



Bringing Northwestern Virginia's History
into the Classroom

It happened near me . . .

Pieces of the Past from Where *I* Live

County: Fauquier

Date: 1862

Topic : Impact of the Civil War on Virginia

Background: Susan Elizabeth Caldwell lived in a fine Victorian house in Warrenton a block from the courthouse. While her husband Lycurgus was away doing war work in the [Confederate] national capital at Richmond, Susan kept busy with letters to him always beginning with "Dearest Papa." Warrenton, like many Northern Virginia towns, was engulfed by the federal invasion of Virginia in March and April of 1862. In her letters, we see the fear and changes.

Warrenton Fauquier Co.
Thursday April 10th 1862

Dearest Papa:

We went to the Baptist Church and our friend Dr. Bacon had gone through with the usual singing and prayer—and opened the Bible to take his text . . . He commenced by remarking that this Sabbath had been the first Sabbath since the retreat of our army that we had met for public worship—that it was right and proper that we should meet in public to implore divine aid to strengthen and guide us through our days of trial and . . . privations that appeared fast approaching upon us—when a colored man entered the pulpit in a very excited manner and remarked the Dr. had better dismiss the congregation, the *Federal Army* was approaching the town! You can better imagine than I describe the panic produced. Mr. Finks called the servant and inquired if they were in town—"Yes Sir" at every point you will meet them-- I felt unnerved at the moment for I feared Mr. F. would be *arrested* immediately . . . We all started for home—and what a sight to behold . . . On looking down the road you could see them coming as far as the eye could take in—every lady was at her door . . . seem[ing] anxious to see what the *yankee* soldiers were made of. Col. Geary's brigade arrived in the morning, and about 3 O'clock . . . the *Dutch* [soldiers from Pennsylvania] arrived.

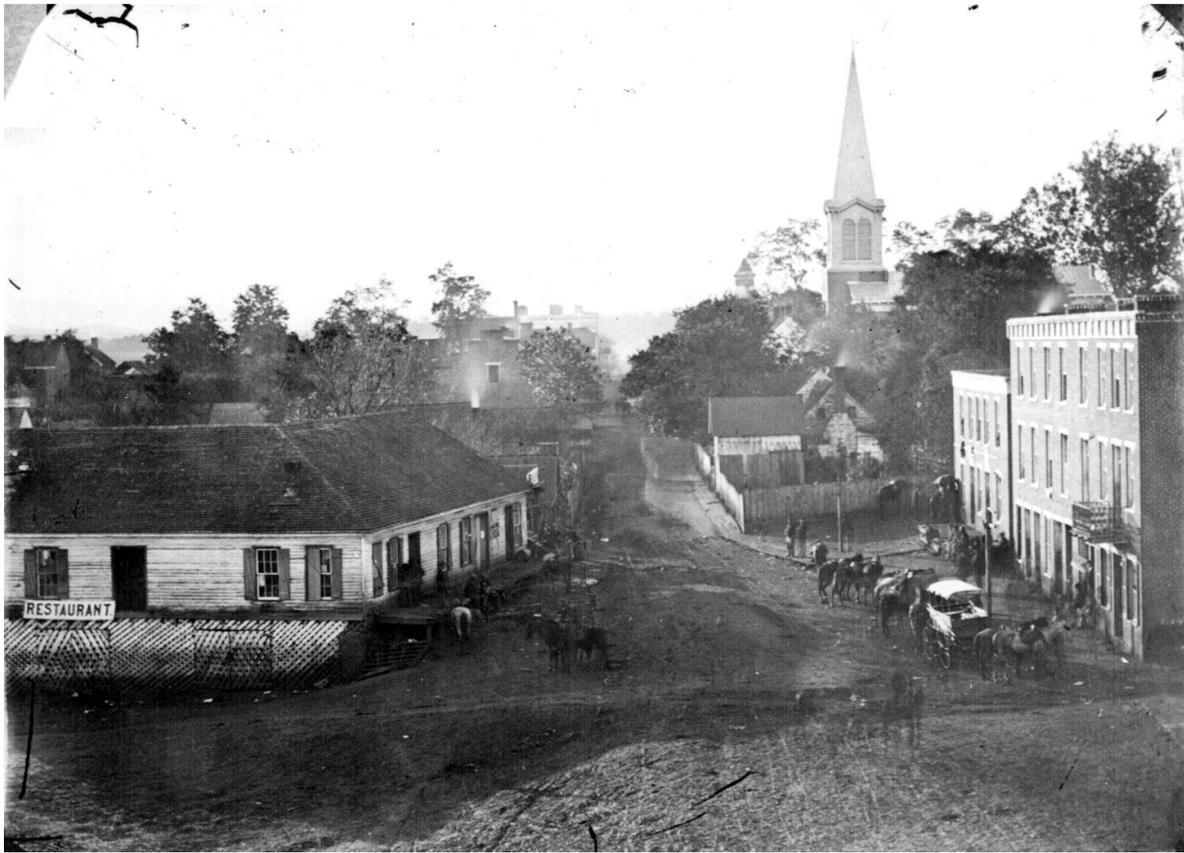
During the afternoon Mrs. Brooke was waited on by several officers demanding a Secession flag which she had [been] waving to our soldiers on their retreat . . .

After the arrival of the Dutch they commenced quartering themselves upon private citizens . . .

Warrenton, Fauquier County
May 7, 1862

Dearest Papa—

. . .Mr. Samuel Bailey whipped one of his Servant women, whereupon she went to the yankee camp and brought home with her quite a number of Yankees. They entered the house. Mrs. Bailey was alone, and [they] went into her trunks taking out every article of dress that was nice and made this *servant woman dress in them* and took her in the parlor, seated her down and bade Mrs. Bailey wait on *her* . . .



Warrenton as it looked in the spring of 1862. The Baptist church Mrs. Caldwell was attending when federal troops arrived is in the right center of picture, and still sits along Main Street. Caldwell home today is below.



Making Sense of Evidence from the Past.

1. In the first letter, Mrs. Caldwell cites the minister as noting that it is proper they should “implore divine aid to strengthen and guide us through our days of trial.” In that same month, the Congress of the Confederate States of America mandated that all churches should sing the National Anthem, *God Save the South*, at services. Did Southerners see *God* as on the side of Virginia and the Confederate South?
2. Notice that “a colored man entered the pulpit.” Did whites, slaves, and free blacks go to the same churches in 1862 Virginia? Why?
3. Mrs. Caldwell fears “Mr. F [Finks] would be arrested” by the Union Army. Why?
4. “Mrs. Brooke was waited on by several [Union] officers demanding a Secession flag which she had [been] waving,” writes Mrs. Caldwell. What flag is this? Why do the occupying Union forces want this poor woman’s flag?
5. Susan Caldwell refers to the Union soldiers as “the Dutch” and notes that they are “quartering themselves upon private citizens.” Who are these soldiers? What are they doing? Why call them “*Dutch*”? What does she likely *really* mean by that?
6. When Mrs. Caldwell speaks of one of Mrs. Bailey’s “servant women” she means . . . ?
7. What did the soldiers have the servant woman do? Why? What will happen next?