

Journal of Sarah Jane Graham Sams (1835-1920) to her husband Dr. Robert Randolph Sams (1827-1910) during the Civil War. Before the war, they owned a plantation on Ladys Island referred to in Sams oral legend as *Hard Scrabble*.

This compilation starts Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> and runs through Mar 25<sup>th</sup>, 1865. Of particular note are Sarah's observations on the march north through Barnwell by the Federal forces under command of Major General William T. Sherman; in particular Brigadier General H. Judson Kilpatrick's cavalry division.

Barnwell C H<sup>1</sup> Feb. 3, 1865

My Own Darling R<sup>2</sup>,

Mrs. Pope has just arrived from Allendale in great alarm as the Yankees were skirmishing with our men just six miles below that place---poor thing, like many others she leaves most of her effects to fall into their grasp. Annie Pope has been staying with us but left on the arrival of her sister. They now occupy the house in which Col. Hulson lived.

Feb. 4<sup>th</sup> A rumor is rife this morning that the Yankees are but six miles from here but few seem to believe it as I have just heard they are at least eighteen miles and will not probably reach here before tomorrow but reports are so contradictory that they may come upon the town before we are aware of it. Bet<sup>3</sup>, Ma<sup>4</sup>, and myself<sup>5</sup> have been busy all day removing our provisions from the cellar and the pantry into our bedrooms hoping they may be more secure. It was a [sic] fatiguing after having sat up more than half the night baking bread and biscuits for Lewis<sup>6</sup> and Pa<sup>7</sup> to take with them. I forgot to mention that we

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<sup>1</sup> Barnwell Court House

<sup>2</sup> Robert Randolph Sams (1827-1910)

<sup>3</sup> Believed to be Aunt Elizabeth Exima Sams (1831-1906)

<sup>4</sup> Sarah Givens Graham Sams (1813-1896)

<sup>5</sup> Sarah Jane Graham Sams (1835-1920)

<sup>6</sup> Lewis Reeve Sams III (1850-1949)

<sup>7</sup> Lewis Reeve Sams II (1810-1888)

emptied the cotton out of one of our mattresses and filled it very nicely with all of our cloth, blankets, sheets and gentlemen's clothing, sewed it up like a mattress and put it under the rest. Whether they discover it will be proved by tomorrow I fear. Pa and Lewis started for Lexington Dist. to remain till the Yankees pass through.

Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> Kanapaux<sup>8</sup> battery passed through the town long before dawn of the day on the retreat which aroused us from our troubled slumbers as our men told us that the battery would be removed if the general concluded not to make a stand. I woke the children and put on them two suits of underclothing and their dresses and wore the same quantity myself, besides three small bags containing needles, cotton and flax thread, tape and buttons. I am a burthen [*sic*] to myself but must try to save a few articles. Pa carried off most of my money and my jewelry is concealed, also your important papers. My room looks more like a commissary room than a bedroom. Many of Wheeler's<sup>9</sup> command are here and report says the Yankees are nine miles off this evening. They are expected in town tomorrow. God has promised that "as our day is, so shall our strength be." How constantly I pray that strength may be given me as I need it and really feel like besieging the thrones of grace till my prayer is answered. Pa went as far as Blackville<sup>10</sup> yesterday but returned today on important business. He just left for the same place again. Another anxious night is before us. This continued suspense and anxiety causes me to feel nervous and badly. God bless and keep you all is the prayer of your loving ---S<sup>11</sup>.

Feb. 6<sup>th</sup> Ma has just sent to ask some gentlemen who are standing by this house if there were any reliable reports current---they say the Yankees are reported to be about eight miles off but he thought they will not come in today, but if they are so near, why should they postpone their march when they will meet with no resistance? One wounded man is in our piazza, the poor fellow is wounded in three places and has a hot fever but he will not recline in the parlor

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<sup>8</sup> Captain John Theodore Kanapaux's Battery, Lafayette's Light Artillery, South Carolina Volunteers

<sup>9</sup> Maj General Joseph Wheeler, CSA

<sup>10</sup> Blackville, SC is 12 miles north-northeast of Barnwell

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Jane Graham Sams (1835-1920)

as it will cause him too much pain to ascend the steps. Bet has just made him some lemonade, which he says has refreshed him very much.

Our troops are retreating very steadily and as it is the fashion, I must say, in good order. They have carried the wounded off on horseback, poor fellow. Goodbye dearest, more another time. The Yankees are just beyond the limits of the town. Great God deliver us from the hands of this fiendish foe.

Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> The Yankees came into town yesterday at two o' clock, fired at some of our men who remained to see them enter. We were in our piazza at the time but the balls struck none of us. They pursued our men across the creek but found it a fruitless errand so returned. They say that one of our men and eleven cavalry horses were captured, but no one but a Yankee can believe it. They kept marching in right in front of our house till I thought that the division must have comprised the whole Yankee and foreign nations. Eight thousand cavalry and passed before dark, It was Kilpatrick's<sup>12</sup> Division. They had not all marched in before the stable in Cousin Bet's yard which contained Pa's carriage and cousin F's buggy, was fired, and in a half hour after Louisa and her little ones were turned into the streets. They next fired Wm. deTreville's office, the Ivestman's store, the Ferguson's barn which caught his house. The Graham's fine house was also burned. Mrs. Oakman screamed when the Yankees rode up the street. I could but feel that 'twas best to remain as firm as possible. I've found it very difficult to keep the children from giving vent to their feelings, but after some reasoning, they have become more calm. One of the first twenty went into our house and opened the door. Of course asked if any rebels were in the house, where they were, if in the rebel army and many men had been stationed in and about the town. We replied that there were none there, the young men were in our army. My father was absent, that only a very few men were or had been there, really not enough to cope with their numbers. He also asked if I were married . On my replying in the affirmative, he wanted to know where you were and I was proud to say that you were in our army. He took his departure but we were not allowed to remain in quiet long for two came

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<sup>12</sup> Brigadier General H. Judson Kilpatrick

in very soon after him and after catechizing me as the first did, asked what kind of treatment we expected at their hands. I replied that we always expected civil and polite treatment from gentlemen. He said there were no gentlemen in the Yankee army as it was entirely composed of convicts released for the purpose of subjugating the rebellion. Ma then said she would expect the Officers to treat us as Ladies should be. "You will find the officers worse than the men," he said. My strength had been given me by an Almighty Power and could not be taken from me by a Yankee's venomous tongue. We were all nervous but to all appearances, perfectly calm.. Just as we had gotten rid of those, two others stole up the back steps, got into my room and were searching in everything.at the same time, others had broken in our cellar door and stealing molasses. I could stand it no longer so got Bet to accompany me to headquarters (Mrs. Brown's house) where I succeeded in getting a guard. An officer (Lieutenant Fulen) accompanied us home. We were bareheaded in all the rain. He soon made the two men tramp and return all they took to me, one of them seemed quite sulky and told him that before night, she would have nothing left. The Guard tried all in his power to keep the men out but in spite of him, there were sometimes ten in the house and yard killing all our poultry and stealing from the negroes. They fired the Sid Brown's store twice and each time we went for an officer and had it extinguished. He made them promise not to do it again but they went directly off and fired Mr. Aldrich's<sup>13</sup> office and Masonic hall which very soon caught the Brown's store and in an hour after , we were turned into the streets in all the cold and rain, homeless wanderers. Some of the Yankees were very kind in saving our bedding and some of our clothing. The few provisions we saved are not worth mentioning, they may with strict economy, last three weeks. I've lost almost everything--- a number of blankets with the rest. I tried all in my power to save your horn and lox but it was stolen in the streets after having been brought out of the house. My two carpets were saved but before they could be housed, the General sent for them to protect the house in which Miss Oakman resided from the flames. I hear he took quite a fancy to her and offered her his hand in marriage. Of course, my carpets were burned.

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<sup>13</sup> Alfred Proctor Aldrich, a prominent lawyer and judge in Barnwell; owned a plantation call "The Oaks"

We now have three small pieces before the fireplaces. We were in the cold, wind and rain till after nine that night trying to protect the few things brought out of the house.

Feb. 9<sup>th</sup> We are now at Mr. George Duncan's and only a few stragglers are to be seen of the Yankee Division. Before they left, many nice houses were fired and burned. They behaved more like enraged tigers than human beings, running all over the town, kicking down fences, breaking in doors and smashing glasses---also stealing and tearing up clothing. I've no plans for the future---Yankees say that three divisions of infantry are to pass through here in a few days. God forbid it is my prayer. We feel worn and sick at heart. Servants are perfectly unmanageable.

Feb. 10<sup>th</sup> Report says the Yankee infantry are not very far off. We feel almost unequal to the task of enduring more hardships but I never cease praying for submission to the Divine Will and strength to bear what is sent upon us.

Feb. 13<sup>th</sup> The Yankees arrived here two evenings ago. Twenty-four thousand strong, all infantry. I felt as if the lower regions had been turned inside out, such awful countenances as some had---really they looked too fiendish to live. I saw among them three Chinese and someone saw an Indian. I forgot to mention Ma and myself were compelled to go to headquarters at daylight on the morning Kilpatrick's raiders left for a guard. The streets were so wet that the water ran over the tops of our shoes and neither of us were made sick. We were well guarded so the infantry did not molest us quite as much as the Cavalry. They all tried very hard to fire the Duncan's house but we guarded it night and day as none of us placed much confidence in the guards. These last divisions were commanded by Generals Baird, Vadiver, Morgan and Jeff Davis. The latest command burned the whole block of buildings to the left of our house. Barnwell is a wreck of its former self. Look for the sheet of white paper for the conclusion as I am too much pressed for time to copy all.

Feb. 15<sup>th</sup> Barnwell is quiet once more. Negroes are slow to obey and hold their heads rather higher than they should, are behaving worse on the plantations than in town.

Feb. 16<sup>th</sup> We are busy making up some shirts for Mr. T. Duncan as the Yankees have left him without a change of clothing or a blanket. I have loaned him one of mine as the mattress made of our blankets and clothing was left undisturbed.

Feb. 18<sup>th</sup> Mr. Shuck has kindly offered us the use of his house for several months. He removed his family to N.C. and does not know when they can return. I can see the hand of the Lord gradually providing for us. Blessed be his name.

Feb. 19<sup>th</sup> We removed to the Shucks yesterday. Had to toil very, very hard and fear we will not be able to cook long. We begin to feel the importance of that prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Feb. 21<sup>st</sup> We found the cooking and drawing water so very irksome that we hired one of the Shuck's women to do it for us at twenty-five cents a day but we call on her for nothing else. Aunt M. Givens has been very kind indeed, sent us some nice salt meat and potatoes. Miss L. Futh has loaned us some spoons, knives and forks.

Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup> Can the people of this Confederacy ever be purged of their selfishness? Mr. James Patterson lost no provisions and has determined not to sell except for mules and cloth. We have neither, therefore if left to his tender mercy, must starve. He offers a hundred bushels for a mule. Old Mr. H. Duncan has lost everything.

Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup> Mr. H. Duncan, out of his reduced means, has just sent us some meal though he has to supply Aunt Caroline and Mrs. Oswald who have lost everything. Aunt Mary has just sent us some salt and potatoes. I hope the Lord may bountifully reward the cheerful giver.

Feb. 24<sup>th</sup> I cannot find our cow, calf or Susie. Suppose I must give them up as lost. Our little children keep well. Bet is teaching them now. We lost all the rye straw and most of the palmetto. Mr. H. Duncan has just sent us a flich of bacon and Mrs. Aldrich a loaf of bread and some veal which we appreciate very much. I have not lost my fondness for steak. We have just heard of the fate of

Columbia--- those poor girls, I feel very anxious about them and can hear nothing definite. They may have been removed but it is doubtful.

Feb. 25<sup>th</sup> The weather is so very gloomy that it has not tended to make us any more cheerful. I have been thinking of and praying for you all the time, dearest. I sometimes fear we will never meet again on earth but we must both pray for a meeting when there will be no more parting. It may seem foolish but I have been expecting Samuel and Cole to be sent to find out how we were situated after the visitation we have had. I try to think Cole is with you but often fear he may have been taken by the Yankees.

I heard yesterday that Pa had hired James on the cars as fireman. Cole could assist us so much if he were only here. Mr. Shucks told Ma yesterday that he expected to bring his family here very soon. In that event, we will be very soon looking out for other lodgings. I am tired of moving when we are so dependent upon others to do for us. Mr. Easterling has sent us a few potatoes. Oh that I could but receive one line from you. Do you not think our cause begins to assume a dark aspect? God is mighty to save and I will not despair. Good-bye dearest till Monday. May God bless and keep you all is the prayer of your devoted and anxious wife.

Mar. 9<sup>th</sup> I have had so many demands made upon my time that it has been impossible to continue my journal, yet I like to devote a few moments of each day to writing to you. Minnie and Genie started with Prioleau Chisolm from Columbia to walk here and arrived on Tuesday with sore feet and worn out limbs. They lost most of their clothing, brought a few pieces on Pa's horse. They were taken up seventeen miles on the way and Cousin Agnes heard that Wm. Det.(William de Treville?) was on his way too, so she borrowed Mrs. Channon's carriage and mules and met them in Blackville and brought them on. We were much relieved to see them once more. Only one fourth of Columbia is standing. How I long for peace. My shoes are forsaking very fast. Will try to mend up my slippers. If I only had the sole leather, I could get some made at \$10 a pair. Phoebe's are in rags. The wants of my little ones gives me much anxiety, though I try to commit them with the rest. I love you so dearly

into the keeping of a kind and Merciful Father. Pa has not yet arrived and in three or four weeks' time, we will have to leave this house as Mr. Shuck expects to start in a short time for his family. We will be compelled to take one of those stores belonging to Mrs. Brown, where Mr. Cline kept. There is not a building to one and the doors and windows were very much broken by the Yankees. I dread the move very much indeed but it is the best we can do. Mr. James Patterson sent us some grits meal and a few potatoes. Your letter received a fortnight ago relieved my mind very much. The one sent by Col. Legare has not been received. I hope you may receive my reply to yours. I feel so \_\_\_\_\_ and lonely and long more than ever for our quiet and pleasant home on the Island<sup>14</sup>. I do not think many months will elapse before peace will dawn upon us. God grant it may soon come. We can not get work and no one will sell provisions. Our little ones are quite well and often speak of dear Papa. Sis is in Charleston, where the treasury department has been removed. Good bye dearest---May God keep and bless you.

Mar. 14<sup>th</sup> Since my last (entry) I have been quite sick and suffered very much from a severe attack like those of Mr. P. I have nearly recovered from it but still feel very weak. Heard from Cole today. He is in Georgia and says he will return very soon. Strange that he should have gone there. My confidence in him has been shaken I fear. I am feeling sick and tired of trying to endure these privations to which we are all subjected. Very often I feel very hungry and fear twill be so for a long time. Pa has not come yet but we hear he is on his way. Goodnight darling. May God keep you.

Mar. 25<sup>th</sup> Pa came a week ago looking extremely well. I received your letter written on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Feb. sent by Col. Legare, but it contained no news concerning yourself. Prioleau is here sick with chills and fever. He expects to return to the Army in a few days and I will try to send this by him. I hope you have received some of my letters by this time. I feel so tired of this long separation. God grant it may soon end. I have gotten that shoemaker who worked at the corner of the street by Pa's to make a pair of shoes for Maude,

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<sup>14</sup> Lady's Island, S.C.



one for Phoebe, and put new fronts to my shoes and slippers of the leather and goat skin you left here---all of which he is to do for a palmetto hat which I have just completed. He has finished Phoebe's and one pair of mine. Do let Graham read my journal.

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Footnotes by Jane Griffith and Bill Riski, Dataw Historic Foundation, 2019

These letters have been previously published in whole or in part in several books:

- *When Sherman Came: Southern Women the "Great March"* by Katharine M. Jones, 1964
- *Tales of Beaufort* by Nell S. Graydon, 1993
- *Those Damn Horse Soldiers: True Tales of the Civil War Cavalry* by George Walsh, 2006