

**A JOURNAL, KEPT BY  
EMMA FLORENCE LeCONTE, FROM DEC. 31, 1864  
TO AUG. 6, 1865, WRITTEN IN HER SEVENTEENTH YEAR  
AND CONTAINING A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE  
BURNING OF COLUMBIA, BY ONE WHO WAS AN  
EYEWITNESS.**

Transcript prepared by the Historical  
Records Survey of the Works Progress  
Administration, May, 1938.

**DIARY**

Columbia South Carolina, Dec. 31st 1864.

Georgia has been desolated. The resistless flood has swept through that state, leaving but a desert to mark its track. And now our hateful foes hold Savannah. Noble old Charleston is at last to be given up. They are preparing to hurl destruction upon the State they hate most of all, and Sherman the brute avows his intention of converting South Carolina into a wilderness. Not one house, he says, shall be left standing, and his licentious troops - whites and negroes - shall be turned loose to ravage and violate. All that is between us and our miserable fate is a handful of raw militia assembled near Branchville. And yet they may say there is a Providence who fights for those who are struggling for freedom - who are defending their homes, and all that is held dear! Yet these vandals - these fiends incarnate, are allowed to overrun our land! Oh my country! Will I live to see thee subjugated and enslaved by these Yankees - surely every man and woman will die first. On every side they threaten - Lee's noble army alone stands firm. Foreign nations look on our sufferings and will not help us. Our men are being killed off - boys of sixteen are conscripted. Speculators and extortioners are starving us. But is this a time to talk of submission? Now when the Yankees have deepened and widened the breach by a thousand new atrocities? A sea rolls between them and us - a sea of blood. Smoking houses, outraged women, murdered fathers, brothers and husbands forbid such a union. Reunion! Great Heavens! How we hate them with the whole strength and depth of our souls!

Jan. 1st, 1865

Yesterday we had a letter from my darling father. He was at Thomasville. He has been gone two weeks, and I suppose by this time he is at the Altamaha. The Gulf Road only runs thus far, and there he will have to stop and get word if possible to Aunt Jane, with Sallie, Cousin Ada and Cousin Annie to meet him. If that is impossible he will try to make his way through the lines to them. Though I never say anything about it, I feel uneasy in regard to father. The Yankees have been through Liberty County, burning and destroying, and I hear they have passed right through our plantations. Father says however that he has heard of no outrages committed. But how dreadfully they must have been frightened. And what is worse, if the provisions have been destroyed, they may be suffering. The uncertainty is very horrible. But how accustomed we have

Jan. 4th.

What a budget of bad news this morning! Four letters. One from father who writes from camp at Doctortown only fifteen miles from Halifax, but he cannot get there. He had sent word to Aunt Jane by some scouts to try to reach him with the girls, but how can they when every mule and horse has been taken - they could only walk, and that of course would be impracticable. Father said the Yanks made a clean sweep of everything, and we have lost all our worldly possessions except the few negroes here. Perhaps Aunt Jane's family and Sallie are almost starving! Oh it is too dreadful to think of!

Jan. 12th.

Troops have been passing through Columbia for some days and I feel a little safer, though if Joe Johnston is put in command we had as well pack up and prepare to run. He will certainly execute one of his "masterly retreats" from the coast back to Virginia, and leave us at Sherman's mercy. I hear that Sherman has drawn his troops back from South Carolina to Savannah. Some think this bodes ill for Gen. Hood, who is in Alabama or Mississippi or somewhere else, and may be caught in a trap between Sherman and Thomas. I hope not. Cousin Lula says they had a letter from Julian yesterday. He, who used to be such an ardent Georgian, is down on the State for behaving so shamefully. He says all his Company have abjured their State, and made a vow never to live in it, especially in Savannah. As for me, I am a South Carolinian. I have lived here almost since I can remember, and only wish I had been born here instead of in Georgia! That whole State is utterly demoralized, and ready to go back into the Union. Savannah has gone down on her knees, and humbly begged pardon of Father Abraham, gratefully acknowledging Sherman's clemency in burning and laying waste their State! Oh it is a crying shame, such poltronnery!

Father writes that he will try to get them all out of Liberty County under a flag-of-truce. I wish he would make haste and come home - who can tell how soon communication may be cut off.

Jan. 18th.

Well, our great bazaar opened last night, and such a jam! I was at the State house helping to arrange the tables until four o'clock so I was thoroughly tired. There are seven booths in the House (of Representatives) South Carolina, at the Speaker's desk, is the largest, and on either side are Texas, Tennessee, Virginia, Mississippi, Louisiana and Missouri. In the Senate are North Carolina, at the Desk, Arkansas, Georgia, Alabama and Florida. The tables or booths are tastefully draped with damask and lace curtains, and elaborately decorated with evergreens. To go in there one would scarce believe it was war times. The tables are loaded with fancy articles - brought through the blockade, or manufactured by the ladies. Everything to eat can be had if one can pay the price - cakes, jellies, creams, candies - every kind of sweets abound. A small slice of cake is two dollars - a spoonful of Charlotte Russe five dollars, and other things in proportion. Some beautiful imported wax dolls, not more than twelve inches high, raffled for five hundred dollars, and one very large doll I heard was to raffle for two thousand. "Why" as Uncle John says, "one could buy a live negro baby for that." How can people afford to buy toys at such a time as this! However I suppose speculators can. A small sized cake at the Tennessee table sold for seventy-five dollars.

The bazaar will continue until Saturday. They had intended holding it for two weeks, but Sherman's proximity forces them to hurry up. I heard, but it is only one of Mr. Johnston's stories, that the aforesaid individual had announced his intention of attending the Ladies' Bazaar in person before it closes. The railroads are so broken up that we can hear nothing definite, but report says that Sherman is marching one column on Augusta and one on Branchville. One piece of bad news is certain, namely that Fort Fisher has fallen at last. I had expected to take great interest in the Soldier's Bazaar, but I cannot. It seems like the dance of Death, and who can tell that Sherman may not get the money that was made instead of our sick soldiers. How long before our beautiful little city may be sacked and laid in ashes.