

A HOUSEWIFE'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE INVASION OF HUNTSVILLE

Mary Ione Cook Chadick was the wife of the Reverend William Davison Chadick, minister of the local Cumberland Presbyterian Church and a colonel in the Confederate Army. She lived in the 400 block of Randolph Street and kept a diary throughout the four years of the Civil War. Her diary is considered one of the important records of how life was carried on in a city which was occupied.

(April 11, 1862) On the morning of April 11, General Mitchell's division (Federalists) took possession of Huntsville. There was no opposition, there being only a few wounded and sick Confederate soldiers in the town.

They entered at daybreak, first taking possession of the railroad and some 15 engines. The southern train was just coming in, having on board 159 Confederate soldiers, some wounded, going to their homes, and

other, who had been on furlough, rejoining their regiments.

The train endeavored to make its escape but was fired into by two cannons. One of the firemen was seriously wounded. All aboard were taken prisoners. The well soldiers were confined in the depot house, and the wounded remained in the cars.

The telegraph office and post office were next seized. Many wounded soldiers quartered in town and many prominent citizens and refugees made their escape during the day. Among them was the secretary of war, Pope Walker, the Hon. John Bell and others. There was a great deal of excitement and consternation among the citizens, as it had not been generally believed that the enemy would come here.

About 7 o'clock, in company with Mrs. Bradford, Mrs. Mayhew, Mrs. Francis, Mrs. Powers, Mrs. Tony and other ladies



from the college, we waiting on Gen. Mitchell to ask permission to visit our wounded soldiers he had taken on the cars. We were ushered into his august presence in the parlor of the hotel at the depot. He received us politely, remarking that he was always glad to see the ladies, provided they “did not rail at him as they had done at Fayetteville”.

The object of the visit then was stated to him by Mrs. Bradford, when, instead of a direct reply, he went on to speak of the very great surprise he had given us that morning and expressing great surprise on his part that we had no reception prepared for him! I had it in my heart to let him know “that we had one grand reception prepared for him at Corinth”, but considering that “discretion was the better part of valor”, kept silent.

He went on to enumerate the towns he had taken in his route, saying that he did not know how much farther south he should go. He expressed surprise that we had so few provisions here

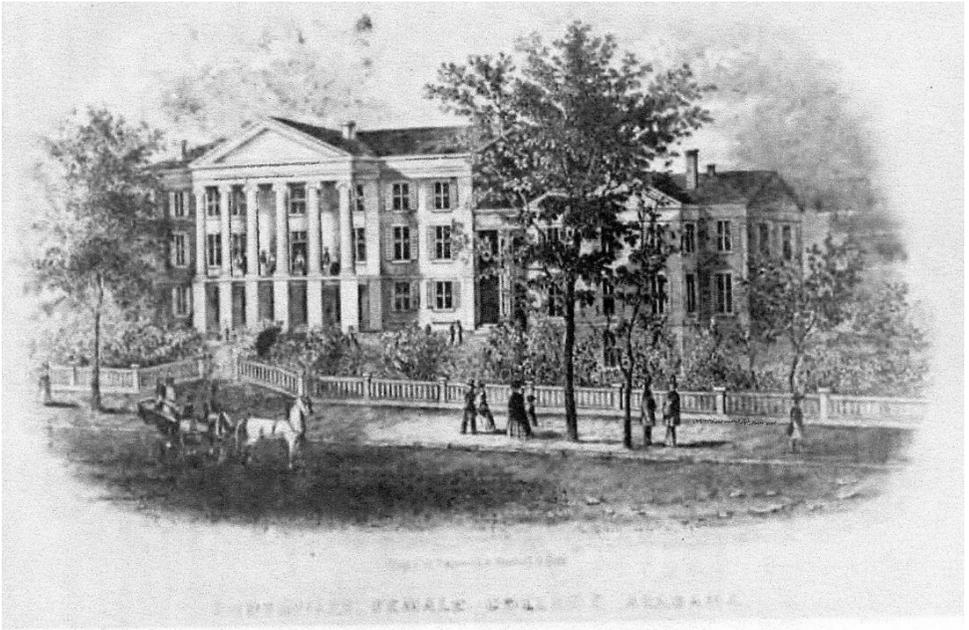
(all our government stores had been removed) and said that we should be compelled to call on the North for help. He also said he blushed to speak of some Southern ladies who had taunted his soldiers with our late victory at Corinth, all of which was very magnanimous on the part of a great general going forth “conquering and to conquer”, especially where he had no armed force to oppose him.

Visit Wounded on Cars

He, however gave us permission to visit our wounded and do what we could for them. We found them still on the cars in a very uncomfortable position, and many of them suffering dreadfully, and having no nourishment in two days!

Among them we found three Confederate officers – Major McDonald and Capts. Means and Byrd, who by their gentlemanly bearing, refinement and severe wounds, received in the Battle of Corinth, enlisted our deepest sympathies and interest. We also visited the well prisoners in the





Huntsville Female College on Randolph Street served as hospital for soldiers.

depot house and found them suffering for something to eat.

In the evening, we returned to them with milk, wine, soups and a great quantity of provisions – enough for all. Some of the Federal officers informed us that their wagon trains would not be in for two days (so forced had been their march), and that they would have to tax the citizens for food for their own men.

Through Dr. Thumesd [sic], we obtained permission to move our

wounded to the hospitals. Mrs. Harris and myself, accompanied by Mr. Brown (Methodist minister), were deputized to set the house and beds in order, while Mrs. Bradford and some others remained behind to superintend their removal. Everything was soon arranged and, before night, they were all on comfortable beds and their wounds dressed. They declared that they were the sweetest beds they ever lay down upon – poor fellows! One of them was wounded in nine places and was perfectly helpless.



Miss Clapham and Miss Danils from the college went around and washed all their faces and hands which they declared was another luxury.

(Saturday, April 12)

Truly our town is full of the enemy. There is a sentinel at every corner. Everybody keeps the front door locked, and I make it a point to answer the bell myself, not permitting children or servants to open it.

They have been searching the houses today for arms. We have not been molested. Servants are giving information of all the arms and soldiers who have been concealed.

Visited the wounded prisoners. One poor fellow had his hand amputated today. His name is Gregory. Promised him a shirt tomorrow. Found three or four other suffering immensely from their wounds, the Federal surgeons having neglected to dress them. Went for Dr. Sheffey to attend to them. Gave the major a bouquet and promised him some butter.

(April 13) Visited the well prisoners at the depot. Our visit seemed to delight and cheer them very much. Many of them asked us to write to their wives and friends and gave some of their valuables into to keeping. As et, they have no food, only what we carry them. The wounded officers were removed this evening to the college. One of the prisoners at the depot (Duncan of Louisiana) gave me a little tea bell as a keepsake.

Had a conversation with a Federal officer, Capt. Doughty, in the course of which he remarked that the "Western men who form Mitchell's division are fighting for the right of secession, and whenever we become convinced that the slavery question is involved, we shall lay down our arms and go home".

(April 14) Some arrests have been made today or prominent Secessionist. Among those were Matt Steele, but they have been released.

Visited the hospital and was mortified to find that many of our wounded men



had taken the oath and were going home. Expressed our mortification and disappointment in the presence of the Federals and exhorted the others never to do likewise. Those who had not taken the oath said they would die first. The prisoners at the depot refused nearly to a man thus to disgrace themselves, and the ladies openly commended them for it. Some of them have made their escape.

(April 21) Messrs. Wilson, Bannister and Maghers have returned from Corinth. The latter brought me news from my dear husband. He is well. This is some consolation, yet a letter would have delighted me exceedingly. His absence has always been painful, yet I would not have him here now at the mercy of the enemy. It must be so humiliating to the men – reckon some of them wish they had gone to the war and saved their reputation.

Mr. Wilson has been arrested, not giving the information desired, and

has been kept in confinement several days.

Two prisoners at the depot made their escape in this way: they put on Yankee uniforms and walked out of doors, stood a while and then went back. Whereupon, the guard ordered them out, telling them that “they had no business in there” so they went quietly out and walked up town and made their escape! As soon as it was known, the remainder of the prisoners were hurried off to Camp Chase, Ohio.

(April 28) General Mitchell has been in a rage all the week on account of the cutting of the telegraph poles and lines, the tearing up of the railroad tracks, firing into trains, and holds the citizens responsible for the same, having had 12 of the most prominent arrested. It is probable that the work of our cavalry has annoyed him excessively, as they are constantly picking off his men.

Great depredations have been committed by the Federal cavalry in the country surrounding Huntsville, and the citizens



of Athens have suffered terribly. We are all “prisoners of hope” and are in daily expectancy that Gen. Kirby Smith or Gen. Morgan is coming to our relief. News of an exploit of the latter near Pulaski has reached us. He took a son of Gen. Mitchell prisoner, paroled him gave him plenty of money, telling him “that his Union many would be of no use to him here”, and sent him to his father, asking for the exchange of his brother, Charleston Morgan. Gen. Mitchell was quite surprised at such magnanimity from such a desperado as Morgan.

(May 10) There has been a small fight at Bridgeport, which the Federals claim as a great victory. They brought down a great many wounded and 41 prisoners, who are in the West Huntsville Methodist church. Have been to see them, carrying them flowers and food. They are a fine-looking set of men, and from the account of one of them, they fought bravely against fearful of them, they fought bravely against fearful of them, they fought

bravely against fearful of them, they fought bravely against fearful of them, they fought bravely against fearful of them, they fought bravely against fearful odds. Our Gen. Ledbetter acted cowardly, burning the bridge and running. We have also furnished them with a change of clothes and had their washing done. Rinehart and Clayton are the officers and are Georgians.

(May 12) There has been some fighting at Athens. The enemy has brought up some wounded men and taken a few of our men prisoners. One of the Federalists at the hospital told me that our cavalry took an entire company of their men prisoners, including the officers.

Gen. Mitchell has sent Lts. Rhinehart and Clayton and Capts. Byrd and Clare to Gen. Beauregard to affect an exchange of prisoners. I have sent by Capt. Byrd a letter to my husband to assure him of our health and safety, and trust that I shall have the happiness of receiving one in return.



Our officers in the college are now nearly recovered from their wounds and able to walk about but are not allowed to go beyond the boundaries of its walls. They have received great attention from the ladies, and we are proud that we have such men in our army.

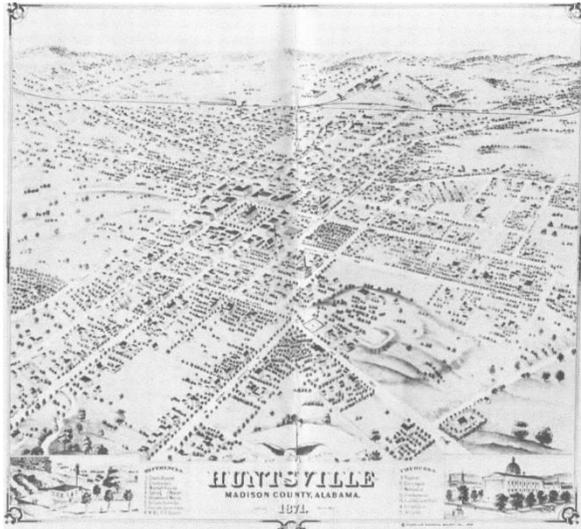
General Mitchell complained that the ladies of Huntsville have given his officers the “cold shoulder” by not having received them into the social circle! Some of the Unionists gave a picnic and invited two of his officers, who arrested. Some folks were malicious enough to attribute it to

jealousy because he was not invited himself.

SOURCE: This diary was first published by The Huntsville Times in 1937 and again in the Sesquicentennial Edition in 1955. Its publication was made possible through the courtesy of Mrs. Chadick’s grandson, Colonel John R. Fordyce of Little Rock, Arkansas. The excerpts quoted here are taken from the version published in the Alabama Historical Quarterly, Summer Issue, 1947, volume 9, number 2 Montgomery, Alabama: State Department of Archives and History, pp. 199-204.

[Editor’s note: Although not a native-born southerner, Mrs. Chadick nevertheless was an ardent supporter of the Confederacy throughout the war. As a diplomat, she was able to help many citizens of Huntsville resolve their difficulties with the Federal troops by being brave enough to present their causes to the commanding generals. She was criticized for commanding generals. She was criticized for accepting Union soldiers as boarders in her home in order to provide for her family’s necessities. She also permitted her eldest daughter, Susan, to be courted by Captain Samuel W. Fordyce of the Union army. After the war, he returned to make her his bride and established himself in the banking business before moving to St. Louis, Missouri, and Hot Springs, Arkansas. The Chadick family later moved to McMinnville, Tennessee, where they spent the rest of their lives].





Huntsville Female Seminary, closed as a school when Huntsville was occupied,



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