and friends for supporting me throughout my education. I would also like to thank the staff at the Virginia Historical Society and Robert E. L. Krick at Richmond National Battlefield Park for their help with my research. Thank you to the education department at the Virginia Historical Society for encouraging me along the way and offering me opportunities to share my research with the public. I would like to thank Dr. John Kneebone and Dr. John Coski for serving on my thesis committee and offering excellent advice. Thank you to Dr. Kathryn Meier for being a tremendous resource and wonderful advisor along the way. Above all, thanks to Kemper Gibson, my soon to be husband, who put up with me through all the research, writing, and editing and is still willing to marry me even though my mind is usually in 1865.

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Abstract

"LIFE UNDER UNION OCCUPATION: ELITE WOMEN IN RICHMOND, APRIL AND MAY 1865"

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This paper crafts a narrative about how elite, white Richmond women experienced the fall and rebuilding of their city in April and May 1865. At first, the women feared the entrance of the occupying army because they believed the troops would treat them as enemies. However, the goal of the white occupiers was to restore order in the city. Even though they were initially saddened by the occupation, many women were surprised at the courtesy and respected afforded them by the Union troops. Black soldiers also made up the occupying army, and women struggled to submit to black authority. With occupation came the emancipation of slaves, and this paper also examines how women adjusted to new relationships with freed blacks. By the end of May, white women and white Union soldiers bonded over their attempt to control the black population, with some women and soldiers even beginning to socialize.

Introduction

"Here let me say, and be it ever spoken to the honor of the American flag, that, so far as I know, the triumphal entry of the Federal army into Richmond was not disgraced by one deed of insult or oppression to any woman, or indeed to any citizen," wrote Virginia Dade years after the war, about her time as a loyal Confederate woman living in Union-occupied Richmond, Virginia, in 1865. She went on to write, "All their efforts seem to have been directed toward conciliation, and to bringing order out of chaos, affording protection to person and property, and endeavoring to relieve, as best they could, the want and suffering which they found here."¹ How did a woman who had devoted her time and energy to the Confederate cause turn to thanking and praising the Union enemy? As it turns out, Virginia Dade was not the exception when it came to Richmond women and the Union occupiers. Confederate women under Union occupation throughout the South displayed their hatred towards the Union soldiers however, this was not the case in Richmond. Once the women realized that the Union Army was there to protect them, their fears switched to reestablishing their status as the upper class in society.

The first few days of April 1865 changed the lives of Richmond citizens forever. Union troops helped extinguish the fires set by fleeing Confederates, and the occupiers quickly set up stations for the destitute -- those whose houses had been lost and refugees from other areas -- to receive food and clothing. Richmond citizens had feared the occupation of their beloved city, yet they were surprised by how well the Union

¹ Virginia E. Dade, "The Fall of Richmond," in *Our Women in the War: The Lives they Lived, The Deaths they Died, from The Weekly News and Courier Charleston SC*, [Francis W. Dawson, ed.] (Charleston: News and Courier Book Presses, 1885), 104.

Army conducted themselves. While maintaining order and aiding the poor, the occupiers did not harm any citizens or cause destruction. For the next five years, Union troops occupied the city during the period known as Reconstruction.

Richmond, Virginia, served as the capital of the Confederate States of America, and historians have extensively analyzed the city during the war as well as the evacuation and surrender on April 2 and 3, 1865. Little has been written about Richmond after these dates, and even less has been written about the women of Richmond during the fall and occupation of the city. At a time when many Richmond men were either fighting in the Confederate Army or fleeing the city as part of the government evacuation, women made up a key component of citizens that were directly impacted by the loss of their city. Recently, scholars have been studying both Union and Confederate women during the war, and it is just as necessary to look at women immediately after the war to see how their lives changed with Confederate defeat and an overturned social order. This thesis crafts a lost narrative about how elite, white Richmond women experienced the fall of their city and the first couple of months of Union occupation. Richmond women did not exhibit the same behaviors as Confederate women because of the respect displayed by the occupying troops as well as the women's wish for the war to finally end. Rather than ignoring the occupiers or being rude and disrespectful, the women began to see the occupiers as their protectors, especially when it came to protecting them from black troops and newly freed slaves.

Historiography

Scholars have extensively studied Richmond during the Civil War, but the period of time right after the war has largely been neglected. Nelson Lankford, Rembert W. Patrick, David D. Ryan and Emory Thomas have gone in-depth about the chronological events surrounding the fall of the city, and while they have included some personal stories of citizens' experiences, they mainly focus on the governmental aspects of the evacuation.² In terms of the remainder of 1865 and Richmond under Reconstruction, Michael Chesson's *Richmond After the War, 1865-1890*, provides a nice chronology of events in the capital city without delving too much into the social aspect of life in the city.³ Two unpublished dissertations by Richard Duggan and Leslie Winston Smith focus on the military occupation and the governmental policies during Reconstruction.⁴ These works prove essential in understanding the politics of Richmond under occupation and Reconstruction, but they too do not tell the social history of Richmonders during this time.

Scholars have written about Union occupation in other Southern cities, and these are useful as points of comparison with Richmond. Many of these historians analyze the relationship between Confederate women and Union occupiers as one of tension, with the women often openly showing their distaste towards the enemy. Stephen Ash's *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* as well

² Nelson Lankford, *Richmond Burning: The Last Days of the Confederate Capital* (USA: Penguin Books, 2002); Rembert W. Patrick, *The Fall of Richmond* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960); David D. Ryan, *Four Days in 1865: The Fall of Richmond* (U.S.: Cadmus Marketing, 1993); Emory Thomas, *The Confederate State of Richmond; a Biography of the Capital* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971).

³ Michael Chesson, *Richmond after the War, 1865-1890* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1981).

⁴ Richard Duggan, "The Military Occupation of Richmond, 1865-1870," (masters thesis, University of Richmond, 1965); Leslie Winston Smith, "Richmond during Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-1867," (PhD. Diss., University of Virginia, 1974).

as LeeAnn Whites' *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation, and the American Civil War*, discuss the fears southern women held about the Union Army as well as the interactions that occurred once their cities and towns were occupied.⁵ However, Richmond women did not follow the same pattern as occupied women elsewhere, as this paper will explore.

Over the past few decades, historians have studied gender relations during the war, and these works provide context on women during this time period. LeeAnn Whites, Drew Gilpin Faust, Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber have extensively studied how women emerged from their domestic roles into the public sphere during the war years.⁶ These authors have compiled books of essays that also discuss fears southern women had of the Union Army and how these fears emerged, which help show why Richmond women were so afraid of the occupying army. I hope to speak to these fears and then examine why the reality was so different in Richmond.

The topic of Civil War memory must also be studied, especially when it comes to the work women did in regards to memorialization and reconciliation. Caroline Janney and Catherine Bishir argue that women were left to memorialize and monumentalize the dead because southern men were forbidden from speaking out in favor of the

⁵ Stephen Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); LeeAnn Whites, *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation, and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009).

⁶ LeeAnn Whites, *Gender Matters: Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Making of the New South* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds, *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Confederacy.⁷ While this paper does not analyze the women's memorial groups in Richmond, the loyalty to the Confederacy and respect for the veterans shown in April and May 1865 provided the foundation for these groups. Historians differentiate between reconciliation and reunion. Reunion is the "political reunification of the nation" which was achieved in the spring of 1865. Reconciliation, on the other hand, is harder to define and involved the emotional rejoining of Northerners and Southerners.⁸ In order to fully be reunited emotionally, reconciliation had to occur. Historians of Civil War memory also disagree about when reconciliation occurred, with the majority of them arguing that it occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century, peaking with the Spanish American War. In many ways the women of Richmond began displaying signs of reconciliation in the months immediately following the war.

Organization

Chapter one will examine the interaction between the women and the occupiers. Richmond women had heard stories of Union soldiers forcing themselves into southern homes to rape women, steal personal possessions, and burn down houses. Fearing the same in Richmond, women expected the worst once the Union Army arrived in the first week of April 1865. While initially devastated by the entrance of the occupiers, the women began to see a different side of the enemy shortly after occupation. For years they had been ingrained with the knowledge that anyone from the North was rude, vile,

⁷ Caroline Janney, *Burying the Dead but not the Past: Ladies Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Catherine Bishir, "A Strong Force of Ladies: Women, Politics, and Confederate Memorial Associations in Nineteenth-Century Raleigh," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 77 no. 4, (2000): 455-491; Cynthia Mills and Pamela Simpson, eds., *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003).

⁸ Caroline Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 5-6.

and out to destroy the South, but accounts from both the women and the Union soldiers reveal the complexities of emotional reconciliation under occupation. Chapter one begins by discussing the fears Richmond women had as the threat of the Union Army loomed near as well as the origin of these fears by looking at occupation elsewhere. This chapter also examines the immediate reactions the women had to Union occupation. While they were initially disturbed by the occupiers, the Union Army quickly put orders into place that showed their main goal was to keep peace within the city, which comforted the women. Because the occupiers showed respect and quickly restored order, Richmond women did not feel the need to treat the troops badly as women in other cities had done.

Chapter two continues to examine the relationship between women and the occupiers during the first two months of occupation. Once it became clear that the army was not in Richmond to cause harm, the women's fears turned to the overturned social order and how to reestablish their former elite status. Along with the white occupying soldiers came United States Colored Troops (USCTs), and Richmond women wrote of negative interactions with them. The women were already startled by black men in uniform armed with weapons, since this went against the society they had lived in. Some USCTs threatened Richmond women and even stole from them. In a surprising twist, women turned to the white Union occupiers to protect them from the colored troops. Black soldiers were not the only black people Richmond women interacted with during occupation. Once the troops entered the city, all the slaves in Richmond became free. The formerly elite women lost their workforce and had to do their own chores.

While many slaves found work and began to create lives for themselves, some resented their former mistresses, creating more concern for the women. Above all, the women feared retribution by the emancipated people in return for their years of enslavement. Contrary to the women's fears, the Union Army actually helped the women define their new social status by setting parameters for blacks, assuring the women that blacks would still be treated as inferior.

Despite the cordiality displayed by Richmond women, they did remain loyal to their Confederate soldiers returning home from war. By treating the veterans as heroes, women showed the occupiers where their true loyalties resided. Even after all the occupiers had done to help the women and their beloved city, the women could not turn away from the cause they believed to be right. It is this loyalty to the Confederacy that inspired the long process of memorialization undertaken by Richmond women. Through this process, it became clear that reunion and reconciliation would take time.

Sources and Methodology

Because this project is primarily a social history of elite, white women in Richmond, their diaries, letters, and memoirs constitute the bulk of the primary sources. Some of these works have been published, such as Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut's *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, Judith M. McGuire's *Diary of a Southern Refugee during the War, by a Lady of Virginia*, and Sallie Brock Putnam's *Richmond during the War: Four Years of Personal Observation*.⁹ Katharine Jones and Neal Wixson have put together

⁹ C. Vann Woodward, ed., *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (USA: Vail-Ballou Press, 1981); Judith M. McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee during the War, by a Lady of Virginia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); and Sallie Brock Putnam, *Richmond During the War: Four Years of Personal Observation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

compilations of primary sources of women living in Richmond during and right after the war containing many useful accounts.¹⁰ A few of the accounts examined in this paper, like Putnam's, were memoirs written after the period of occupation, and it is important to remember this when analyzing the women's thoughts. However, the memory accounts do not seem to differ too much from the contemporary accounts.

Other primary sources are unpublished and housed at the Virginia Historical Society. These include the diary of Emma Mordecai, letters of Maria Smith Peek Marrow and letters of Susan Hoge in the Hoge Family Papers.¹¹ Newspapers also provide important insights into women's lives, especially the *Richmond Whig*, since it did not stop publishing after the fire and evacuation of the city. However, one must be reminded that these newspapers were monitored by the occupying army and therefore exhibit a northern bias.

It is also essential to look at sources written by Union soldiers who occupied the city in order to learn about their interactions with women. Occupying soldiers William W. Clemens, of the United States Signal Corps, George Lewis Bronson, of the 11th Connecticut, and George G. Barnum, of the 100th New York Volunteers, wrote about their experiences in Richmond.¹² Also interesting is the non-soldier perspective.

Thomas Cooper DeLeon and Charles Page reported on the occupation and commented

¹⁰ Katharine M. Jones, ed., *Ladies of Richmond: Confederate Capital* (USA: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1962); Neal E. Wixson, ed., *From Civility to Survival: Richmond Ladies during the Civil War* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2012).

¹¹ Emma Mordecai, "Diary, 1864 May 1-December 15 and 1865 April 13-May 30," Virginia Historical Society (hereafter referred to as VHS); Marrow Family Papers, VHS, Hoge Family Papers, VHS.

¹² William W. Clemens, "Diary," William W. Clemens Papers, Miscellaneous Military vol. 4 (217), Richmond National Battlefield Park (Chimborazo site), Richmond, Virginia [hereafter cited as RNBP]; George Lewis Bronson, "Diary," George Lewis Bronson Papers, Connecticut vol. 5 (196), RNBP; George G. Barnum, "Diary," George G. Barnum Papers, New York vol. 4 (26), RNBP.

on the relationships they observed between the Richmond women and the Union occupiers.¹³

Using all of these primary accounts, this thesis argues that Richmond women did not have the same experience with Union occupiers as women elsewhere because the women quickly learned that the Union Army was there to help them. Instead of stealing their property and physically harming them, the occupiers' goal was to restore order and protect the citizens. Rather than punishing the women, the troops helped reestablish their place in the social order by protecting them from hostile former slaves and asserting the freed people's second-class status in society.

¹³ Thomas Cooper DeLeon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals: An Inside View of Life in the Southern Confederacy, from Birth to Death* (New York: Collier Books, 1962); Charles A. Page, *Letters of a War Correspondent* (Boston: L.C. Page & Company, 1899).

The Anticipation: Expecting the Worst

“It is absolutely necessary that we should abandon our position tonight, or run the risk of being cut off in the morning,” said General Robert E. Lee in a telegram to Confederate President Jefferson Davis on April 2, 1865.¹⁴ Unbeknownst to the women of Richmond at the time, this one sentence would drastically alter the lives they had been living in the Confederate capital for four years. Anger and sadness at the evacuation of the city and the subsequent fire led Richmond women to fear and even hate the incoming Union troops and the supposed changes they would enforce. Since 1861, stories of horrible Union atrocities had flooded the ears of Richmond citizens. Tales of pillaging, looting and burning incited fear among Confederate women everywhere, and Richmond women were no exception.

The enemy army was not the only thing women feared; they believed that Union occupation would overturn the well-established social order by emancipating the slaves and giving them a social and possible political voice. Even for women who did not own slaves, emancipation would change their lives drastically, and they knew that the Union Army would bring this freedom because of Lincoln’s 1863 Emancipation Proclamation. Despite these fears, many Richmond women realized not long after the occupation of their city that their worries were unfounded, at least in regard to the actions of the army. Surprisingly to both groups of people, the women began questioning their contempt towards the occupying army because of the soldiers’ actions. The occupying troops quickly restored order to the damaged city and brought rations the citizens had

¹⁴ James C. Clark, *Last Train South: The Flight of the Confederate Government from Richmond* (USA: McFarland Publishing, 1984), 13.

long been without. The first week of April brought challenges never before seen, but the women composed themselves in order to protect their homes and families.

Prior to April 1865, Richmond ladies had grown accustomed to living in a city bustling with war activity.¹⁵ Once Richmond became the capital of the Confederate States of America, its people were thrown into the center of the conflict. At first many Richmond citizens were excited about the war, believing it would be a short affair that would result in the triumph of the South. Fannie A. Beers wrote during the summer of 1861, "Ah! The lovely, joyous, hopeful, patriotic days of that summer. The Confederate gray was then a thing of beauty, -the outer garb of true and loyal souls. Every man who wore it became ennobled in the eyes of every woman."¹⁶ The ladies of Richmond were proud of their boys in gray and were excited to be in the middle of the action.

As the war progressed, many Richmond women took jobs in factories, government offices and hospitals since a large portion of the male citizens were off fighting. While certainly not pleased with the years of battles and fighting, the women created a new normal way of life the best they could. When not at work or taking care of the home and family, the citizens of Richmond would visit with their friends and

¹⁵ For more information on Richmond Women during the Civil War, see Sallie A. Brock Putnam, *In Richmond during the Confederacy* (New York: R. M. McBride Co., 1961); Putnam, *Richmond during the War*; Wixson, *From Civility to Survival*; McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee*; Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*.

For more information on Women during the Civil War: Judith E. Harper, *Women during the Civil War: an Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Catherine Clinton, *Southern Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Marilyn Mayer Culpepper, *Women of the Civil War South: Personal Accounts from Diaries, Letters, and Postwar Remembrances* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2004); Charles G. Waugh and Martin Harry Greenberg, *The Women's War in the South: Recollections and Reflections of the American Civil War* (Nashville, Tennessee: Cumberland House, 1999); L. P. Brackett and Mary C. Vaughan, *Women at War: A Record of their Patriotic Contributions, Heroism, Toils, and Sacrifice during the Civil War* (Stamford, CT: Longmeadow Press, 1993); Faust, *Mothers of Invention*.

¹⁶ Jones, *Ladies of Richmond*, 79.

neighbors, with some even holding parties or plays in their parlors.¹⁷ Fannie A. Beers described the atmosphere of the city as, "The hum of conversation, the sound of careless, happy laughter, the music of a band playing outside...Richmond was gay, hopeful."¹⁸ The fighting may have surrounded them, but the women tried to go about their day-to-day lives as best they could, often even enjoying themselves.

By 1863, food and supplies in the city and throughout the South began to dwindle. Historian Drew Gilpin Faust explained this shift as women "playing" war and then having to make increasing sacrifices for the Confederate cause.¹⁹ In Richmond, women's lives soon became filled with desolation and hunger. "The storerooms became almost empty and our fare was very frugal. We often sat down at the table to bread, a dish of rice, and no butter. If we had more, it was reserved for the soldiers in camps and hospitals," wrote Mrs. Mark Valentine.²⁰ Women who had never worried about food or supplies had to grow accustomed to meager servings. This change of pace came as a shock to the women, but they adapted as best they could. In the face of harsh realities, starvation parties became popular; these were parties with no food or drink. The citizens of Richmond still enjoyed the hospitality and camaraderie of neighbors, but there was no food to spare.

Women of the lower class and even some of the middle class in Richmond became upset over the lack of food and resources and decided to take action in what

¹⁷ Virginia Tunstall Clay, "There's Bound to Be Somethin' Goin' On," in *Ladies of Richmond*, 90.

¹⁸ Fannie A. Beers, "The Lovely, Joyous, Hopeful Days of Summer," in *Ladies of Richmond*, 81.

¹⁹ Drew Gilpin Faust, "Confederate Women and Narratives of War," in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., (New York: Oxford University Press 1992), 26, 181.

²⁰ Clay, "There's Bound to Be Somethin' Goin' On," in *Ladies of Richmond*, 90.

was called the Richmond Bread Riot.²¹ Citizens took to the streets of Richmond demanding that the government provide them food, and when their cries went unheard, they began looting local stores until government officials finally stopped them. Elite Richmond women were disgusted by the event, calling the actions of the lower class “disgraceful.”²² To the elite, complaining and rioting went against everything in which they believed. These women were suffering as well, though not to the same extent, but they were willing to sacrifice, as long as it helped the Confederate cause. “The generosity of our people was unstinted, and became more and more beautifully manifest as our poverty increased. A disposition was evinced to withhold nothing of ease or luxury which might in any way benefit a cause that called forth the most earnest devotion of patriotism,” wrote Sallie Putnam, nee Brock.²³ The self-sacrifice displayed by the elite women was something they had never had to do; however, they were willing to sacrifice, as it was their way of fighting the war on the homefront.

By the winter of 1865, citizens were suffering intensely in the capital city. As Putnam, wrote, “War and privation strained the southern social order, forcing pampered white women into unaccustomed roles.”²⁴ Women dreamed of the luxuries they had

²¹ For more information on the Richmond Bread Riot, see Ernest B. Furgurson, *Ashes of Glory: Richmond at War* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1996); Brooks D. Simpson, *The Civil War: the Third Year Told by Those Who Lived It* (New York: The Library of America, 2013); Douglas O. Tice, *Bread or Blood!: the Richmond Bread Riot* (Harrisburg, PA: Civil War Times Illustrated, 1974); Katherine R. Titus, “The Richmond Bread Riot of 1863: Class, Race, and Gender in the Urban Confederacy” (master’s thesis, United States Naval Academy, 2010); Stephanie McCurry, “Bread or Blood!: Armed Women Took to the Streets to Protest against Confederate Injustice,” *Civil War Times Illustrated* 50, no. 3, (June 2011): 36-41; William J. Kimball, “The Bread Riot in Richmond, 1863,” *Civil War History* 7, no. 2 (1961): 149-154; Michael B. Chesson, “Harlots or Heroines? A New Look at the Richmond Bread Riot,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 92, no. 2, (1984): 131-175.

²² Putnam, *Richmond during the War*, 209.

²³ *Ibid.*, 211.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, xviii.

before and at the start of the war. Even amidst the woe and grief, elite women tried to put on a happy face, which aligned with Victorian ideals of suffering. Elites believed pain and suffering were a sign of “whiteness, refinement, and class status,” according to historian Frances Clarke.²⁵ By accepting the suffering and trying to continue their lives, these elite women exemplified the ideal Victorian lady. Nellie Gray remembered trying to be happy despite the suffering. “There were hunger and nakedness and death and pestilence and fire and sword everywhere,...but, somehow, we laughed and sang and played on the piano,” she wrote.²⁶ However, this lack of food, constant death on both the battlefield and in hospitals, and low morale in the Confederate Army and on the home front led many of them to believe the end of the war was imminent. In fact, many southern women began encouraging their loved ones to desert and come home; they believed future fighting would be futile. Catherine Clinton argues that women’s loss of interest and wish for the war to end is one reason the Confederacy did not last longer.²⁷

Long gone were the days of balls and parties for the women left in Richmond at the beginning of 1865. Many of the former elite struggled to find food for their families, as prices soared to unbelievable highs. According to a letter by Eliza Middleton Huger Smith, one bushel of meal cost for one hundred dollars, while a barrel of flour cost five hundred.²⁸ Virginia Dade wrote in March 1865 that one pound of coffee was forty

²⁵ Frances M. Clarke, *War Stories: Suffering and Sacrifice in the Civil War North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 12.

²⁶ Nellie Gray, “Sometimes We Were Hungry,” in *Ladies of Richmond*, 262.

²⁷ Faust, “Confederate Women and Narratives of War,” in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, 182.

²⁸ Eliza Middleton Huger Smith, “This Abode of Misery,” in *Ladies of Richmond*, 225.

dollars, one pound butter twenty five, and a pair of shoes eighty dollars.²⁹ The harsh winter led many women to conclude the war would soon be over. Sallie Brock Putnam wrote in March, "We felt that the approaching campaign, which was expected to open very early in the season, whether it terminated in favor of or against us, would conclude the war."³⁰ Others foresaw a Confederate defeat; Judith McGuire wrote in her diary that by February 1865 she knew that Richmond would fall and subsequently the rest of the South.³¹ She wrote that she would rather see the city burn before the Union Army took control of it. While these women did not want a Confederate defeat, they were ready for the war to be over. They had lost too much, made too many sacrifices and were ready to have their loved ones home and they hoped have food and other necessities returned to them.

Throughout the war there had been occasions where the Union Army was close to Richmond, but it had never yet reached the gates of the city. In 1862 during the Seven Days Campaign, the enemy army was just miles away; in fact the troops could even hear the city church bells ringing. The people in Richmond feared that they would soon be occupied. Judith McGuire wrote, "A panic prevails lest the enemy should get to Richmond...I can't believe that they will get here though it seems to be their end and aim. My mind is much perturbed; we can only go on doing our duty, as quietly as we can."³² Though Robert E. Lee's victory spared the city that summer, the capture of

²⁹ Dade, "The Fall of Richmond," 104.

³⁰ Putnam, *Richmond during the War*, 356.

³¹ McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee during the War*, 340.

³² Judith Brockenbrough McGuire, "They Shan't Get to Richmond," in *Ladies of Richmond*, 106.

Richmond remained the ultimate Union goal; thus, Richmond citizens were constantly on edge, waiting for a renewed offensive.

At various points throughout the war, Richmond women anticipated a possible evacuation of the city by the Confederate government. Because of the military engagements around Richmond that continually threatened the safety of the city, the Confederate government had been prepared for an evacuation since 1862.³³ The year preceding April 1865 was filled with confrontations between General Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Potomac and Lee's Army of Northern Virginia that would lead to Richmond's ultimate evacuation and the end of the war the women so desperately wanted. In June 1864, after a Confederate win at Cold Harbor just north of Richmond both armies headed south of the city to Petersburg.³⁴ If Petersburg fell, Richmond would fall. For nine months the armies were entrenched around the city of Petersburg with the Confederates determined to defend Richmond at all costs. Both armies knew that if the Union occupied the Confederate capital city the war would likely end soon. Officials developed plans as early as 1862 to hastily put all important Confederate government documents as well as the government officials themselves on the railroad to Danville, Virginia, if Lee ordered evacuation. The citizens of Richmond would be left in the city to deal with the incoming Union Army.

³³ Clark, *Last Train South*.

³⁴ For more information on Cold Harbor, see Ernest B. Furgurson, *Not War But Murder: Cold Harbor, 1864* (New York: Knopf, 2000); Gordon C. Rhea, *Cold Harbor: Grant and Lee, May 26-June 3, 1864* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002); Noah Andre Trudeau, *Bloody Roads South: the Wilderness to Cold Harbor, May-June 1864* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1989).

During the entrenchment at Petersburg, both sides occasionally attacked the enemy, hoping to end the stalemate.³⁵ Because of the armies' close proximity to Richmond, the citizens in the capital constantly received updates with the latest news from the front. In March of 1865, the Confederate government in Richmond learned that Lee and his troops would not be able to hold off Grant's men much longer. President Davis even sent his wife, Varina, and their children south to North Carolina because evacuation seemed imminent, just as he had done in 1862 when he feared the city's occupation.³⁶ Most Richmond women did not have the means or finances to flee the city in preparation for its demise, and many still wanted to believe that Richmond would remain strong. After a Union breakthrough at Five Forks on April 1, this belief quickly vanished.³⁷

April 2, 1865: A Day of Fear

As the Union Army threatened Richmond and evacuation seemed imminent, elite women feared what occupation would bring to their beloved city. Once it was clear the Confederate troops could no longer hold back the larger and stronger Union Army, Lee sent the fateful telegram to Davis the morning of April 2 telling him to prepare to evacuate the city. Davis received the notice while sitting in church at St. Paul's

³⁵ For more information on Petersburg and the various engagements that made up the campaign, see Edwin C. Bearss and Bryce A. Suderow, *The Petersburg Campaign* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Casemate, 2011); John Horn, *The Petersburg Campaign: June 1864-April 1865* (Conshohocken, PA: Combined Books, 1993); A. Wilson Greene, *The Final Battles of the Petersburg Campaign: Breaking the Backbone of the Rebellion* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2008); Earl J. Hess, *In the Trenches at Petersburg: Field Fortifications & Confederate Defeat* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

³⁶ Clark, *Last Train South*, 5.

³⁷ For more information on the Battle of Five Forks, see Edwin C. Bearss and Chris Calkins, *Battle of Five Forks* (Lynchburg, VA: H.E. Howard, 1985); Robert Alexander, *Five Forks: Waterloo of the Confederacy: a Civil War Narrative* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2003); Edwin C. Bearss and Bryce A. Suderow, *The Five Forks Campaign and the Fall of Petersburg* (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2014).

Episcopal Church in the center of Richmond, and he quickly got up and exited.³⁸ As word began to spread, other government officials began leaving the sanctuary, and the congregation realized that something was amiss. By late afternoon, the majority of Richmond citizens knew that the government would be leaving that night, heading west towards Danville and that the Union Army would soon be in route to Richmond.³⁹

As Davis met with the Confederate Cabinet to go over their plans for evacuation, the women and the few men left in the city ran to various warehouses and banks to retrieve their valuables from safekeeping. They feared that once the Union Army arrived and occupied the city, the troops would confiscate all their possessions. "Visions of looting and savagery, spawned by old stereotypes about the barbaric Yankees, seized white imaginations," writes historian Stephen Ash.⁴⁰ The citizens had heard horror stories coming from other occupied cities of Union troops stealing personal possessions and burning banks and warehouses, so they became determined to protect their valuables. The fear of looting proved true, but the enemy troops were not the looters. People in the city began taking whatever food and supplies they could get their hands on, and at one point that day the warehouses opened for anyone who wished to come take provisions.⁴¹ The elite women did not want to participate in the chaos of the evacuation, but many knew they should stock up on food so they would not go hungry

³⁸ Ryan, *Four Days in 1865*, 14.

³⁹ For more information on the evacuation of Richmond and the timeline of the fire, see Clark, *Last Train South*; Ryan, *Four Days in 1865*; A. A. Hoehling and Mary Duprey Hoehling, *The Day Richmond Died* (San Diego: A. S. Barnes, 1981); Patrick, *The Fall of Richmond*; Edward H. Ripley, *The Capture and Occupation of Richmond, April 3rd, 1865* (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1991); Lankford, *Richmond Burning*.

⁴⁰ Stephen V. Ash, "White Virginians under Federal Occupation, 1861-1865," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 98, no. 2, (1990): 172.

⁴¹ Ryan, *Four Days in 1865*.

in the days to come.⁴² Women began to debate what was moral and appropriate for their status versus what they needed to do to survive, and these deliberations would only increase once the Union Army arrived. Elite women did not want to be seen in the streets with the lower class citizens scrambling for food, but they, too, were hungry. In the end, class status did not matter; even the upper class women rushed to gather their belongings and take whatever food and supplies they could obtain.

Meanwhile on the afternoon of April 2, Confederate General Richard Ewell ordered all government supplies and documents to be loaded on the railroad and all Union prisoners to be evacuated from the prisons in the city, such as Libby Prison and Belle Isle.⁴³ The last thing the government wanted was the Union Army to arrive and free all their prisoners, which would further strengthen their number of men. Meanwhile, Richmond Mayor Joseph Mayo prepared his own local city officials for the Confederate government's evacuation, as Mayo would be in charge of officially surrendering the city to the Union since the city government would remain in Richmond.

As the sky grew dark and night fell upon the city, Confederate officials boarded the railroad along with as many documents as they could load and headed west. Even though the Union Army was the enemy, Davis still tried to appear a proper southern gentleman, a theme continually seen with Richmond women during the war and later during occupation. Even in times of war, these men and women still wanted to uphold the ideals and manners expected of southern elites. Around the same time as Davis himself fled the city, Ewell ordered the remaining Confederate troops in town to set fire

⁴² Myrta Lockett Avery, *A Virginia Girl in the Civil War, 1861-1865; being a Record of the Actual Experiences of the Wife of a Confederate Officer* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1903), 358.

⁴³ Ryan, *Four Days in 1865*.

to the tobacco warehouses so the Union troops would not be able to take the product for themselves when they arrived.⁴⁴ The southern troops lit the fires and left the city, and though chaos abounded, the night to come would be even more hectic. Susan Hoge wrote, "The confusion of that night cannot be described-vehicles of every description were passing all night long carrying away people they knew not where, army wagons rushing through, artillery, cavalry, & thousands on foot."⁴⁵

The women of Richmond struggled to see their beloved city in flames. The Confederate Army had protected the women for four long years, and then the army itself set flame to the city. Men who had been protectors now threatened the homes and lives of the people that had so strongly supported them, and the women found this hard to understand. "I beheld the most sublimely awful spectacle that it has ever been my fortune to witness-the whole city...seemed a sheet of fire...Every moment the devouring monster seemed coming nearer and nearer to the place where I stood," wrote Virginia Dade.⁴⁶ Once it became clear that the fire was spreading quickly, women set to work doing what they had learned to do throughout the war: protect their families, homes and valuables at all costs. The flames at the warehouses got out of control, leading the fire to spread to more than just the warehouses. Overnight, the blaze enveloped much of the business district of the city and began threatening to consume local houses. The women quickly put aside their fear over the fire and the incoming army and focused instead on making sure family members got out of the fire's way and collecting as many possessions as possible so they would not be burned. Many

⁴⁴ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁵ Susan Morton Wood Hoge to Elizabeth H. Howard, October 28, 1865, Hoge Family Papers, VHS.

⁴⁶ Virginia E. Dade, "The Fall of Richmond," 104.

of their everyday necessities, such as clothing and food, were limited already because of the war; what would happen if they lost what little they did have? The women certainly did not expect the incoming enemy army to provide food and clothes, so they remained determined to protect what they did own.

Throughout the course of the war, women's roles drastically shifted through the transition from gentle and nurturing motherly figure to strong protector, but the shift was necessary as the women had to become the heads of the household while the men fought. No question existed as to what to do when their livelihoods were threatened by fire; they would fight. One woman, Rebecca Jane Allen who lived at 20th and Main Streets, hid her fear and took it upon herself to save all of her family's possessions, showing her strength in a stressful time. As the fire neared her house, it was up to her to save the property. In the middle of the night, Allen took all four of her children to a vacant lot across the street from the house and told them to stay put as she went back and forth carrying whatever she could to the safety of the empty lot.⁴⁷ Despite not knowing what the next day would bring, Allen knew it was her duty to protect her family and valuables while her husband was away. Allen had learned to be both the woman and man of the house during the war, and at the end, she showcased both of these roles by saving her possessions while still mothering her children.

The fire was not the only villain women worried about; amidst the chaos of the evacuation and fire, women also tried to hide their gold, silver and any other treasured family heirloom from the Union Army. For months, stories had reached Richmond of the

⁴⁷ Patrick, *The Fall of Richmond*, 60.

rude, plundering Yankee troops that would force themselves into southern houses, scare the women and children and then take their food, silver, and any other valuable items. Catherine Cochran kept a scrapbook in her Richmond home of newspaper articles that talked of these Union crimes. One such article detailed Union General Judson Kilpatrick forcing himself and his men into homes in Georgia, destroying family's items and then demanding the women at the homes cook him dinner.⁴⁸ Another article on the occupation of Columbia, South Carolina read, "Until the last Yankee left town, person nor property were safe from the impolite intrusions upon their welfare."⁴⁹ These stories had passed all over the South and throughout Richmond; and the women fully believed their veracity.

The orders for the Union occupiers had been set in 1863 by Abraham Lincoln in his General Orders No. 100, "Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field," known as the Lieber Code. Cities and town occupied by Union troops would be put under martial law and citizens of the city would be considered the enemy. That being said, Article 22 of the code stated, "The principle has been more and more acknowledged that the unarmed citizen is to be spared in person, property, and honor as much as the exigencies of war will admit." Though Lincoln expected the troops not to murder or enslave the citizens, he did state that property could be taken if needed for the Union military effort. He also stipulated that if property was taken, a

⁴⁸ "Outrages by Yankee Generals," unidentified newspaper, in "Recollections, 1861-1865, of Experiences in Middleburg, Loudoun County, VA., and Richmond, VA," Catherine Mary Powell Noland Cochran Papers, VHS.

⁴⁹ "The Campaign in South Carolina: The Character of Federal Victories," unidentified newspaper, "Recollections, 1861-1865, of Experiences in Middleburg, Loudoun County, VA., and Richmond, VA," Catherine Mary Powell Noland Cochran Papers, VHS.

receipt should be issued to the owner as a form of security.⁵⁰ Despite these military orders, soldiers typically did not get punished for burning homes or for stealing private property that could not in any way be used for the war effort, such as family photographs. Many of the soldiers that committed such acts believed that destroying private property was a way of waging psychological war upon the enemy citizens.⁵¹ Others thought that if they intentionally targeted women and homes, the women would eventually turn their backs on the war and support the Confederacy no longer.⁵² Whatever their logic, the Union actions did enrage southern women, and stories of the horrors spread throughout the Confederacy.

While many of these Union horror stories originated farther South in locales such as Georgia and Alabama, the Union Army had been closer to home in locales such as Alexandria, Norfolk, and the Shenandoah Valley, and the citizens in these places related their tales of woe at the hands of the enemy. Judith McGuire had lived through the Union Army entering Alexandria and had fled to Richmond. She wrote about how the troops searched each and every house in Alexandria for valuables to take for themselves.⁵³ Women and children had fled Norfolk once the city became occupied, and many of them came to Richmond and told their tales of woe.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ "General Orders No. 100: The Lieber Code," *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, Yale Law School, 2008.

⁵¹ Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 75.

⁵² Lisa Tendrich Frank, "Bedrooms as Battlefields: The Role of Gender Politics in Sherman's March," in *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation, and the American Civil War*, LeeAnn Whites, ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 36.

⁵³ McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee during the War*, 21.

⁵⁴ Constance Cary Harrison, "Richmond Scenes in '62," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel, eds. (New York: The Century Co., 1887), II: 439.

Reports from the Shenandoah Valley perhaps sounded even worse. Richmond women learned of General Phillip Sheridan and the destruction he created in the valley, including burning 2,000 barns, all the mills in one area, all the factories of cloth, and eating every animal so the people could not be sustained.⁵⁵ Women in the Shenandoah Valley feared what would happen to their houses and even their lives when the enemy army got too close. An unidentified woman wrote to her mother in April 1862, "Some of these gallant Federal soldiers did not hesitate to use the most profane language in our presence...They searched the whole house from garret to cellars...They threatened to burn the premises."⁵⁶ To Richmond women hearing these stories, the Union would stop at nothing to punish the South, even if it meant physically harming innocent women. "No species of crime, no deliberate, diabolical perpetration known to humanity, has been revolting for their sacrilegious hands...Their beastly passions, guided by the demon instinct within them, have been more than once in my knowledge violently visited upon one fair woman in a manner too revolting, too atrocious to contemplate," read one article in Cochran's scrapbook.⁵⁷ Women expected the worst from the Union Army, and those in Richmond prepared to do whatever they needed to protect themselves and their valuables.

Believing that the Union Army would enter the city and their houses and take or destroy anything of value, ladies thought that hiding the items in the house would be of

⁵⁵ OR Series II Vol III, "Report of the Joint Select Committee Appointed to Investigate the Condition and Treatment of Prisoners of War."

⁵⁶ Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 30.

⁵⁷ "The Yankee Rule in North Alabama," unidentified newspaper, "Recollections, 1861-1865, of Experiences in Middleburg, Loudoun County, VA., and Richmond, VA," Catherine Mary Powell Noland Cochran Papers, VHS.

no use, especially if the fire got to the house before the army did. Instead, women decided to try to hide their treasures on their own bodies, under their hoopskirts and dresses. Emmeline Lightfoot, nee Crump, wrote of her mother tying gold and silver coins to a cotton belt before tying the belt around Emmie herself.⁵⁸ The women hoped that the troops would not violate social customs and search their bodies, but they knew it was a possibility based on the stories they had heard from other occupied cities. When the Union troops entered women's homes, they were directly invading the domestic privacy of the home, often considered the woman's domain. To further this psychological warfare, Union soldiers occasionally entered the female bedroom, the ultimate taboo. "When Union soldiers broke down doors, wrenched open personal trunks, and tossed furniture around women's bedrooms, they were violating gendered rights and spaces," writes historian Megan Kate Nelson.⁵⁹

One of the biggest fears many of the ladies held was that the Northern troops would force their way into their homes and rape them. Just as stories had reached Richmond of Union troops entering homes and taking property, tales had been spreading of soldiers raping southern women. The actual number of women raped by Union troops is unknown; most women of the times would not have admitted rape even if it did occur. Most historians believe Union rape of white women rarely occurred and instead view these stories as propaganda devices used to incite fear and hatred throughout the south towards the enemy.⁶⁰ Believing all the rape rumors coming from the deep South to be true, the Richmond women nervously awaited what the Union

⁵⁸ Patrick, *The Fall of Richmond*, 22.

⁵⁹ Nelson, *Ruin Nation*, 76.

⁶⁰ Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 20.

occupation would bring while at the same time dealing with the task at hand, mainly protecting themselves from the fire.

Despite all of their fears, the women in Richmond held up remarkably well during the pandemonium of April 2. Determined to remain strong for their far-away men as well as their family still at home, elite white women did not publicly cry and mourn the loss of the city; they simply took action and prepared for the arrival of the Union troops. "Few tears were shed; there was not time for weakness or sentiment. The grief was too deep; the agony too terrible to find vent through the ordinary channels of distress,"⁶¹ wrote Sallie Putnam. While this is not a true representation of her real feelings during occupation since she wrote her memoir years later, Putnam found it important enough to write about. The women did not deny the fact that they were scared of the unknown; they just knew that they needed to try to remain strong as best they could.

Not only were the women's physical goods and homes being threatened; they watched their way of life and the known social order dissolve with the burning buildings. As historian Ashley Luskey writes, "For Richmond's leading ladies, the dramatic blaze symbolized not only the destruction of their homes and the Confederate seat of government, but also the end of a way of life for which they had fought through four long years of sacrifice, forceful ritual, and socio-political negotiation."⁶² The women feared the army looting and plundering, but perhaps their biggest fear was what life would be like under occupation, especially regarding their social status. "The most privileged southern women were those who defined themselves and their status in

⁶¹ Putnam, *Richmond during the War*, 364.

⁶² Ashley Luskey, "A Debt of Honor": Elite Women's Rituals of Cultural Authority in the Confederate Capital," (PhD. diss., West Virginia University, 2014), 306.

relation to the slave institution on which their privilege rested...Females in slaveholding families had the most to lose," writes historian Drew Gilpin Faust.⁶³ Elite women were established in their status because of their slaves, and once the army entered those slaves would be emancipated. Women feared that their status would change with the loss of their slaves. They would no longer have the property that defined who they were, and they feared they would fall lower in the class system.

The women were not only concerned about their societal positions, they also had the idea that the former slaves would use their freedom to retaliate against their former owners. Mary Chesnut recalls the death of her cousin, Betsey Witherspoon. Originally determined to be natural causes, the death was ruled a homicide. "Poor Cousin Betsey Witherspoon was murdered! She did not die peacefully, as we supposed, in her bed. Murdered by her own people. Her negroes."⁶⁴ If white women could be murdered when their slaves were still in bondage, once the slaves were free, there would be no one there to protect the women against anything they might plan. Besides violence, women also feared rape by black men. A fear that had been around since colonial times, elite southern women believed that rapes of white women by black men would only increase if slaves were given freedom.⁶⁵ All of these fears, from violence and rape by blacks to looting and plundering by Union troops filled Richmond's elite women's minds as the city burned and the army prepared to march into the city.

Marching into Richmond: April 3, 1865

⁶³ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 6-7.

⁶⁴ Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, 198.

⁶⁵ Hodes, "Wartime Dialogues on Illicit Sex: White Women and Black Men," in *Divided Houses*.

In the early morning hours of April 3, the Union Army inched ever closer to its goal to capturing the Confederate capital. The flames continued to spread throughout Richmond, and Union troops stationed at Fort Harrison under General Godfrey Weitzel just a few miles southeast of the city prepared to advance and capture the capital. The men could hear explosions coming from the armory, Rockett's Landing and elsewhere, and they had no idea what to expect once they were able to march into their destination. Early on the morning of April 3, Mayor Mayo and a few advisors rode out in the direction of Fort Harrison and met with a few of Weitzel's men to discuss terms of surrender.⁶⁶ Mayo noted that he would surrender the city as long as the Union troops promised to protect Richmond's citizens.⁶⁷ The Confederate government may have fled the city and abandoned its citizens, but the city government remained loyal to its inhabitants.

Shortly after eight in the morning, Federal troops marched into Richmond and replaced the Confederate flag flying above the Capitol building with the American flag, a sight Richmond citizens had not seen for four long years.⁶⁸ Even though the enemy troops had finally achieved the war-time goal of capturing Richmond, one observer noted that the troops were not boisterous and triumphant marching to the Capitol. "It was a solemn and gloomy march; little resembling the people's idea of triumphal entry into a captured city. The troops were quiet, showing little elation; their officers anxious

⁶⁶ *Richmond Evening Whig*, April 4, 1865.

⁶⁷ Joseph Mayo, "Surrender Note," April 3, 1865, Joseph Mayo Papers, Confederate Memorial Literary Society Collection, currently being relocated to the VHS.

⁶⁸ The American flag that was raised can be seen on display in the Virginia Historical Society's *Story of Virginia* exhibit.

and watchful ever; and dead silence reigned around them."⁶⁹ This containment of emotion perhaps set the stage for the weeks and months to come.

There was no doubt that the soldiers were overwhelmed with emotion upon entering the city; they had finally achieved a military goal many of them had been fighting towards for four years. Hiram Peck of the 10th Connecticut Infantry described the passion he and others felt when entering Richmond. "We were at last in Richmond—the city that had cast so many thousands of loyal lives, through many fruitless attempts to capture...What wonder that our hearts were filled with deep emotion because of the changed condition of affairs?"⁷⁰ Another onlooker also remarked on how the troops conducted themselves. A Frenchman, Alfred Paul, wrote in a report, "It was towards eight o'clock in the morning that the Federals arrived in the city in the most perfect order, without committing any excess, protecting the people and the property. Their discipline and conduct had to be admired as they calmly advanced into the heart of the city where their entry had been greatly dreaded."⁷¹ This self-containment of ecstatic emotion was in part the men protecting themselves from Richmond citizens retaliating against the enemy.

Just as the Richmond women had preconceived notions about Union troops, the troops expected the Richmond women to be rude towards them. At the beginning of the war, the army saw Confederate women as harmless, but as Union troops began to have more and more interaction with women in the South, they quickly realized the

⁶⁹ DeLeon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 397.

⁷⁰ "The Fall of Richmond," *National Tribune*, September 27, 1900.

⁷¹ Warren F. Spencer, "A French View of the Fall of Richmond: Alfred Paul's Report to Drouyn de Lhuys, April 11, 1865," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 73, no. 2, (1965).

women were not the quieter, weaker sex they had originally thought.⁷² Throughout the Confederacy, Union soldiers faced belligerent women not afraid to speak their mind. Speaking out against the enemy allowed the women to feel as though they were contributing to the war effort. Explains historian Drew Gilpin Faust, "With words, gestures, chamber pots, and even, on occasion, pistols, white women assaulted the enemy in ways that many southerners celebrated as heroic testimony to female courage and patriotism."⁷³ In New Orleans, women would empty streetcars if a Union soldier got on, and sometimes they would dump their chamber pot on the men's heads.⁷⁴ The soldiers entering Richmond had heard the reports of women in other cities insulting the occupying troops, and they believed the women in the capital city would do the same.⁷⁵

While the Union Army marched towards the city, the loud explosions periodically going off at places like Rockett's Landing and the arsenal at Seventh and Canal Streets had kept the women of Richmond awake most of the night.⁷⁶ Rising from their disturbed slumbers, they looked out their windows to see men in blue uniforms walking down the street. Even though they knew occupation was coming, they were still deeply saddened to see Federals in their beloved city. When recalling the moment she saw her first Yankee, Emmeline Lightfoot wrote, "I can never forget the man's appearance, and the thrill of horror that went through me; his blue jacket with the yellow stripes down

⁷² Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 61.

⁷³ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 196.

⁷⁴ Alecia Long, "(Mis)Remembering General Order No. 28: Benjamin Butler, the Woman Order, and Historical Memory," in *Occupied Women*, 21.

⁷⁵ Ash, *When the Yankees Came*.

⁷⁶ Ryan, *Four Days in 1865*, 88.

the back is vivid in my mind's eye today."⁷⁷ Lightfoot and others had talked of the enemy for years, and when they finally saw them they believed all their fears would soon materialize.

Other women were not so kind in their remembrances of first gazing upon the troops. "Our streets were undeseccrated by the tramp of their feet marching among us, treading out liberty and joy from every loyal heart," wrote Frances Dickinson.⁷⁸ Because the women had only heard horror stories of what the Union men would do once in their town, they were still terrified. Other women felt more sadness and despair than bitterness towards the troops. Myrta Lockett Avary recalled, "The saddest moment of my life was when I saw that Southern Cross dragged down and the Stars and Stripes run up above the Capitol...Was it for this, I thought, that Jackson had fallen... was it to this end we had fought and starved and gone naked and cold?"⁷⁹ Richmond women had sacrificed much to the Confederate cause—their men, their money, their time, and they had gone without food and fine clothes as the war progressed all so the South could win the war. Once the American flag was flying over the Confederate Capitol building, the women finally knew that war would soon be over.

In addition to the white Union troops that marched into Richmond, United States Colored Troops (USCTs) also reached the Capitol on April 3. These soldiers were doubly horrifying to the Richmond women. Not only were they wearing the blue of the enemy; they were also free African Americans with weapons. To a people still accustomed to

⁷⁷ Emmeline Allmand Crump Lightfoot, "The Evacuation of Richmond," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 41 (1933), 218.

⁷⁸ Fannie E. Taylor Dickinson, "Diary, 1865 April 4-18," Fannie E. Taylor Dickinson Papers, VHS, 1.

⁷⁹ Avary, *A Virginia Girl in the Civil War*, 363.

African Americans as property, seeing armed blacks was quite a shock; one woman even said they looked like monkeys.⁸⁰ Comparing these soldiers to animals displays the mindset of elite women towards blacks, ideas ingrained since colonial times. Young Fannie Walker Miller remembered seeing these troops enter the city. "I looked down the street, and to my horror beheld a Negro cavalryman yelling, 'Richmond at last!'"⁸¹ Frances Doswell evoked the thought of many women when she said, "O how galling it is to us to see the Yankee negroes on horseback & to hear the remarks they make."⁸² These views of blacks as animals and property foreshadowed problems in the days to come. How were the Richmond women going to treat the newly freed slaves that would need homes, food, and jobs?

Once Richmond was surrendered and officially under Union rule, martial law was enacted. Civilians were supposed to owe allegiance to the occupying power and not resist.⁸³ "The functions of the mayor and police have been suspended for the present, and military law governs the city. In the present unsettled state of affairs this is perhaps proper, and highly necessary."⁸⁴ Even though the Richmond government had not fled the city, all of its duties were suspended. The people of the city were truly under the supreme authority of the occupying army.

Brigadier General George Shepley was named military governor of the city on April 3, and his first order brought comfort to the people of the city. The order was to

⁸⁰ Lucy Parke Bagby Chamberlayne, "Chronicles of the Life of Lucy Parke Chamberlayne," Bagby Family Papers, VHS.

⁸¹ Fannie Walker Miller, "To My Horror," in *Ladies of Richmond*, 277.

⁸² Frances Anne Sutton Doswell, "Diary of Mrs. Thomas Walker Doswell, April 1865," *Hanover County Historical Society*, no. 46, (1992): 5.

⁸³ Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 56.

⁸⁴ *Richmond Evening Whig*, April 6, 1865.

extinguish the fire that still raged on the streets of the business district. He put up notices asking citizens to aid in the process, and he made sure to note that soldiers would not be offensive or insulting towards the people. The notices read, "With the restoration of the flag of the Union, they may expect the restoration of that peace, prosperity, and happiness which they enjoyed under the Union of which that flag is the glorious symbol."⁸⁵ While the residents of Richmond expected to be treated poorly by the enemy troops, Shepley wanted to make it clear that this would not be the case. Lincoln and other Unionists' ultimate goal was reunion between the North and South. Treating citizens poorly would hinder this goal, so orders were to respect the private lives of the occupied. Article 37 of the Lieber Code reads, "The United States acknowledge and protect, in hostile countries occupied by them, religion and morality; strictly private property; the persons of the inhabitants, especially those of women: and the sacredness of domestic relations. Offenses to the contrary shall be rigorously punished."⁸⁶ The code established that the occupying Union Army would not violate the domestic or private sphere, though it was up to the women to believe that the occupiers would follow the order.

Unless they were helping extinguish the fire, citizens were ordered to remain inside once the occupying army had set up their headquarters and began to settle in the city.⁸⁷ The women did not argue with this order; many remained inside to avoid

⁸⁵ Ryan, *Four Days in 1865*, 89.

⁸⁶ "General Orders No. 100: The Lieber Code," *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, Yale Law School, 2008.

⁸⁷ Duggan, "The Military Occupation of Richmond," 27.

interaction with the occupiers.⁸⁸ Soldiers reported seeing eyes watching them from behind doors and shutters that would quickly close when the men glanced their way.⁸⁹ Emmie Lightfoot wrote of peeking out the windows at the soldiers as they walked down the street. Hoping for protection for the house and family, the Crumps' servant told the soldiers walking by that the Crumps were Union supporters. When Emmie found out, she became furious that the servant would lie.⁹⁰ She did not care that the servant was trying to protect her; she was willing to be punished so that she could display her loyalty to her beloved Confederacy.

The majority of Richmond women were not willing to be punished for voicing their hatred of the Union. They worried what the army would do to outspoken opponents, and none of them wanted to end up in jail arrested for treason, or worse. On the other hand, the occupiers themselves had to decide how to deal with insulting women- would they treat them as proper females or punish them as enemies? "The Federals often found themselves torn by conflicting impulses: on the one hand to punish and coerce hostile women as military necessity demanded, on the other hand to indulge and protect them as the Victorian ethos encouraged," writes Ash.⁹¹ The men knew to respect women, but when the women were hostile enemies, did the same societal rules still apply? Occasionally the occupiers took action when dealing with extremely insulting Confederate women. When the women in New Orleans became belligerent towards the occupying troops there, General Benjamin Butler issued General

⁸⁸ Mrs. A. Fontaine to Marie Burrows Sayre, in *From Civility to Survival*, 137.

⁸⁹ Edward M. Boykin, *The Falling Flag. Evacuation of Richmond, Retreat and Surrender at Appomattox* (New York: E.T. Hale & Son, 1874), 14.

⁹⁰ Patrick, *The Fall of Richmond*, 69.

⁹¹ Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 61.

Order 28, which stated that any woman insulting a Union soldier would be treated as a prostitute. The Union troops then could treat the woman as an enemy and essentially throw societal rules away.⁹² They could hit the woman or insult her and not face repercussion. Richmond women were wary of this same thing happening to them, so many chose to remain quiet.

Others chose to be quiet because they felt it was not their place to speak out in public about matters such as war. As Faust writes, "At least some women...worried that antagonistic behavior threatened both women's safety and prevailing standards of feminine propriety."⁹³ Whatever the reason for not speaking out, for the most part, the ladies of Richmond chose to keep their true thoughts away from the Yankees, and the Union did notice and appreciate the propriety. War reporter Charles A. Page wrote, "The ladies of Richmond have manifested no such venom as the ladies of Fredericksburg were accustomed to exhibit two years ago."⁹⁴ This restraint by the women allowed a hesitant but cordial relationship to begin to form between the occupiers and the occupied.

Many diaries and letters display this fear of being punished and the willingness to remain quiet in front of the occupying army. "It is very hard to keep quiet under such rule but we must bear it as best we can," wrote Margaret Wight.⁹⁵ It was not just speaking out verbally that women were feared. Women even worried about what they wrote to others. Maria Smith Peek Marrow wrote to a friend, "Let me know if my letters

⁹² Alecia Long, "(Mis)Remembering General Order No. 28," 28.

⁹³ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 204.

⁹⁴ Page, *Letters of a War Correspondent*, 349.

⁹⁵ Shirley A. Haas and Dale Paige Talley, eds., *A Refugee at Hanover Tavern: The Civil War Diary of Margaret Wight* (Charleston: The History Press, 2013,) 194.

express too disloyal sentiments as I do not want to say any thing [sic.] that would offend the Powers that be. For we are in their power now-helpless slaves."⁹⁶ Since all mail had to pass through the occupying forces, women like Marrow knew that their letters may be read and that any opposing ideas might bring retribution.

Many times it was hard for the women to keep their thoughts and opinions to themselves. Fannie Dickinson wrote of wanting to voice her feelings but how she finally convinced herself to stay silent because she was scared of what would happen if she spoke out.⁹⁷ This struggle she and others faced was yet another internal debate with which many had to contend. Not wanting to turn their backs on the Confederacy contradicted the need to stay safe in their homes protecting their families, and for the majority of women the latter took precedence.

"They did not molest or disturb us...:" The True Nature of the Occupying Army⁹⁸

In compliance with the Lieber Code, Union troops were given strict orders to remain respectful of the people and their homes while in Richmond. "No officer or soldier will enter or search any private dwelling, or remove any property therefrom, without a written order from the Headquarters of the Commanding General, the Military Governor, or the Provost Marshal General."⁹⁹ These commands to be respectful showed

⁹⁶ Maria Smith Peek Marrow to Daniel G. Marrow, May 10, 1865, Marrow Family Papers, VHS.

⁹⁷ Dickinson, "Diary," 1-5.

⁹⁸ Avary, *A Virginia Girl in the Civil War*, 365.

⁹⁹ "General Order No. 2 HQ Military Governor of Richmond, April 3d, 1865," *Richmond Evening Whig*, April 7, 1865.

the women that the commanding generals expected order in Richmond, but the ladies still hesitated to believe that occupation would be completely peaceful.

Perhaps because of their conscious decision to keep quiet and not provoke the Union men, it was not long after occupation that Richmond women began to see another, softer side to their rival troops. One report by an onlooker stated that the ladies were "fraternizing with [the troops] without fear as early as the afternoon of April 3.¹⁰⁰ The women's accounts dispute this claim, but just two days after occupation, the women began again to go about the city to visit the sick and wounded, to find food, or just to leave the house.¹⁰¹ Once on the streets, the women were surprised at the action of the occupying troops. Historian Rembert Patrick writes "Ladies who imagined a barbaric horde of Union soldiers bent on acts of medieval rapine implored protection... Their pleas received polite attention, and soldiers were assigned to escort them to their homes."¹⁰² Instead of the rude and malicious soldiers they expected, the ladies were surprised to learn that many of the men did not seek to punish them but instead treated them with respect. The Union generals in charge of Richmond were determined to restore order and peace to the war-torn city, and harassing citizens was not on their agenda.

One way to keep order in the city was to make sure there was no looting or plundering as on the night of April 2. Guards were posted on every city block to monitor the streets.¹⁰³ Since the troops were guarding the streets, women soon began to have

¹⁰⁰ Spencer, "A French View of the Fall of Richmond," 182.

¹⁰¹ DeLeon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 400.

¹⁰² Patrick, *The Fall of Richmond*, 75.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

interactions with them, if even just to walk by them on the street. Soon the women began recording their thoughts on the gentlemanly nature of the men. Virginia Dade wrote, "To our surprise, we were treated by these with the greatest respect and courtesy, always giving us the sidewalk and ever checking rude laughter whenever we draw near."¹⁰⁴ Women who had initially stayed inside to avoid interaction with the occupiers now realized they would not be molested when walking around town.

The women did not take the courtesy afforded them for granted. They knew that they were under the power of an enemy army. Because of the circumstances of war and occupation, the Union men could have treated the Richmond citizens poorly. Even by the end of the first week of April, the majority of women living there realized that they were being treated quite fairly by the occupiers. Emmeline Crump Lightfoot echoes this idea in her journal when she writes, "We were not interfered with, however, and it was generally conceded that our enemies behaved with consideration under the circumstances."¹⁰⁵ Marietta Powell also echoed this sentiment in a letter to Mary Custis Lee. "I was glad to learn from your letter that the Yankee's were evincing a desire to conciliate, and show consideration to the people of Richmond....I think deary [sic.] Mary we should try to give them the credit they deserve, for it was in their power to have made our lives a perfect burden."¹⁰⁶

The one Richmond newspaper allowed to continue printing at the beginning of the Union occupation, the *Richmond Whig*, also noted the nature of the troops and the quietness of the citizens. "So far as we can learn everybody is highly gratified at the

¹⁰⁴ Virginia E. Dade, "The Fall of Richmond," 104.

¹⁰⁵ Lightfoot, "The Evacuation of Richmond," 220.

¹⁰⁶ Marietta Powell to Mary Custis Lee, July 3, 1865, Mary Custis Lee Papers, VHS.

deportment of the troops who entered the city yesterday. There have been no acts of violence or disorder committed, as some persons apprehended; but, on the contrary, the soldiers conducted themselves with marked propriety and decorum."¹⁰⁷ It is important to note that this newspaper, though run by Richmonders, was censored by the occupying army; therefore, anything written in the paper put a positive spin on Union actions. The article however cannot be completely untrue since Richmond women corroborated the facts to a certain extent in their accounts. Union officers also noted the good nature of the occupied people. Colonel William Kreutzer wrote "The people are submissive; we have not heard a word to mar the good feeling between both parties."¹⁰⁸ Many Union soldiers expected to be treated as the enemy, and they were glad when this was not the case.

Richmond citizens knew that despite their feelings towards the Union and its army, they had much to be thankful for. Much of their city was burned, but there were still parts that survived thanks to the Union troops. The women were upset and worried about the future, but they were kept safe in an orderly city thanks to the troops. All of these things were reasons to be grateful. When analyzing the actions of the occupying army, Patrick writes, "Rather than destroying it, they had saved a city fired by retreating Confederates; instead of committing rapine, they had guarded defenseless women; in contrast to expected vandalism, they had fed the hungry."¹⁰⁹ This

¹⁰⁷ *Richmond Evening Whig*, April 4, 1865.

¹⁰⁸ William Kreutzer, *Notes and Observations made during Four Years of Service with the Ninety –Eighth N.Y. Volunteers, in the War of 1861* (Philadelphia: Grant, Faives, and Rodgers, Printers, 1878).

¹⁰⁹ Patrick, *The Fall of Richmond*, 101.

discrepancy between what women expected of the Union Army and what the army actually showed the women that their fears were as yet untrue.

While women did not show their appreciation directly to the men, many expressed their gratitude in their private journals and letters. "I must do the Federal soldiers justice to say that the discipline was admirable, and Generals Ord and Patrick proved themselves gentlemen and very much inclined to be conciliatory," wrote Evelina Lucas in a letter.¹¹⁰ The fact that the women were thankful to their enemies, including Edward Ord and Marsena Patrick who were originally in charge of Richmond's occupation, shows the Victorian ideal of manners. Though they hated the men for being from the North and fighting against the Confederacy, they knew that they should appreciate the respect shown them.

Relations between the occupiers and ladies were fairly cordial; however, the two groups were not overtly friendly towards each other during the first week of occupation. Even though the men were respectful to the citizens, the women just could not forget the past four years of misery. In a letter to a friend, Maria Peeks Marrow wrote, "But I cannot forget, no matter how polite, how courteous, how-handsome they may be, I cannot forget I do not wish to forget that they are the People who have been fighting for the last four years in deadly conflict against my brothers and my friends."¹¹¹ Though appreciative, it would take time for the women to begin to see the occupiers as more than just the enemy.

¹¹⁰ Evelina Tyler Brooke Lucas to unidentified, July 27, 1865, Lucas Family Papers, VHS.

¹¹¹ Maria Smith Peek Marrow to Daniel G. Marrow, May 20, 1865, Marrow Family Papers, VHS.

Women actively tried to avoid interactions with the Union troops. Thomas Cooper DeLeon observed Richmond ladies walking the streets. "Clad almost invariably in deep mourning- with heavy veils invariably hiding their faces-the broken hearted daughters of the Capital moved like shadows of the past, through the places that were theirs no longer."¹¹² Rather than have the troops look upon them, the women sometimes wore four or five mourning veils at a time to shield their faces. Now not only were they mourning lost loved ones; they were mourning the lives they once led as well as the loss of their long established society. Fannie Dickinson wrote of the drastic change in wealth that previously upper class citizens faced with the fall of Richmond. "Many who Saturday were rich men are now scarcely worth anything but a change of raiment."¹¹³ People who had been wealthy were now poor, and women attributed this to the Union Army.

Another person the women attributed their misfortunes upon was Abraham Lincoln, who visited Richmond on April 4. Many of the women's accounts discussed here do not discuss Lincoln's visit; they did not even want to give him any mention in their writings. A few women briefly wrote about seeing Lincoln outside their window, but they were not going to go outside while he was nearby.¹¹⁴ Emmie Sublett, a teenager at the time, wrote to her friend and mentioned Lincoln's visit. She wrote, "You know Lincoln came to Richmond Tuesday the 4th and was paraded through the streets...The "monkey show" came right by here, but we wouldn't let them see us looking at them,

¹¹² DeLeon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 400.

¹¹³ Dickinson, "Diary."

¹¹⁴ Francis Anne Sutton Doswell, "Diary," Doswell Family Papers, VHS, 4.

so we ran in the parlor and peeped at them."¹¹⁵ Lincoln represented everything the Confederacy opposed, and the women were not going to give him any of their time, both literally and in their writings.

Every time the women glimpsed a Union soldier they were reminded of all they had lost over the course of a few days. The soldiers may be respecting them and treating them courteously, but the fact was they were still in the city and in charge. They were being kind now, but what about once the war officially ended? Would they continue to be civil towards the citizens, or would they turn all of their attention to punishing the former Confederates? The women did not know, and for now they were wary of becoming sociable with the enemy.

At times, women were actually offended by the conciliatory nature of the occupying troops. Rather than being pleased by the respect, some women would have preferred the men to completely ignore them. They would rather have no interaction than any sort of positive communication. Julia Porter Read wrote in a letter that she was walking down the street, and a group of Union troops blocked the sidewalk. When they spotted her, one of the men told everyone to "move for the nice, young lady," and Read was quite offended.¹¹⁶ What seems a gentlemanly action, moving out of the way for a woman, was seen as rude simply for the fact that the men were in her town and in her way in the first place.

DeLeon goes on to say that despite their seemingly cold actions, the women did not look upon the occupying troops with horror as they did on April 3. "There was only

¹¹⁵ Emmie Sublett to Emily Anderson, April 29, 1865, Confederate Memorial Literary Society Collection, VHS.

¹¹⁶ Julia Porter Read to unidentified, April-May 1865, Read Family Papers, VHS.

deep and real dejection...If forced into collision, or communication, with the northern officers, ladies were courteous as cold; they made no parade of hatred, but there was that in their cold dignity which spoke plainly of impassable barriers."¹¹⁷ The fact that the women were not cruel to the troops speaks volumes. Throughout the rest of the South, occupied women yelled at and provoked Union men. Richmond women, though dejected, were pleased that the war would soon be over, and they knew that the men were treating them well. The decorum these women showed by being polite was something occupying troops did not expect when they entered the enemy capital, and this again shows the remarkable self-control displayed.

Even though they were polite, women were worried about the future for Richmond's population because of the occupation. Even if the war ended and the country was reunited, the ladies did not want to be reunited with people from the North. They still saw them as a completely different group of people, and they did not want those people in their city once occupation was over. Maria Marrow said, "It makes me feel so badly when I look into the future and see how we will be intermingled with 'those people,' so much so as even to feel that we are one People."¹¹⁸ This mindset would cause a continuous rift between the women and the occupying troops, but it was not enough for the women to speak out or take action against the men; they simply would not be friendly towards them. Fannie Dickinson was staying at a house that was visited most mornings by a Yankee captain who would come to breakfast. "He seems to be a gentlemanly man but I cannot enjoy or hardly tolerate his company," she wrote in

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Maria Smith Peek Marrow to Daniel G. Marrow, May 9, 1865, Marrow Family Papers, VHS.

her journal.¹¹⁹ It did not matter how cordial the captain was; the interaction itself was enough to stop Dickinson from talking to him.

Other women worried that the Union courtesy and civility would convince Richmonders to forget the past and interact with the people of the North. The women had to make a decision whether or not to be civil and socialize with the troops since they were being nice. "They are particularly kind to us, offering to assist us in any way they can. I am afraid they will succeed by their leniency and kindness in winning over the Southern people and healing their wounds," wrote Marrow in a letter.¹²⁰ Manners would dictate that the women be nice in return to the troops, but their internal emotions and loyalty to the Confederacy convinced them they could be civil while not becoming friends, at least in the first few days and weeks of occupation.

While many elite Richmond women were still worried about the future, by the end of the first week of April, they knew they had reason to thank the Union Army. Their city had been partially destroyed by their own loyal Confederate troops, and the ladies were deeply saddened. Union troops saved the day by entering Richmond, extinguishing the fire, and restoring order to the occupied people. Signs so far indicated that the women would be treated with respect and that the soldiers were not there to punish them. The occupiers themselves had the women to thank, for not treating them poorly and showing self-control in their words and actions towards the troops. The majority of people knew the war would soon be over, and they looked upon the occupiers to guide them into the period after war.

¹¹⁹ Dickinson, "Diary," 5.

¹²⁰ Maria Smith Peek Marrow to Daniel G. Marrow, May 9, 1865, Marrow Family Papers, VHS.

Tension still existed between the troops and the women, and the actions and events of the next few weeks would establish how the two groups would coexist. The biggest worry many women now held was living alongside the emancipated people who had previously been their possessions. Fears that the freedmen would retaliate, especially since the women were alone and vulnerable, ran prevalent. The women also wondered what their status in society would with their money now useless. Would they soon be left to live among Richmond's lowliest people, upon whom they previously had looked down? All of these worries dominated the thoughts of the women and would lead them in their acts and behaviors of the next few weeks.

The Reality: Reestablishing the Social Order

As the first week of April 1865 passed away, Richmond citizens knew the end of the war was imminent because of the capture of Richmond. Sallie Putnam explained it well when she wrote, "The principal pillar that sustained the Confederate fabric had been overthrown, the chief corner-stone had been loosened and pushed from its place, and the crumbling of the entire edifice to a ruined and shapeless mass, seemed to us but a question of time."¹²¹ The answer of when the war would come a week later, on April 9 when Robert E. Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to Ulysses S. Grant's army at Appomattox Court House west of Richmond. Though the Civil War was not technically over, citizens in both the North and South knew that the Confederacy could not withstand the fall of its capital city and the surrender of Lee's army. While women in Richmond yearned for their loved ones to return home, they had more pressing matters at hand in the city with the occupying troops and the newly emancipated freedpeople.

While scholars have examined the beginning of April in Richmond, the happenings in the city during the rest of April and into May have been largely neglected. Michael Chesson, Richard Duggan, and Leslie Winston Smith lay out narratives of Richmond in Reconstruction, but their focus is on the political aspects, specifically the tension between the occupying government and the local government, as well as the tension between the Freedmen's Bureau and both the federal and

¹²¹ Putnam, *Richmond during the War*, 371.

local governments.¹²² However, their works do not examine the social history of Richmond during the first two months of Reconstruction. While the first few days of the month were the climax of Richmond women's war-time stories, the next weeks shaped how their lives during Reconstruction played out.

Shortly after the surrender at Appomattox, General E. O. C. Ord replaced General Godfrey Weitzel in charge of the occupation in Richmond. The occupiers divided the city into four districts, and assigned a provost marshal to each area to retain control.¹²³ Colored troops went to work clearing debris from the gas and water mains in order to restore their functions, though gas service would not resume until mid-May. A seventy-member civilian relief commission, led by a Union officer and two Richmond citizens, helped aid the poor, including the recently emancipated.¹²⁴ Richmond citizens had to be approved in order to reopen business and also had to obtain permits in order to travel outside of the city.¹²⁵ Meanwhile the Union Army surrounded the city to prevent more and more refugees from entering. The period of April and May is often referred to as the interregnum period; the occupying army was in charge, but the federal governor, Francis Pickens, did not arrive in Richmond until the very end of May.¹²⁶ On top of this, the local government did not regain authority until October 1865.¹²⁷

While white occupiers were trying to maintain order in the city, African Americans, both soldiers and the recently freed, had different goals for the immediate

¹²² Chesson, *Richmond after the War*; Duggan, "The Military Occupation of Richmond"; Smith, "Richmond during Presidential Reconstruction."

¹²³ Smith, "Richmond during Presidential Reconstruction," 45.

¹²⁴ Chesson, *Richmond after the War*, 72.

¹²⁵ Duggan, "The Military Occupation of Richmond," 29.

¹²⁶ William T. Alderson, Jr., "The Freedmen's Bureau in Virginia" (master's thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1949), 4.

¹²⁷ Smith, "Richmond during Presidential Reconstruction," 182.

post-war period. Black troops wanted to earn racial equality and complete social transformation for all blacks through their occupation duties, whereas whites did not want to alter the social order. Historian Andrew Lang argues that black soldiers saw the army as an “active force of social and political transformation,” and that black troops were not afraid to use their authority to obtain their goals.¹²⁸ Many newly emancipated people believed they were entitled to land and compensation for their years in servitude.¹²⁹ Whites, both Union occupiers and Richmond women, did not agree with this, and they wanted to limit the freedoms that blacks held. Blacks saw this as wrong; they thought the army and government should protect them from violence, not try to discipline and control them.

Meanwhile, black women yearned to be autonomous while still relying on whites for work. Throughout slavery, white women had dominated slave females, often resorting to violence to control them. After the war, females of both races struggled with their new relationship. Historian Thavolia Glymph states, “Mistresses fought to reestablish their claims to class and race privileges and to deny and turn back the efforts of black women to redefine the meaning of womanhood, freedom, family, home, and domestic economy.”¹³⁰ White women worried what freedom would mean to their status, so they often tried to exert control over black women even after the war ended.

¹²⁸ Andrew Lang, “Republicanism, Race, and Reconstruction: The Ethos of Military Occupation in Civil War America,” *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 4, no. 4 (2014), 566.

¹²⁹ Carole Emberton, *Beyond Redemption: Race, Violence, and the American South after the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 6.

¹³⁰ Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 7.

Amid all this restructuring and opposing goals, the whitewomen in Richmond continued to navigate murky relations with the Union occupiers. As April progressed into May, the women realized that the soldiers were not as terrible as they had originally believed. In fact, many appreciated the hard work and respect put forward by the Union troops, and both the women and the men began to establish a new way of life in an occupied city. Within this month, elite women progressed from fearing marauding Union soldiers to fearing newly emancipated blacks and USCT troops. Interacting with Union soldiers proved far less taxing to Richmond ladies than navigating a new social order complete with freed African Americans or running a household without slave labor. Ultimately, the occupiers helped the women begin to find their place in the new society by affirming the idea that whites were in charge.

From enemies to protectors: Union soldiers as guards

A few days after the occupation of the city, women found that they could not stay in their houses with the blinds shut forever. It was necessary for them to begin venturing out in order to obtain food and other necessities. The majority of these women wore veils, sometimes four to eight veils at once, so the occupiers would not see their faces and "behold our pretty girls," according to Myrta Avary.¹³¹ The women knew it was necessary to obtain provisions, but they still wanted a barrier between themselves and the occupiers. Though far from being openly friendly with the soldiers, these women took the first step in the direction of interacting with the men simply by walking outside.

¹³¹ Myrta Lockett Avary, *Dixie after the War* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 109.

For many, the first interaction with the Union occupiers came out of pure necessity. Most of the Richmond citizens, including the former elites, struggled to find food and clothing at the end of the war. Once Richmond fell and the war ended, Confederate money became worthless, and the formerly prosperous were now among the destitute. Women had to figure out a way to feed their families, and for many the solution, though tough to swallow, was to ask for aid from the Union troops. Virginia Dade wrote, "In this state of things it is not surprising that even ladies reared in ease and luxury now crowded to the ration office to get their allotted portion of codfish, fat pork and yellow meal, for this was all there was between them and starvation."¹³² In order to receive food, women had to be the ones to request it and prove that they truly needed the food. In the week of April 8-14 alone, 17,367 ration tickets were issued providing for 86,555 rations, a number almost equal to the original, pre-evacuation population of the city.¹³³ By the end of April, 13,000 rations were being handed out daily to anyone that needed it.¹³⁴

The women often wrote about their utter humiliation and embarrassment when asking the occupiers for help.¹³⁵ Until the Confederate veterans returned home, it was still the woman's job to make sure her family was clothed and fed, and to admit that she could not fulfill these duties was upsetting. Though humiliated, it was in these pleas for help that the women began to see a different, kinder side to the occupying soldiers, and they did not fail to express their gratitude and appreciation for the kindness

¹³² Virginia Dade, "The Fall of Richmond," 105.

¹³³ *Richmond Whig*, April 17, 1865.

¹³⁴ Smith, "Richmond during Presidential Reconstructions," 349.

¹³⁵ DeLeon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 401; Dade, "The Fall of Richmond," 105.

bestowed upon them. Based on four years of reports of the horrors of the Union Army, the women had reason to believe that the Union soldiers would not provide any aid whatsoever once they were in charge. Why would they help the enemy when all reports pointed to them stealing from the innocent southerners? When the soldiers proved that they were not the beasts people had expected them to be, the women were not ashamed to voice their thanks. Virginia Dade, impressed by the actions of the occupiers and the relief commission, wrote, "From that time till definite arrangements were made for us by our friends not a day passed that we were not the recipients of some kind attentions at their hands."¹³⁶ Women who had nothing nice to say about Union soldiers just weeks prior now changed their expressions, a sign that feelings were changing.

Union soldiers also noticed the shift in women's feelings during this time. William W. Clemens, with the U.S. Signal Corps in Richmond, wrote, "This hatred towards us I think is slowly wearing away, at least it is not so, manifest now as it was upon our first arrival and I have no doubt but that in due course of time this feeling will almost be entirely eradicated."¹³⁷ People from the North also noticed that the women in Richmond were not behaving like Confederate women in occupied cities elsewhere. Charles Page wrote, "The ladies of Richmond have manifested no such venom as the ladies of Fredericksburg were accustomed to exhibit two years ago."¹³⁸ Page determined that since the army was not harming the women and instead keeping order, the women did not see the need to react with vengeance.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Dade, "The Fall of Richmond," 108.

¹³⁷ Clemens, "Diary," May 7, 1865.

¹³⁸ Page, *Letters of a War Correspondent*, 349.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

Not only did the women need basic necessities from the troops; they also wanted physical protection. After the chaos and mob scenes of April 2, Richmonders knew the danger possible from looters and recent refugees flooding the city, and they feared for their homes and possessions. Women also feared for their personal safety, especially from newly freed slaves who may seek revenge against their former owners. The solution to these fears was to ask for guards to protect the women's homes and lives. The new Union leaders of the city had already placed guards on each block, but some of the former elite wanted individual protection in the form of a guard in front of their house.

For many of these women, asking for assistance was the first time they had spoken to a Union soldier. Judith McGuire explained the sad atmosphere of walking to the Provost's Office to request a guard and seeing all of her forlorn friends there for the same reason.¹⁴⁰ "An officer escorted us to the room in which we were to ask our country's foe to allow us to remain undisturbed in our own houses...Other friends were there; we did not speak, we could not; we sadly looked at each other and passed on," McGuire later wrote.¹⁴¹ The women had already been defeated by these men, and now the physical act of asking for help brought a new level of sadness. They believed protection was necessary, so they swallowed their pride and approached the occupiers to ask for their aid.

It was not too difficult to procure a personal guard; a woman had to request one from the Provost's Office, and an officer would write an order for a guard. The order

¹⁴⁰ McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee*, 347.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 347-348.

would state that the guard should “protect the house and occupants by penalty and death.”¹⁴² The guards were also ordered not to enter any house without permission, which alleviated the fears some women had of troops simply barging into their houses. Just a few weeks prior, these Union soldiers had been the ultimate enemy- shooting at Richmond women’s husbands, sons and brothers, and now by the end of April they protected these same women. This switch showcases how quickly both the occupiers and the women began to see each other as more than just enemies. Once the war ended, the women recognized that their enemies would be the ones to help them survive the first few months of Reconstruction. The women were more concerned with their safety than with remembering and honoring the defeated Confederacy.

The elite women suffered emotionally and mentally when asking for protection from the former enemy, but they began to see the Union Army as a source of security. Even children noticed the shift in women’s ideas towards the troops. Benjamin Harrison Wilkins, a young boy in Richmond in April 1865, sensed the peace that women felt from the guards. He wrote, “Mother now felt safe for the time being, under federal protection. Guards were placed all around to maintain peace and good order.”¹⁴³ Confederate children in Richmond had been taught to hate the Union Army, but after the war they too saw the good the occupiers were doing for the city.

Though the women trusted their safety and security to the guards, they occasionally felt the guards exceeded duties. Lucy Chamberlayne, nee Bagby, went to ask for a guard, and Officer Staniels picked two young soldiers to guard her house. For

¹⁴² “Order of Edward Hastings Ripley,” Garnett Family Papers, VHS.

¹⁴³ Benjamin Harrison Wilkins, *“War Boy:” A True Story of the Civil War and Reconstruction Days* (Tullahoma, Tennessee: Wilson Bros. Printing Company, 1990), 46.

a week they stood outside and never entered the house, which greatly pleased Chamberlayne. She even volunteered to heat their coffee for them, a mere but sure sign of hospitality and friendliness. However, Staniels later came by the house to check on Chamberlayne and see how the guards were acting. He also brought a bag of oranges to give Chamberlayne and her family, which upset Lucy greatly. This seemingly innocuous act shocked Chamberlayne, who saw the Union troops as guards and nothing else. She appreciated the protection but was not ready to act neighborly and socialize with the men or even accept a small gift of fruit. She wrote, "I told him I could not possibly receive a visit from him nor accept the oranges. Why did he call? He mistook me greatly if he thought I'd receive a Yankee soldier into my house."¹⁴⁴ Chamberlayne had begun to see the men as protectors, but she still struggled to be friendly. Still, the step away from utterly hating the occupiers was a step towards reconciliation. Unity would not come immediately; it would take time, but the women and the occupiers had begun the process.

The guards and other Union soldiers did not just protect the Richmond women from looters or criminals; they protected them from any person looking to seek harm. The *Richmond Whig* published a short article on May 1, 1865 detailing an incident where a Frenchman struck a woman with a cane. For his punishment, he was marched around the city with a placard on his back stating "This is for striking a woman." A Union band played music to accompany his march.¹⁴⁵ The occupiers used the man as

¹⁴⁴ Chamberlayne, "Chronicles of the Life of Lucy Parke Chamberlayne," Bagby Family Papers, VHS.

¹⁴⁵ *Richmond Whig*, May 1, 1865.

an example to show others that they would not tolerate harm to a woman, even if she had been their enemy just weeks before.

From the Union entrance into the city, officers continually expressed to the citizens the desire to restore order. In the April 15 issue of the *Richmond Whig*, authorities published a notice stating, "It is the wish and intention of the military authorities to protect all good and peaceable citizens, and to restore, in as great a measure as may be practicable, the former prosperity of the city."¹⁴⁶ The women in Richmond appreciated the hard work to restore order as well as the respect and kindness shown through the work, and some even began to show their gratitude towards the Union troops.

While some women expressed their gratitude publicly, others were not quite ready to display it and therefore simply wrote about it privately. "There would be a failure in simple justice, and a compromise of conscientious generosity, did we refuse to accord to those placed in temporary authority..., the offering of sincere gratitude, for the respect, the kindness, the lenity with which the citizens were treated. For a conquered people, the lines had fallen to us in pleasant places," wrote Sallie Putnam.¹⁴⁷ Though these expressions of gratitude were far from statements of love and respect for the occupiers, the words were a far cry from the fears about the Union Army that had echoed in women's minds during the war. As women began to have more interactions with blacks in the city, they realized that the occupiers would again prove helpful in navigating the strange new society.

¹⁴⁶ *Richmond Whig*, April 15, 1865.

¹⁴⁷ Putnam, *Richmond during the War*, 386.

“With indignation akin to disgust”¹⁴⁸: Interactions with black troops

Though the women’s dealings with the white occupiers were fairly cordial, their feelings towards the United States Colored Troops (USCTs) in the city were anything but. From the moment the colored troops marched into Richmond, the women were appalled to see armed black men in uniform. Virginia Dade saw colored troops at the Capitol and wrote, “Now with indignation akin to disgust we beheld there groups of Negro soldiers.”¹⁴⁹ Dade and others had spent their whole lives viewing blacks as property with no rights, so to see them holding weapons was more than they could fathom.

It was not just the fact that blacks were armed that upset the women, it was what the armed soldiers represented. Historian Chad Williams writes, “As an accessible target of white hostility, black soldiers represented a perceived social, economic, and physical threat to Southern society in the wake of emancipation and the defeat of the Confederacy.”¹⁵⁰ Black soldiers represented everything the women feared, especially a new way of life in a society where blacks were no longer considered property. Williams goes on to say that the troops implied “the arrival of a new social order that promised to differ profoundly from the old.”¹⁵¹ The idea that they were no longer at the top of

¹⁴⁸ Dade, “The Fall of Richmond,” 104.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Chad Williams, “Symbols of Freedom and Defeat: African American Soldiers, White Southerners, and the Christmas Insurrection Scare of 1865,” in *Black Flag over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War*, Gregory J. W. Urwin, ed. (USA: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 248.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 250.

society upset them, but the women were also concerned about the actions of the black troops.

Black soldiers were often placed in occupied cities and towns so that white Union soldiers could return to fighting. This left the white population in fear of reprisal and revenge from the armed soldiers, and sometimes black soldiers did go against orders and do things such as ransacking homes. While black troops wanted a complete social transformation for their race, white occupiers' goals of peace and order overpowered theirs.¹⁵² Many times the army would have to pull the black occupiers out of a city because of the disagreements over the goals of occupation between white and black troops.¹⁵³ While black troops were not left in Richmond alone, women still feared their actions.

Women wrote about colored troops stealing personal property from them, a violation of General Order No. 2. Fanny Young, nee Braxton, wrote about a silver plate allegedly taken by colored troops.¹⁵⁴ A white officer brought the plate back, but Young's story was not the exception. Emma Mordecai, who was staying at her sister's house on the outskirts of the city, had multiple negative encounters with colored troops. Just after occupation, a group of USCTs arrived at the Mordecai house and demanded a horse and saddle. Emma had to walk to the Union camp and then into the city to try to get her horse back and was consequently very upset with the colored troops.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Lang, "Republicanism, Race, and Reconstruction."

¹⁵³ Robert J. Salimas, Jr., "A Disturbance in the City," in *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era*, John David Smith, ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 362.

¹⁵⁴ Fanny Churchill Braxton Young, "Letter, April 11, 1865," Fanny Churchill Braxton Young Papers, VHS.

¹⁵⁵ Mordecai, "Diary," 131.

On another day, Emma returned to find her house supposedly ransacked by USCTs. She wrote in her journal, "Nine of the most ruffianly [sic]. black demons had been here during my absence, and under pretense of searching for arms, had been all over the house—upturning everything, going into smoke-house, dairy, closets-drawers &c. !!—Still we had escaped in such a way as to make us thankful for God's protection — They had not torn or destroyed anything in the house."¹⁵⁶ While the soldiers did not destroy any property, they did take off with some of Mordecai's possessions, including her work-box and some other trinkets.¹⁵⁷ One of the women's pre-occupation fears, that their houses would be searched and items stolen, came true for some of them in April of 1865; however, the black troops were doing the plundering and not the white Union soldiers as they had originally feared.

The Mordecai's neighbor, Mr. Young, alleged that a group of colored troops had come to his house and threatened him by holding guns to his head. They did not leave until Young told them where his silver was.¹⁵⁸ White women did not just write about black troops stealing personal possessions. Sometimes mere interactions between women and black troops took a negative turn. Mordecai was attempting to go back to her house one day after being in the city, and a colored guard was rude to her and almost did not let her pass. Mordecai was upset by the insolent guard, and when she went back into the city another day to ask for a guard, she took a different road. Despite this, she experienced another disturbing encounter with a group of colored

¹⁵⁶ Mordecai, "Diary," 133.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 132.

guards.¹⁵⁹ These troops would not let her pass either and were quite disrespectful. Mordecai ended up going a different route and walking five miles into the city. The women were already disturbed by seeing black men in uniform, and the interactions they wrote about deepened their hostility.

While not all black troops in Richmond went against the orders of occupation, enough did to create a bad representation of the group for the white population. In fact, the army was disturbed by all of the complaints against the black troops. General Weitzel wrote on April 11 that he “regrets that so many complaints are being made in regards to the colored troops of his command.”¹⁶⁰ White officers usually took white women at their word when they reported crimes by black soldiers.¹⁶¹ Officers were not afraid to punish black soldiers, sometimes more harshly than they would whites. Thomas Morris Chester, a black war correspondent who followed black troops through Virginia, wrote about the execution of black soldier Samuel Mapp of the 10th USCT on April 20. Mapp was executed because of his “disobedience of orders, inciting to mutiny, and threatening [the] life of [a] superior officer,” Chester wrote.¹⁶² Punishing the black soldiers showed the women who was really in charge, the white soldiers.

Too many complaints against black troops would eventually lead to the black troops’ removal. After multiple reports from General Henry Halleck to General Grant on the misbehavior of the black troops in Richmond, Grant did not allow the colored troops

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 131.

¹⁶⁰ William A. Dobak, *Freedom by the Sword: The U.S. Colored Troops, 1862-1867* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 2011), 419.

¹⁶¹ Noah Andre Trudeau, *Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War 1862-1865* (USA: Back Bag Books, 1999), 457.

¹⁶² Thomas Morris Chester, *Black Civil War Correspondent: His Dispatches from the Virginia Front*, R. J. M. Blackett, ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 321.

to stay in the city long. Halleck wrote to Grant, "A number of cases of atrocious rape by these men have already occurred. Their influence on the colored population is also reported to be bad."¹⁶³ By the end of April, he ordered all the USCTs out of Virginia, so the women only dealt with them for about a month.¹⁶⁴ By taking the women's complaints at their word and removing the black soldiers from their presence, the Union Army reassured the women that blacks would still be seen as inferior. Displaying white superiority over black troops helped establish the place of blacks in the post-war society. While their exchanges with colored troops may have been relatively short, women were dealing with a new group of blacks that would also create tension- emancipated slaves leaving their houses and duties, a situation the women had long dreaded.

Upheaval of Society: Loss of Slaves as Workers

As soon as the Union gained control of Richmond, the city's slaves were emancipated, forcing white women to figure out alternate ways to run households without the workers on whom they had so long depended. Simple chores, such as collecting water or cooking meals, now fell to someone other than a slave. Throughout the women's recollections, letters, and diaries, a common theme emerges of the former elite struggling either to do the housework themselves or find workers to replace the slaves. Fannie Dickinson recalled ringing a bell for her slave Millie, but Millie never came. She wrote, "Today our servants have all left... This is indeed the unkindest cut of

¹⁶³ Dobak, *Freedom by the Sword*, 420.

¹⁶⁴ Chesson, *Richmond after the War*, 75.

all. I cannot write about it."¹⁶⁵ Having gone from one day being served hand and foot to the next day having no help at all, Dickinson and others struggled to manage daily duties.

Maria Marrow, nee Peek, complained of having no one to fetch water from the well once the slaves left and wrote a letter asking her friend Daniel G. Marrow to please come help at the house. The cook at her house also complained that she desperately needed help in order to prepare meals for the family.¹⁶⁶ Emma Mordecai also sought aid to complete household duties, since she herself was having to do work she had previously never done.¹⁶⁷ Even though many of the men were away from Richmond during the war, the women had still been able to depend on their slaves to help do housework. Now the women had no slaves and often war-ravaged, injured men returning to their homes, but many were quick to take on even more duties. Myrta Lockett Avary explained the situation well when she wrote, "Women who had been social queens, who had had everything [a] heart could wish, and a retinue of servants happy to obey their behests and needing nothing, now found themselves reduced to a harder case than their negroes had ever known, and gratefully and gracefully availed themselves of the lowliest tasks."¹⁶⁸ Now women were not only doing tasks usually delegated to men, they were completing the slaves' duties also.

For some, the loss of their life-long slaves was an emotional loss as well. Though they were enslaved, some of them had spent their whole lives with their mistresses,

¹⁶⁵ Dickinson, "Diary," 9.

¹⁶⁶ Maria Smith Peek Marrow to Daniel G. Marrow, May 21, 1865, Marrow Family Papers, VHS.

¹⁶⁷ Mordecai, "Diary," 152.

¹⁶⁸ Avary, *Dixie after the War*, 150.

and some whites wrote about their sadness when the slave departed. Emma Mordecai's niece, Augusta, had a slave named Mary. Mary's mother had been Rose's (Augusta's mother) slave, and Rose had promised Mary's mother when she died that she would care for Mary.¹⁶⁹ When Mary's father took her away from the Mordecais in April, Emma wrote how both Rose and Augusta were grieving for the young girl.

Not only did the women have to manage without their workers; the entire social order had changed, and many worried what the change would say about their social status. Elites had depended on being in control of the black population; this helped define their class status. Historian Faust writes, "The direct exercise of control over slaves was the most fundamental and essential political act in the old South...Loss of the property that had provided the foundation or privilege undermined the wealth and position of formerly slaveholding families."¹⁷⁰ Without slaves, the formerly elite would be seen on the same societal level as the lower classes; without their property there was nothing to distinguish them as the superior class.

Richmond women were quick to comment on the overturned social order because they were worried about what it would mean to them in the long run. Emma Mordecai wrote, "What an uprooting of social ties, and tearing asunder of almost kindred associations, and destruction of true loyalty, this strange, new state of things produced!!...The disturbance to the Whites...is incalculable."¹⁷¹ The glue that previously bound the elite class together- slavery- had disappeared, and in its place was confusion over how to define the transformed upper class.

¹⁶⁹ Mordecai, "Diary," 133.

¹⁷⁰ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 54, 250.

¹⁷¹ Mordecai, "Diary," 149.

The former slaves also realized that society as they had known it their whole lives had changed. One of the Mordecai slaves, Cyrus, was asked by Emma if he would continue to stay and work. Mordecai wrote, "He informed me there was to be no more Master and Mistress now, all was equal." Even though Cyrus said he would no longer work for the Mordecais, he stated he would continue to live on the land, claiming that it was partly his since he had worked on it for so long.¹⁷² Cyrus was not the only slave that maintained the philosophy that he deserved land and necessities after the years of hard labor he had endured. However, the Union occupiers were quick to squash this mindset, wanting the blacks to know that they would have to work in order to receive any sort of aid.

While most of the freed blacks left their former owners to find homes and work elsewhere, some did remain loyal to the people who had previously owned and controlled them. Frances Doswell wrote that her former slaves asked her if they could do anything to help her out, showing their commitment despite them being free and having no obligation to help Doswell.¹⁷³ The Mordecai family also had Lizzy, who decided to continue working in the house even after she was emancipated.¹⁷⁴ This loyalty shown from some former slaves displays how accustomed they were to working for the whites they had knowon. Blacks who chose to work for the same families allowed white women to retain some sense of the old societal structure. However, sometimes loyal freedpeople posed problems as well. Clara Shafer was frustrated that her servants were continually distracted by other free blacks, and she wrote, "Our

¹⁷² Ibid., 147.

¹⁷³ Doswell, "Diary," 5.

¹⁷⁴ Mordecai, "Diary," 147.

servants seem to look upon it as a holiday frolic."¹⁷⁵ The distractions freedom caused were the least of the women's worries, many still feared retaliation by the black population for enslaving them for so long.

White Control of Richmond Blacks

By the end of April, 20,000 blacks inhabited the city, over half of them refugees from the country.¹⁷⁶ With many of this number struggling to find food and work, the women wondered what the occupying army would do, if anything to control the blacks. Black men were seen as a sexual threat to the white women, and many feared that blacks would rise up against the once elite slave-holding class. S. Millett Thompson of the 13th New Hampshire Volunteer Infantry, wrote, "It cannot be denied, the evidences are too exact and too numerous, that a deep seated and ever-abiding dread pervades the whole ex-slave- holding class."¹⁷⁷ Thompson goes on to explain the fear by writing, "that somehow, in the darkness of night, or in the light of open day...the ex-slaves will avenge their wrongs, will resent their stripes, will claim their rights so long denied, and many plunder, destroy, burn, maim, or assassinate."¹⁷⁸ With these worries consuming the minds of Richmond women, the Union guards helped quell these fears by offering to protect women from any possible harm inflicted by blacks and quickly establishing that blacks would not just automatically be allowed to do whatever they pleased.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Clara A. Shafer, April 5, 1865, "Diary, January-April 1865," Clara A. Shafer Papers, typescript at RBNP, original copy at the University of Virginia Library.

¹⁷⁶ Smith, "Richmond during Presidential Reconstructions," 346.

¹⁷⁷ S. Millett Thompson, *Thirteenth Regiment of New Hampshire Volunteer Infantry in the War of the Rebellion 1861-1865: A Diary Covering Three Years and a Day* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, & Company, 1888), 594.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Hodes, "Wartime Dialogues on Illicit Sex: White Women and Black Men," in *Divided Houses*, 231.

At first, some women saw the influx of emancipated people as a complete loss of control of the city by the authorities. Julia Read wrote, "The negroes are all free now...They do as they please now and no one can exert any control of them. A lamentable state of affairs truly."¹⁸⁰ Read had an unpleasant interaction with black men threatening to burn her house, so she truly believed the blacks were out of control. However, more women were quite impressed with how the Union Army in Richmond handled the free black population during the first two months of Reconstruction. Based on racist ideas about black work discipline and misinterpretations of black resistance during slavery, the army's goal during Reconstruction was not to just give free hand-outs to every black person; instead they wanted to teach them how to work and provide for themselves. Historian Mary J. Farmer writes that they "did not want to create a permanent class of black indigents dependent on the government for survival."¹⁸¹ She then writes, "[They] created policies aimed at preventing starvation among the former slaves while also inculcating the importance of labor, self-reliance, and independence, and at providing relief only to the 'deserving' poor, while compelling others to enter the labor market."¹⁸² Instead of providing rations and homes to any black person, the occupying army created a system where blacks had to work in order to receive any aid. Women were pleased to learn that unless an able-bodied black man was working and had the papers to prove it, he would not receive rations. This process

¹⁸⁰ Julia Porter Read to unidentified, April-May 1865, Read Family Papers, VHS.

¹⁸¹ Mary J. Farmer, "'Because they are Women': Gender and the Virginia Freedmen's Bureau's 'War on Dependency,'" in *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction: Reconsiderations*, Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miner, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

showed the Richmond women that Union troops were not going to just offer hand-outs to blacks.¹⁸³

Being forced to work to receive rations reassured whites that blacks would continue to be viewed as inferior. Contrary to the southern white idea of the time that blacks were lazy and simply wanting hand-outs, some people in Richmond noted that blacks appeared to be working harder than whites.¹⁸⁴ Northern reporter John Trowbridge noted how he was awakened in the morning by the sounds of blacks cheerfully going to work.¹⁸⁵

The system of keeping order put in place by the occupiers extended into the black population, possibly to an even harsher degree. Determined to show the blacks who was in charge, the Union authorities created strict policies to regulate peace and keep citizens safe. Troops gathered up blacks to help clear debris from the burnt district, which not only provided them work but also helped clean the mess from the April 2 fires. The army converted Camp Lee, a former Confederate camp, into a village for freedmen to provide some semblance of shelter for those that needed it.¹⁸⁶ For blacks who could not or would not find work, authorities would pull them off the streets

¹⁸³ The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, more commonly known as the Freedmen's Bureau, was created in March 1865, as a way to help provide for the black population. The Bureau was focused on making the blacks self-sufficient, just like the Union Army was. However, the Bureau did not get established in Richmond until May 31, 1865, so this paper does not examine its relationship in the city. For more information on the Freedmen's Bureau, see Alderson, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Virginia;" Cimballa and Miner, *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction*; Mary Farmer-Kaiser, *Reconstructing America: Freedwomen and the Freedmen's Bureau: Race, Gender, and Public Policy in the Age of Emancipation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

¹⁸⁴ John T. O'Brien, "Reconstruction in Richmond: White Restoration and Black Protest, April-June 1865," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 89, no. 3 (1981): 266.

¹⁸⁵ John Townsend Trowbridge, *The South: A Tour of its Battlefields and Ruined Cities* (Hartford, Connecticut: L. Stebbins, 1866), 146.

¹⁸⁶ Trowbridge, *The South*, 185.

and force them to work. The May 19 *Richmond Whig* stated, "All who could not show that they were engaged in legitimate employment were marched off to a point where they could be made generally useful. The indolent of the colored class who expected a holiday....will be woefully disappointed when they find themselves hard at work in the burnt district, or plying a broom on the dirty streets of Richmond."¹⁸⁷ The occupying army was quick to squash the idea that blacks would simply be allowed to do whatever they pleased and be given handouts. While the social order had still changed, the Union was not going to allow blacks to simply rise in class status; they would have to work for it.

After the immediate influx of black refugees, Union guards were placed around the city limits to prevent any further blacks from entering, creating a barrier between the white Richmond citizens and the blacks.¹⁸⁸ For the blacks who had entered already, as well as for the ones who lived in Richmond during the war, the occupiers did not make life easy. Blacks could not be out at night, and starting in May they had to carry passes signed by white employers stating their identity and what their job was. Those caught without a pass would be arrested.¹⁸⁹ All of these policies gave the white women a sense of protection, and when blacks did not follow the rules, the Union Army was there to enforce them and shield the women from harm.

Some white women did claim they encountered blacks doing and saying whatever they wished. Union soldier S. Millett Thompson wrote, "The negroes are

¹⁸⁷ *Richmond Whig*, May 19, 1865.

¹⁸⁸ O'Brien, "Reconstruction in Richmond," 270.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 271. *Richmond Whig*, May 20, 1865.

almost in open insurrection, idle, indolent, and insolent.”¹⁹⁰ The April 25 *Richmond Whig* published a brief article about a woman being threatened by angry black men. The article read, “DISORDERLY.-Yesterday morning several colored men made a trespass upon the premises of a lady on 22d street, near Main, and began the use of very abusive language.”¹⁹¹ Luckily for the lady, a Union guard was readily available to take control of the situation. The article continued, “The lady immediately ran off and informed a guard stationed in the neighborhood, who repaired promptly to the spot and carried off the trespassers to the guard-house. This invasion of a private residence seems to have been prompted by mere wantonness.”¹⁹² While the event was frightening for the woman, the Union Army reacted in a quick manner to arrest the black men, a sign that the occupiers were not going to put up with any bad behavior from the recently freed. The statement that the blacks appeared to act based on “mere wantonness” enforces the occupiers’ idea that blacks should be kept working and busy so they would not get into any trouble.

Julia Read had a similar experience with a group of black men. Three blacks came by to speak with Read’s mother. She wrote, “Suffice it to say that they were very insolent, cursed her continually and threatening to burn the house over her head.”¹⁹³ It is unclear why Read did not immediately run for help, as a Union soldier would have quickly come. However, Read and her family remained, “in a state of dreadful

¹⁹⁰ Thompson, *Thirteenth Regiment of New Hampshire Volunteer Infantry*, 583.

¹⁹¹ *Richmond Whig*, April 25, 1865.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Julia Porter Read to unidentified, April-May 1865, Read Family Papers, VHS.

expectancy, not knowing at what moment the vile things might return.”¹⁹⁴ Read then wrote that she asked for a guard but was told that no more personal guards were being given. Read saw this incident as the loss of control she wrote about, but she later felt safer when her neighbor got a guard, showing she did put some faith in the Union protecting her.¹⁹⁵

While these instances involved blacks the women did not know,. Emma Mordecai wrote about her interactions with some of her family’s former slaves. One of the slaves, Cyrus, was adamant that he would be staying on the land but not working unless he was paid well. Mordecai wrote, “Cy behaved abominably, and refuses either to leave the place or to do anything on it, unless sure of high wages and an increased allowance of meat...He feels as if the whole place belongs to him.”¹⁹⁶ While Cyrus’ idea that he deserved necessities like land and food due to his years of work was quite common among the newly freed, the occupiers quickly reminded the blacks that this was not the case. Margaret Brown Wight wrote in her diary, “The negroes are flocking to [the Yankees] and they are setting the men to work and sending many of the women back to their homes...which proceedings are very unexpected to the blacks.”¹⁹⁷ Emma Mordecai encountered a black man who was shocked that the occupiers were not providing for him and fulfilling his needs. According to Mordecai, the man said, “Dis [sic.] what you call freedom! – No wuk [sic.] to do, and got to feed and clothe

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Mordecai, “Diary,” 137.

¹⁹⁷ Haas and Talley, *A Refugee at Hanover Tavern*, 193.

yourself."¹⁹⁸ While the freed blacks were upset over the Union inaction, white women were pleased with how the occupiers forced black men to work while also protecting the women from any threats or harm. Even though they were economically and psychologically scarred by the loss of their slaves, the occupying army tried their best to show the women that blacks would not be given special treatment.

Displaying southern hospitality: Socializing with Union soldiers

The women were bonding with the Union troops over their control over blacks. According to Emberton, concerned with the "natural order of things," both white women and Union soldiers wanted to limit blacks' freedom and turn them into productive citizens.¹⁹⁹ Because of this bond, some women began to interact more freely with the soldiers, and some even displayed hospitality and treated them with kindness. Social events picked up in the city after the first couple of weeks of occupation, and both citizens and occupiers attended them. At first, women did not willingly socialize with the Union troops; instead they just happened to be in the same place at the same time and were forced to interact. Churches were some of the first locations in which the two groups came into contact in a social, public setting. As the women ventured out past the home and church, they began to run into the occupiers at places such as the theater and the circus.

By the end of April, the theaters were holding nightly performances, showing that life was becoming a new normal for Richmond citizens.²⁰⁰ Starting in May, the City

¹⁹⁸ Mordecai, "Diary," 155.

¹⁹⁹ Emberton, *Beyond Redemption*, 6.

²⁰⁰ *Richmond Whig*, April 27, 1865.

section of each issue of the *Richmond Whig* was full of theater and concert news; there was always something going on for women to attend.²⁰¹ The occupying army bands held a Music on the Square event each afternoon on the Capitol grounds as a way to continue to build the relationship with the Richmond citizens. "Every afternoon fine music is discoursed on Capitol Square by some one of the numerous bands attached to the military stationed around Richmond."²⁰² At first, attendance at the square by women was sparse because of the number of black people attending. To further encourage white Richmond women to attend, the Union Army eventually banned blacks from attending, and more women did attend.²⁰³ While the occupiers were focused on order and peace in the city, they were not afraid to ban blacks so that local women could be entertained, proving that their relationship with the white women was more important to them than pleasing the black population and again reaffirming the post-war social order.

Women did not just interact with Union soldiers at public events; some began encountering troops elsewhere and were outwardly kind to them. The *Richmond Whig* reported a group of women presenting the 98th New York Volunteers with bouquets of flowers, an act the paper reported as a sure sign of peace and reconciliation. "The officers 'put up their swords,' and unbending their stern brows of war, bowed their thanks and returned their compliments for the flowery tribute....when Mars suffers his weapons to be wreathed with lovely flowers, we hail the signs, and welcome in the

²⁰¹ *Richmond Whig*, May 1865.

²⁰² *Richmond Times*, April 24, 1865.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*; Chester, *Black Civil War Correspondent*, 331.

reign of peace."²⁰⁴ For a city that outwardly hated the Union just six weeks before, this pleasant act displays a shift in thinking towards the occupiers by Richmond women.

The *Richmond Whig* also published a story about a woman walking across town in order to return money she had seen a Union soldier drop. The woman saw the soldier drop a twenty dollar bill, but she could not get his attention to return it. Rather than keeping it for herself, she walked a half mile to the army barracks to give it back to its rightful owner. Thankful for its return, the soldier tried to compensate the woman, but she refused.²⁰⁵ The *Whig* found this event significant enough to warrant space in the paper, which makes sense since the paper was run by the occupiers and stressed reconciliation. This simple act of kindness between a woman and occupier may seem trivial, but it would not have occurred in the first week of April 1865.

The Richmond papers were not the only sources indicating women's new outlooks on the occupiers; accounts by the women themselves corroborate this idea. After black troops allegedly stole Emma Mordecai's horse, she determined to walk to a Union camp to try to get the horse back. Along the way she encountered a friendly soldier who offered her his horse to ride. She refused politely, but the soldier continued to stay with her as she walked. She wrote that he, "rode slowly by my side, talking very pleasantly, and showing me every gentle-manly attention, dismounting to assist me over several streams that ran across the road."²⁰⁶ Surprised by his pleasantry, this man was not the only kind Union gentleman Emma encountered.

²⁰⁴ *Richmond Whig*, May 14, 1865.

²⁰⁵ *Richmond Whig*, May 19, 1865.

²⁰⁶ Mordecai, "Diary," 131.

After the interactions with plundering black troops, an Irish guard was briefly sent to protect the Mordecai house, and the women invited him in to eat dinner one day. Emma wrote, "We were much pleased with him, and he seems disposed to do all in his power to keep order in the neighbourhood [sic.], and to make the negroes do their duty or quit us altogether."²⁰⁷ Emma and her sister allowed their private, domestic sphere to be intruded upon by the former enemy, the very act they and others had so feared. Now instead of being afraid of Union soldiers breaking into their house, some Richmond women willingly opened their doors and provided food and company to the northern men.

The Mordecai women were not the only ones who opened their homes to Union soldiers. Some women took in Union boarders as a way to make some money, occasionally placing ads in the local papers searching for renters.²⁰⁸ Richard C. Phillips, officer of the 43rd USCT regiment, wrote of a kind woman who offered her home to him. "Mrs. Moore and her two daughters were very kind and I made arrangements to board with them." Women also made money by selling other things to the troops. Emma Mordecai sold some of her trinkets to a group of soldiers and made nine dollars, and other women made food in their homes to sell to the men.²⁰⁹ While much of these dealings were done out of pure economic necessity, the fact that women were willing to sell to the men they had so hated previously is a drastic change from the same women who had stayed inside and shuttered the blinds so that the soldiers would not even glimpse them just weeks before.

²⁰⁷ Mordecai, "Diary," 136.

²⁰⁸ Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 219; *Richmond Whig*, April 18, 1865.

²⁰⁹ Mordecai, "Diary," 145.

Union soldiers did not take the hospitality afforded them for granted. They too found interactions with the Richmond women pleasant. Provost Marshal General Marsena Rudolph Patrick even wrote that he was "half inclined to settle down and live here."²¹⁰ Some occupiers flirter and even began romances with local women. Charles F. Branch of the 9th Vermont, began a close relationship with Miss Bettie Jewett while the 9th was stationed just south of Richmond in Midlothian. Even though Branch had a girl back home in Vermont, he and Jewett spent time "visiting, dining, sharing tea, presenting gifts of flowers and maple sugar and receiving flowers in return."²¹¹

One woman, Maria Marrow, was perhaps among the friendliest Richmond women towards the occupying soldiers, eventually opening her house to them and socializing with the men as well as some of their wives that had come down from the North. Marrow wrote, "We have now a house full of Yankees but they are less like Yankees than I imagined they would be. Captain and Mrs. Gibson are as much like Virginians as any body [sic.] I ever saw."²¹² Though Marrow saw the occupiers as more than just enemies, she also was worried how Richmonders might judge her for being friendly to the Union troops. In response to this, she wrote, "Can we not sometimes respect our enemy? They have shown no disrespect to us either in words or manner...Why would not it be right for one to be melted into forgiveness of my wrongs. I am sure it is a Christian and the right spirit, could not I forgive, but not forget?"²¹³ Marrow understood

²¹⁰ David S. Sparks, ed., *Inside Lincoln's Army: The Diary of Marsena Rudolph Patrick, Provost Marshal General, Army of the Potomac* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1964), 514.

²¹¹ Don Wickman, *'We are Coming Father Abra'am: The History of the 9th Vermont Volunteer Infantry 1862-1865* (Lynchburg, VA: Schroeder Publications, 2005).

²¹² Maria Smith Peek Marrow to Daniel G. Marrow, June 28, 1865, Marrow Family Papers, VHS.

²¹³ Maria Smith Peek Marrow to Daniel G. Marrow, July 13, 1865, Marrow Family Papers, VHS.

that the former Confederates, women included, would never be able to forget the horrors and the actions of their enemies during warfare, but she was willing to forgive them, especially since they were so respectful to the Richmond citizens. Each Richmond woman would have to reach forgiveness at her own time, but by showing kindness and even opening their homes to the occupiers, they were beginning to exhibit signs that they were willing to reunite with their enemies from the north.

Despite all of the evidence that shows a positive relationship forming between some of the former elite women and the occupying troops, there were exceptions to this from both groups of people. Occasionally Union soldiers would misbehave or disobey orders. Judith McGuire reported that the first guard sent to her house was drunk, so she had to go to the Provost's Office to get another one.²¹⁴ Any time a citizen complained of a soldier's action, the army would quickly investigate.²¹⁵ While neither the women's accounts nor the Richmond newspapers list many complaints of white soldiers, Union authorities were always willing to punish a disruptive soldier.

By the end of May 1865, relations between the white Union occupiers and the formerly elite white women were quite pleasant, with groups socializing and women even opening their households to the troops. Soldier George G. Barnum wrote in his diary of the Richmond citizens, "They supposed when the Yankees came that their lives and property would be in danger but after we had been here some time they could not fail to see how well we Yankees conducted ourselves and with what respect and

²¹⁴ McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee*, 347.

²¹⁵ Patrick, *The Fall of Richmond*, 107.

kindness we treated them."²¹⁶ The kindness displayed by the occupiers did encourage the women to act with kindness in return, but the fact that the army had proved time and time again that they would protect the women, especially when it came to the black population, whether black troops or newly freed slaves, reassured the women that despite society changing, whites would still remain at the top of the social classes.

²¹⁶ George G. Barnum, May 19, 1865, "Diary."

Conclusion

The formerly elite white women and the Union occupiers continued to strengthen their bond against the black population through the summer of 1865. Still pleased with the protection afforded them, the women acknowledged how lucky they were. Though she wrote it early in occupation, Clara A. Shafer summed up many of the elite women's experiences when she wrote, "We slept feeling perfectly secure-though surrounded by our enemy-how much more terrible was the anticipation than the reality."²¹⁷ Originally scared that the occupiers would harm them and their possessions, they realized their worries were not necessary. The women's fears quickly turned to the loss of their social status as well as possible revenge from their former slaves. However, the Union Army quickly put policies in place to ensure that the white women would still be superior in society. Women began to focus on creating new lives for themselves. Myrta Avary wrote, "We had nothing on which to begin life over again, but we were young and strong, and began it cheerily enough."²¹⁸

The city was slowly returning to life because of the occupiers. Union soldier George G. Barnum wrote, "Richmond is altogether a different city now than it was when we entered it. The streets are clean, houses are being repaired and things begin to look bright once more."²¹⁹ With the citizens establishing a new way of life, it might have appeared that post-war Richmond would be quieting down after the hectic years of

²¹⁷ Shafer, April 4, 1865, "Diary," Clara A. Shafer Papers, RNBP.

²¹⁸ Avary, *A Virginia Girl in the Civil War*, 383.

²¹⁹ Barnum, July 14, 1865, "Diary," George G. Barnum Papers, New York vol. 4 (26), RNBP.

war. However, the following years of Reconstruction would bring new problems to the city, in terms of politics and race.

When discussing Richmond during the summer of 1865, historian Stephen Ash wrote, "The Federal government had stamped out all resistance to its authority, and the forces of order had put to rout the forces of disorder in no-man's-land. But as the summer wore on, it became obvious that the other conflicts-those of politics, race, and class-were not at all resolved but were merely entering a new phase."²²⁰ Tensions between the city government and the occupying government, as well as actions by the black population would soon give the city's citizens new issues to deal with.

Governor Pierpont announced that elections for the city government would be held in June 1865. Citizens elected Mayor Mayo back into office along with most of the pre-war government.²²¹ These results not only upset the federal government, the Richmond black population was worried as well. Already upset with the way they were still being treated as inferior, blacks believed it would get worse with the city government back in office. On June 10, thousands of blacks met at the First African Baptist Church to elect delegates to go to Washington, D.C. to meet with President Andrew Johnson to discuss their grievances.²²² The delegates met with the president, who "assured the delegation that he would do all in his power to protect them and their rights; that he would take care of the military and see they perpetrated no more wrongs upon them, while the Governor would manage the civil authority."²²³

²²⁰ Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, 231.

²²¹ Chesson, *Richmond after the War*, 92.

²²² O'Brien, "Reconstruction in Richmond," 276.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 278.

In reaction to the black protest, the federal government removed the city officials from office; they would not resume their positions until October. Various Union occupying officials were removed from Virginia as well. Alfred Terry, the new military commander, came into the city determined to define the status of freedmen. He abolished the written pass system and curfew and created military courts where blacks were allowed to testify.²²⁴ While all of this pleased the blacks, the white population worried that blacks were being given too much freedom. Once the city government did resume power in October, the biggest arguments occurred between it, the occupying government, and the Freedmen's Bureau over how much aid blacks should be given. The city government did not believe the freedmen were their responsibility. As stated before, the occupying government wished to aid those that were working, while the Freedmen's Bureau was established to help blacks create new, free lives.²²⁵ These disagreements would continue for many years as the status of the freedmen was being defined. Even though the women were not directly involved, they watched anxiously during these deliberations. The status of the freedmen would determine the new social order, something the women were greatly concerned about.

While these discussions over race and the status of the freedmen occurred, the women focused their attention on their loved ones back home from war. The women were overjoyed to have their men back, even if their return meant that the Confederacy had truly lost. Myrta Avary wrote, "It was good to have them home again, our men in

²²⁴ Ibid., 280.

²²⁵ Chesson, *Richmond after the War*, 94.

gray; good though they came gaunt and footsore, ragged and empty-handed."²²⁶

Though pleased with their homecomings, the relationship between the veterans and the women changed once the men returned home. Many of these men were physically and emotionally scarred from the effects of battle. Women had to either take on or continue the role of caretaker and complete tasks that men simply could not do anymore. While this gave the women a sense of self-worth, in many instances the men felt emasculated by depending on their women and from missing part of their bodies.²²⁷ Historian Megan Kate Nelson writes, "When soldiers were blown apart, they lost their distinctive character, a major component of their masculinity."²²⁸ Women were not just physically caring for the men but were also trying to rebuild the men's manhood.

The returning veterans not only had to adjust to different roles in the private sphere. The Union authorities quickly created rules that the veterans had to follow in order to maintain the peace within the city. General Order No. 70 forbade veterans from wearing any clothing with Confederate insignia on it. Many men ended up just covering the symbols on their uniform as that was the only clothing they owned.²²⁹ Veterans also could not congregate in groups for fear they were planning action against the occupiers. Before veterans could conduct business or obtain any sort of permit, they had to take the oath of allegiance to pledge loyalty to the Union, which frustrated the women.

²²⁶ Avary, *Dixie after the War*, 68.

²²⁷ Brian Craig Miller, *Empty Sleeves: Amputation in the Civil War South* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 115.

²²⁸ Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 169.

²²⁹ DeLeon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 404.

Deciding to take the oath was a struggle for the men as well as their women at home. Historian Anne Sarah Rubin writes, "The issue of whether to take an oath of allegiance to the United States struck at the heart of questions of self and nation in the Reconstruction South."²³⁰ After fighting against the Union for years, swearing loyalty to the nation made many feel like Confederate traitors, but in order to resume a civilian way of life, the veterans had to take the oath. Many veterans did soon after they returned home; according to the *Whig*, by May 2, many prominent citizens had taken the oath.²³¹ While oaths of allegiance were typically reserved for men, women in Richmond did have to take the oath in order to be married. General Orders, No. 4, issued by Major General Halleck on April 28, stated that Virginia courts were forbidden to issue any marriage license unless both parties took the oath of allegiance.²³² Women planning to be married had to choose between marrying and breaking their Confederate ties or refusing the oath and marriage. Even though many women were willing to cooperate with their Union occupiers, they struggled to pledge allegiance to the Union. They appreciated the respect shown them, but their loyalties continued to lie with the Confederacy, despite its defeat.

Some Richmond women did take the oath in order to marry, and others continued to be friendly with the occupiers, but this does not mean that the women truly gave up on the Confederacy and those that fought and died for it. The same women thanking the Union Army for protecting them and restoring Richmond still

²³⁰ Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

²³¹ *Richmond Whig*, May 2, 1865.

²³² *Richmond Dispatch*, April 29, 1865.

believed in the Confederate ideals. Sallie Putnam wrote, "Our pride, our glory in our countrymen was heightened, and we felt indeed, 'the South is the land for soldiers,' and though our enemies triumphed, it was at a price that was felt by them."²³³ Emmeline Lightfoot wrote, "The returning soldiers of our army from prison and many hardships endured after the surrender, were heroes in our eyes and indeed in the estimation of the world I think there cannot be found a better hero than a Confederate Soldier!"²³⁴ Writing about their men was not enough, and many women both in Richmond and throughout the South decided to take action to properly honor and remember the Confederate dead.

The many women who lost loved ones during the war, and even those who did not, took on a new role in reconstruction Richmond—those of memorial agents. Historian Caroline Janney has examined this role extensively in her work *Burying the Dead but not the Past: Ladies Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause*.²³⁵ She argues that it was not just the loyalty to the Confederacy that inspired women to form ladies memorial associations (LMAs), or groups of women that helped establish Confederate cemeteries, bury the dead, and create monuments and memorials to the Confederacy. Janney says that women were upset with the federal government burying Union soldiers and neglecting the Confederate dead. Knowing that their dead family and friends lay abandoned on the battlefields was one catalyst for the formation of the associations. Janney also cites the actions of Richmond blacks, specifically in 1866, as encouraging the women to create the groups. In April 1866, local blacks began

²³³ Putnam, *Richmond during the War*, 386.

²³⁴ Lightfoot, "The Evacuation of Richmond," 221.

²³⁵ Janney, *Burying the Dead but not the Past*.

celebrating Emancipation Day, a day in which they said they would celebrate their emancipation and not the fall of Richmond. However, Richmond women disapproved of this celebration as it reminded them of the change in blacks from slave to free. Just two weeks after the Emancipation Day celebration, the Oakwood Memorial Association and the Hollywood Memorial Association were created.²³⁶ These LMAs consisted of upper class women, the same women that navigated the murky relations with the Union occupiers just a year before. Their social status allowed them to participate publicly in these memorial roles.

Forming memorial associations allowed the women to memorialize the Confederate dead as well as to "shape the public rituals of Confederate memory, Reconstruction, and reconciliation."²³⁷ LMAs began reinterring the Confederate dead into cemeteries throughout the south. They also began the celebration of Memorial Day, a day in which people gathered in the cemeteries to remember the fallen as well as the ideals and virtues of the Confederacy. However, the LMAs were not just a way to remember the dead, membership in the associations helped women define their post-war class status. Janney writes, "Ladies memorial associations redefined what it meant to be both an 'ex-Confederate' and a 'Southern lady' in the post-war South."²³⁸ These positions allowed the women to use their societal positions to influence how the Confederacy would be remembered. Their memorial acts were the women's way of resisting Reconstruction, and the associations would set the stage for future groups,

²³⁶ Ibid., 47.

²³⁷ Ibid., 2.

²³⁸ Ibid., 4.

such as United Daughters of the Confederacy that still exist today as a way to remember the men that died 150 years ago and the causes they fought for.

Richmond women immediately after the war experienced many new relationships with potentially hostile groups immediately after the fall of the city, including the Union occupiers, black troops, and freed blacks. Through their interactions with these groups, they quickly learned that the occupying army was there to protect them, not to harm them as they once believed. The army was there to punish blacks that abused their new freedom, and in some cases the troops socialized with the local women. Throughout these interactions, the women struggled to define their social status. After the initial shock of the Confederate defeat and the occupation of their city faded and with the return of their often physically and emotionally scarred veterans, women began establishing memorial associations as a way to establish their class in post-war Richmond and resist Reconstruction.

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