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The following article and its introduction are extracted from Ethel Nepveux's book: "*Sarah Henry Bryce 1825-1901 – A Glimpse at a Remarkable Women in the Turbulent Civil War Era*", published by the author, Charleston 1994.

INTRODUCTION

Sarah Margaret Henry Bryce was a hard working nineteenth century southern woman, wife and mother who had an unusual sense of history. By the time she died, she had preserved more than five hundred documents, dating from 1820 to 1901. When she moved to Philadelphia, she put her paper in metal boxes and left them with her daughter, Caledonia. Sarah Bryce published two articles: one explaining how she saved her house during the burning of Columbia by Sherman's troops, and the other about her four years of work in Columbia hospitals, helping soldiers departing for and returning from the battlefronts.¹

She bore ten children in twenty-two years and was a widow at the age of forty-two. Her extraordinary accomplishments were the result of her unusually hearty constitution as well as her dependable and wealthy husband, Campbell, who provided constant household help. Her husband, Campbell Robert Bryce, was born on October 6, 1817. Campbell and Eli Giles Henry, his future brother-in-law, attended the South Carolina College in 1837. In the winter of 1839-40, Campbell Bryce traveled from Columbia (South Carolina) to Canton (Mississippi) to visit his former classmate. On February 9,

¹ "*The Personal Experiences of Mrs. Campbell Bryce during the Burning of Columbia*"; "*Reminiscences of the Hospitals of Columbia*".

Campbell wrote to his mother that he wanted to marry Giles' sister, fifteen-year-old Sarah Margaret. Sarah Margaret Henry Bryce, born in 1825, was the youngest child of William D. Henry and Margaret Ross.

On June 1, 1840, Campbell wrote to Sarah that his father had agreed for him to return to Mississippi early in the fall "*to claim his bride*" if she consented. Campbell was also studying hard for the law examinations coming up in November, having missed the previous examinations before the Court of Appeals. According to an obituary in Columbia's *The State*, Campbell passed the Mississippi bar and practiced law at Koseiusko for eighteen months. Campbell finally was able to return to Canton. He and Sarah were married February 11, 1841, in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church of Canton. After the wedding, Campbell and Sarah Bryce returned to Columbia where Campbell had a house built for the family on two acres on the southwest corner of Pickens and Blanding Streets in the fashionable part of the city. Sarah's accounts of this house have been very useful to historians.²

This area was the center of activities for the Southern Presbyterian Church's Columbia Theological seminary, located on the block southeast of Pickens and Blanding. The Reverent and Mrs. Howe lived on the northwest corner. He was the president of the Seminary and later became famous as the historian for the Presbyterian Church of South Carolina. Although they were a generation older than Sarah and Campbell, their children were the same ages and they grew up together.³ Just across the street, on the block northeast of Pickens and Blanding, was a mansion that had been built by Wade Hampton for his second wife. Their daughter married John S. Preston who amassed a fortune in a Louisiana sugar plantation and had a brilliant military career during the Civil War, advancing to the rank of brigadier general. Civil War writer Mary Boykin Chestnut adored the Prestons and visited frequently at their mansion in Columbia.

After their return to Columbia, Sarah and Campbell wasted no time producing offspring. Sarah (Sallie) was born in 1842, John in 1843, Margaret in 1845, Caledonia in 1848, Elizabeth in 1849, Mary in 1853, Henrietta in 1860 and Florence in 1864.

Meanwhile, Campbell was becoming a man of influence in Columbia. In 1844, he delivered a speech on the third anniversary of the founding of the Palmetto Lodge, a branch of the Independent Order of Odd Fellowship, which had been started twenty-six years earlier in Baltimore with authority from the parent society in England. Campbell was also concerned about the impact of new laws on Southerners who moved west when their fields became unproductive due to the lack of modern fertilizer. He argued that the proposed Wilmot Proviso would stop slaves from being taken into lands won by war. Campbell wanted Southerners to be able to take their slaves with them, saying, "*the fruits of the Mexican War ... won by Southern valor under Southern skill ... though drenched in Southern blood, bear no fruit of victory for us.*" Northerners did not want Southerners there to control votes in the United States Congress against tariffs that were paid mostly in the South and spent on Northern internal improvements. Also, the Northerners did not want any African Americans and especially Free Blacks in the territories to compete with Northern labor.

The years from 1850 to 1860 were eventful ones for Campbell and Sarah. They lost three parents and two children but became quite wealthy. The 1860 census shows \$50,000 in real estate and \$20,000 in other property. On the census reports, Campbell listed his occupation as planter. He had a 1,433-acre plantation with a gin house, gristmill, and

² Drie, "*Bird's Eye View of Columbia*", 1872.

³ Dr. G. Howe, "*Dictionary of American Biography*"; Dr. G. Howe, "*History of the Presbyterian Church of South Carolina*"; Myers R.M., "*The Children of Pride*".

sawmill - all run by steam. Campbell listed 52 slaves in his 1863 will. John and Campbell diversified their investments, owning stock in banks, railroads, utilities, and insurance companies at a time when most rich Southerners held the bulk of their estates in land and slaves, many borrowing money to increase their purchases in them. Campbell served in the South Carolina Legislature in 1854 and again in 1862.

The Bryce family letters can be a boon to historians as they give insight to the activities of southern families before and during the Civil War. These letters were written to Sarah and not by her, as for example, were the diaries of two other well known Southern women, Mary B. Chestnut and Keziah Brevard. There is little written by Sarah herself except the previously mentioned published material. The Bryce files also include letters to and from Sarah's son-in-law, Fred Trenholm, who was sent to Liverpool during the last years of the Civil war because of illness. His letters from his parents and friends are especially important because the Trenholm residences were burned or occupied by Federal officials, and these letters are almost all of the wartime letters that remain.

The following pages are designed to provide the reader with a brief glimpse at the lives of Sarah and her family, as well as the era in which they lived. Hopefully, this brief glimpse will serve to encourage the inquisitive reader to delve further into the life of Sarah Margaret Henry Bryce, a remarkable woman who contributed much to the well being of her society.

THE CIVIL WAR YEARS AND THE BURNING OF COLUMBIA

Secession of the Southern states began in December 1860, and war broke out April 12, 1861, at Fort Sumter in Charleston. Campbell "materially aided" the Confederacy by mounting and equipping a company known as the Congaree Troop, sometimes called the Kangaroos. The men left for Richmond with Campbell as the first lieutenant.⁴ Sarah donated her carriage horses to the cause.

Seventeen-year-old John enlisted and was sent to seacoast duty near Adams Run, South Carolina. He wrote to his mother on March 11, 1861. He returned to Columbia and traveled to Virginia with the first company of mounted men with whom he served throughout the war. William Howe also enlisted, and young George joined later when the enlistment age was lowered to sixteen.⁵

On September 15, Campbell wrote to Callie from Camp Griffin in Virginia, where he and John were stationed. He asked that Maggie, Libbie, and Tiny (Mamie) write to him. He ended his letter with, "*Tell all the servants in the house and yard, Howd'ye ... and Abram and those at the plantation. Give my love to Grandmother, Miss Amanda, Aunt Jane, Uncle Robert and family, Mr. and Mrs. Crawford, Dr. and Mrs. Howe and Emily. Kiss your mother and sisters.*"

In the winter of 1861-62, Sarah traveled to Virginia to be near Campbell, but the winter, the rigors of Army life, and his bad hearing were proving too much for him. After a few months he received a medical discharge, and they returned home. Back in Columbia, Sarah took over as the president of an organization called "The Soldiers Relief Association", composed of ladies who procured material and supervised the making of uniforms and underclothing for the Army. Mrs. David McCord had been the first president, and a Miss Hampton, the second. Wives, mothers, and sisters of soldiers were paid for the sewing, which was performed, by them or their servants. Sometimes more

⁴ Bryce, "Burning", pp. 5, 6.; Cauthen, Charles, Editor, "State Records of South Carolina", p. 111.

⁵ Dr. George Howe, "Dictionary of American Biography".

than a hundred women from the Sand Hills would be waiting for the work. Sarah was able to procure cloth from Mrs. James Gregg of the Graniteville Manufacturing Company. At first, the work rooms were in the courthouse; then, in Gracy's old store; and, finally, in the little chapel in the Theological Seminary - a very convenient location for Sarah. In addition to sewing, women were asked to help mold bullets and make cartridges. Sallie was taught by her father and soon was teaching a large and enthusiastic class.⁶

During this period, Sarah also became very active in hospitals, and she was to publish an article about the hospitals of Columbia during the four years of the war. In her hospital service, she worked closely with two other Sarahs - Mrs. George Howe and Mrs. John Bryce, her mother-in-law. (In her publication, she refers to friends and co-workers by their title and last name only, such as Mrs. Howe and Mrs. Bryce, making exact identification of people difficult.)

Columbia hospitals were very busy places during the Civil War. Some of the bloodiest sights South Carolina civilians saw were in Columbia when soldiers returned by train from the battlefield. Meanwhile, soldiers going north were often ill. Once 3,000 volunteers were camped near Columbia waiting to go to Virginia. Bad weather set in and there was an epidemic of measles, followed by pneumonia. Mrs. Howe, the president of an existing hospital association, and Sarah went in Sarah's pony carriage during a big gale to try to find shelter for the sick men whose tents had blown down. The ladies met Dr. John Adger, a retired foreign minister and professor at the seminary, who tried to get them to go home. He ended up giving them a twenty-dollar bill.⁷ They then went to see Mr. Crawford at the Commercial Bank. Yielding to their flattery, he gave them a contribution and sent them to the fairgrounds building, which they obtained after some negotiating. With the contributions, they purchased cots, bedding, and crockery. They told the officers to send in the men, but, initially, the men were afraid of a "hors-pi-tul" and wouldn't come. The three Sarahs took a train to the camp and persuaded the men to come. According to Sarah's recollections, this was the first hospital in Columbia for sick soldiers.

There were no nurses at first, and Mrs. Howe and Mrs. Bryce, Sr., helped the very sick undress. The ladies of Columbia formed committees for each day. Dr. Fair was appointed surgeon; Mrs. Howe, president; and Mrs. Bryce, vice-president.⁸ Mrs. Howe lost an eye after catching erysipelas from the patients. Sarah often prayed with dying soldiers and related God's promises to them.

When Sarah, Mrs. Howe, and Mrs. Bryce went to retrieve the cots and bedding, a boy of seventeen lay on a stretcher with typhoid fever. Someone mentioned there should be accommodations at the depot for sick soldiers. Sarah claimed she promised at once to establish a "wayside hospital" a name that she coined. Campbell found the ladies an old building, which had been used as a depository for ice, obtained permission for its use, and sent carpenters to put in a floor. General John Preston, who was in charge of the prison camp at Columbia, said he was glad Sarah had undertaken the care of the soldiers who arrived at the Charleston depot.

Sarah put four men with measles into her carriage and took them to a boarding house. Mrs. John Fisher and the ladies of the Young Ladies' Hospital Association fixed a temporary place in a small room until the ice house was ready. According to Sarah, the

⁶ Bryce, "Wayside", p. 4.

⁷ Adger, John B.: "Howe's History of the Presbyterian Church", Vol. 1; Bryce, "Wayside" p. 4.

⁸ Bryce, "Wayside" p. 13.; Moore, John Hammond, Editor, p. 23 (Dr. Samuel Fair had an office and clinic at Plain Hampton and Sumter).

first board of managers of the Wayside Hospital was composed of Mrs. Howe, Mrs. Bryce, Mrs. John Fisher, Miss Mary Stark, Amanda Graeser, and herself. Almost all the women of Columbia helped. Not only did Mrs. Bryce give her time, but she allowed her house to be used as the depot for supplies that were sent from all parts of the state.⁹

By the summer of 1862, the government had taken charge and had moved the sick to South Carolina College buildings, which were empty. Mary Boykin Chesnut recorded in June that Mrs. McCord had taken possession of the college buildings for her hospital. Mrs. Chesnut would not visit the hospital and said, "*After my failure, illness, and fainting in Richmond, I have deemed it wise to do my hospital work from the outside. I felt humiliated at having to make this confession of weakness to Mrs. McCord.*"¹⁰

Mrs. Chesnut never mentioned any of the three Sarahs nor seemed to know that they existed. She called Mrs. Thornwell a war horse. She gave Mrs. Fisher and Mrs. Izard credit for starting a wayside hospital at the point where all the railroads meet - at the Columbia junction. She again said, "*I am too feeble to attend in person.*" She was very close to the Preston girls who were regular helpers at the hospitals, and later she did begin helping as well.

During the winter, Sarah and Sallie went looking for and found a larger building, which could hold more beds. Sarah and her friend, Augusta Palmer, who was back in Columbia, often sat up with the very ill men. Mrs. Rhett and Mrs. Squire became experts at dressing wounds. Once Mrs. Squire became experts at dressing wounds. Once Mrs. Squire cleaned a boy of sixteen who arrived filthy and who had been blistered before leaving Richmond. After four days on the road without the blister being removed, he had six hideous blisters. Sarah was nearby when an operation was going on and saw an arm and a leg placed on the window sill.

Young ladies who assisted in the hospitals included three of the Bryce daughters (Sallie, Maggie, and Callie Bryce), Mary Preston, Emily Howe, and Isabella Martin who inherited and was one of the editors of the Chesnut diary. Approximately 75,000 soldiers are supposed to have passed through the Wayside Hospital of Columbia.

Campbell made a will in September leaving everything to Sarah except assets from his father, which were to go to the children. Bequests were not to be subject to the debts, contracts, or control of any husband. The will was witnessed by John Crawford.

Sallie had married William Anderson Clarkson (the son of the former Amelia Pringle of Charleston)¹¹, and she followed him to Virginia near the Rappahannock River where he was a lieutenant in Hampton's cavalry. Campbell wrote to her that he had been carrying his arm in a sling from a huge boil but had gone to the legislature anyway. He was again serving in the South Carolina House of Representatives as he had in 1854. He wrote there had been much sickness on the plantation but her mother, with her characteristic energy, had gone to see if she could help the sufferers. He had packaged and was sending to Sallie green hams, sausages, molasses, and nuts. He told about a huge wedding celebration where Sarah had been on the platform close to the wedding party. He was pleased the Sallie was meeting important people.

Sarah's brother, the Honorable Eli Giles Henry, was killed in action on July 1, 1862, and was given a hero's funeral in Canton. He had a promotion to brigadier general in his pocket. A public monument to him was paid for by the citizens of Madison County.

Because of ill health, Dr. Benjamin Palmer returned to Columbia after serving as a chaplain in General Beauregard's army and was preaching eloquent sermons in the First

⁹ Bryce, "*Wayside*" p. 17.

¹⁰ Chesnut, *Diary*, pp. 242, 433.

¹¹ Fenhagen, Mary Pringle, "*Descendants of Judge Robert Pringle*", S.C. Historical Magazine, Oct. 1, 1961.

Presbyterian Church. He felt that slavery was doomed, but he wanted no outside interference in South Carolina's affairs. Mary Boykin Chesnut frequently attended his services with friends.¹²

In December, Campbell was one of a group of citizens of Columbia who wrote to the Confederate Secretary of War to ask for an army corps to save South Carolina and Georgia so that supplies and food could still be sent to the Army of Virginia.¹³ Also, in December, Florence Maud Bryce was born - the tenth and last child of Sarah and Campbell Bryce.

On February 14, 1865, Columbia citizens were awaiting the arrival of General William T. Sherman's army. Since South Carolina had been the foremost leader in rebellion, its people were expecting the worst. Sherman had said he had marched through Georgia with gloves on, but he would come to Columbia with bare hands.¹⁴ Campbell thought it necessary for the family to leave Columbia and filled a wagon, pulled by four mules, with provisions. Sarah and Augusta Palmer had other thoughts, however. They decided they did not intend to undergo the trials and hardships of refugees. At the same time, Sarah was determined to save her house.¹⁵ When Campbell prepared a carriage for her, Sarah told him she would not go. She took pride in being an obedient wife, and this was the first time in her life that she had disobeyed him.

Amidst reports of men being injured by the invading troops, Campbell and the Rev. Palmer reluctantly agreed to leave their wives and go. Amanda Graeser, a friend, remained with Sarah. Sarah's three older unmarried daughters were sent to Charlotte to stay with their grandmother, who was afraid of being burned alive. Augusta Palmer and her young daughters went to the home of Dr. Howe, who also had remained.

When the Federal troops entered Columbia, two of their soldiers warned Sarah to bring all the provisions that were being stored in warehouses inside the main house. The house had a large cellar, containing four rooms and a wide hall. Sarah already had her chickens, ducks, and turkeys locked in one room where they neither cheeped, quacked, nor crowed for the three days and nights during which the Federal Army occupied the town. Now, she and the servants brought in provisions that Campbell had sent from the plantation - barrels of corned beef and molasses, meal, flour, lard and tallow, bacon, and a wagonload of valuable light wood.

Then, she and Amanda Graeser went looking for General Sherman to ask for a guard. They had to travel on foot because Campbell had taken the horses with him. They encountered a fierce windstorm along the way, and as they walked along Blanding Street toward the center of town, other ladies joined them. They passed drunken soldiers and Negroes carousing shouting, embracing, cursing, and preaching. One man was standing on a pile of boxes reminding the officers and men that this was the hotbed of secession, and they were free to do as they pleased. Frequently they did. For example, one Sunday, Dr. Howe was standing a little distance from his house when a soldier grabbed his watch. Although he was lame and walked with crutches, Dr. Howe held on to the watch and walked crab fashion until a guard came to his rescue.

Undaunted by the unruly crowds of men, Sarah and Amanda continued in search of General Sherman and were told to go to the Provost Marshal's office. There, a captain stepped up and offered to find them some guards and led them to his own men who turned out to be good choices as they protected her house faithfully in return for food and shelter.

¹² Chesnut, *Diary*, pp. 434, 435, 451, 471.

¹³ Official Records of the Rebellion, Series 1, Vol. 44, p. 1011.

¹⁴ Reston, "*Sherman's March and Vietnam*", pp. 103, 106.

¹⁵ Bryce, "*Burning*".

Once, according to accounts, soldiers came and demanded her carriage, saying the general had sent for it. Sarah refused to hand over the wheels, which she had taken off and hidden. Finally, the men gave up saying, "*It is such a d--d good Yankee trick, she deserves to keep it.*"

Having been successful once, she and Amanda set out again to look for General Sherman, this time seeking guards for her mother-in-law's valuable house. They found the general paying a social visit to Mr. and Mrs. Harris Simons, friends of Sarah's and refugees from Charleston who were living in one of Campbell's houses.¹⁶ Sherman had been a friend of Harris Simon's brother, the Honorable James Simons of Charleston. The Simons' son was an artillery lieutenant, stationed with his company in Charlotte where he courted Maggie upon her arrival there with her grandmother. The Simons' daughter, Harriet, was married to William Simons. (She wrote an account of Sherman's visit and may be confused with her mother who is mentioned in Sherman's Memoirs).

At the Simons' house, the two women found Sherman seated at a table writing. In the room were the Rev. A. Toomer Porter of Charleston and Dr. Robert Gibbes. They were successful in persuading Sherman to write an order for guards. The guards went to Mrs. Bryce's house; however, they soon left, saying the house could not be saved.

On February 17 it was almost dusk when Sarah saw three skyrockets (red, white, and blue) rushing skyward, after which fires broke out. She wrote that Federal soldiers cut the fire hoses with axes and stuck their bayonets in them. The soldiers also destroyed the fire engines, the waterworks, and the gasworks. Dr. Porter was another witness to the burning of Columbia. He reported that he saw three balloons go up and, within ten minutes, about eight fires broke out approximately equal distance from each other and stretching almost entirely across town. He said, "*I myself, saw men with balls of cotton dipped in turpentine enter house after house.*"¹⁷

Sarah and Amanda stood watch duty to allow the guards to get some sleep. Immense flakes of fire passed over the house all night, but Sarah took consolation in the fact that they did pass over. The fires kept coming closer and finally, around 3 a.m. on the morning of the 18th, she went upstairs, roused the children, and dressed them for departure. Maud was two months old; Nina, five; and Mamie, twelve. (Sarah's recollections don't account for having an infant with them). The guards offered to stay and try to save the house.

Sarah, Amanda, the cook, Harriet, and servants, Charlotte and Manda, walked across the street to old Mrs. Hampton's house where the Federal General Logan had his headquarters.¹⁸ Soon the roof of that house caught fire, and Sarah's group rushed outside. Her thoughts turned to the lunatic asylum, and she hoped the Federals would not burn up the "poor crazy people". She decided to head in that direction.

As they walked along the street, Amanda gathered a few garments in her skirt, only to lose one thing after another, starting with her umbrella. She would say, "*There goes my last pair of stockings*", and "*Oh, my night gown is gone.*" They sat down in front of the Male Academy for a while. Mrs. Simons offered to share a box with Sarah to sit on, reporting that her home had been burned. Sherman, in his Memoirs, stated he sent an

¹⁶ William Gilmore Sims made a list of houses that were burned. The list includes a house on the north side of Blanding Street that was owned by Campbell Bryce and occupied by the Harris Simons family, and the dwelling of Mrs. John Bryce on the south side of Blanding between Sumter and Marion. Salley A. S., Editor, "*Sack and Destruction of the City of Columbia*"; Sherman, William T., "*Memoirs*", pp. 285, 286; Barrett, "*Sherman's March through the Carolinas*", pp. 79, 80; Simons, Robert Bentham, "*Thomas Grange Simons III, His Forebearers and relations*", pp.63; Charleston City Directory, 1859.

¹⁷ Porter, "*Led On*", pp. 159, 160.

¹⁸ Foote, Shelby, "*The Civil War*", pp. 792, 796.

ambulance to the asylum for Mrs. Simons (formerly Mrs. Wragg), and her children, and had them brought to his headquarters.

Sarah and Amanda resumed their journey and, upon reaching the asylum, they found the whole front of the enclosure covered with people whose personal objects were in boxes and trunks or tied up in sheets. Sarah's friend, Mrs. Parker, the wife of the resident physician and superintendent, took them into a room where there was a fire. At about sunrise, a little boy came in saying, "*Mrs. Bryce, your house is still standing. It must have been robbed, though I did not see anyone in it.*" Sarah rushed home and found the house safe. One guard was asleep in a large armchair, and a wood fire was blazing in the sitting room. She gratefully thanked both men, and Harriet "*seated them down to a good breakfast of hominy, ham, eggs, flaky hot biscuits, and true coffee.*" (She had been saving the coffee for special occasion).

Amanda and Sarah went across the street to see how the Howes fared and found their house safe, and the Palmer girls asleep there. The Howe's house was saved by a refugee houseguest, Mrs. Elias VanderHorst, who had brought her daughter and grandchildren from Charleston. The lady was descended from the New York Morris family of Revolutionary fame and still had enough influential Northern relatives to impress New York native Sherman. The Crawford house down the street was also safe, but much of Columbia was in bad shape. Emma LeConte wrote that Blanding, "the finest street in town" was a sad picture, and that the Clarkson house with the white columns looked like an old Greek ruin.¹⁹

The burning was not restricted to the city. On the plantation everything was burned, including the agricultural implements, and the stock was killed. The steam ginhouse, grist mill, and sawmill were gone. Daddy Joe fell on his knees and begged that they might be spared, saying, "*Please massa, don't burn dem; dat's where we make our bread. We have a good owner who is good to his people. For God's sake, don't burn dem.*" His pleas were in vain.

Initially, the Hampton-Preston mansion was saved because General John A. (Black Jack) Logan had his headquarters there. When he was leaving, he had barrels of pitch placed in the cellar and was ready to set them afire when a line of Catholic nuns and pupils entered. They had marched through blazing streets from their burned out Urseline Convent on the corner of Main and Blanding. Sara Aldrich described her dangerous trip down Blanding to Pickens.

The Mother Superior of the convent and academy, where daughters of many Protestants went to school, had taught Sherman's daughter, Minnie, in Ohio. Sister Baptista Lynch had an order from Sherman and was able to save General Preston's house, very much to the indignation of General Logan.

Sarah sent food to many people including Dr. Daniel Trezevant and opened her house to her neighbors. She also helped Dr. John Parker feed the patients at the asylum.

Historical markers were later placed near many places where Sarah and Amanda walked.

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¹⁹Miers, Earl, "*When the World Ended*", pp. 61, 99 (The house belonging to the Anderson Clarkson's uncle was burned because he had seven sons in the Confederate Army).