

**THE ROSANNA A. BLAKE LIBRARY OF CONFEDERATE HISTORY
A Undated Holographic Manuscript**

By

Rosanna A. Blake



**Transcribed and annotated
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PREFACE

The manuscript transcribed here is part of Rosanna A. Blake's personal papers, MS 145 in the Special Collections Department of Morrow Library at Marshall University.

Rosanna started at least four versions of this undated manuscript, which appears to have been prepared for an article or book. I have edited the version that is most complete, and combined the various parts into a more cohesive version. I have changed the tense to be consistent and have also given the manuscript a title. The bracketed [] notes are the editor's.

—Jack L. Dickinson

THE ROSANNA A. BLAKE LIBRARY OF CONFEDERATE HISTORY

The Rosanna A. Blake Library of Confederate History, one of the special collections in the library of Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia, like many another collection began with one book.¹ It was a 75¢ biography of General Robert E. Lee given to Dr. Blake by her mother on her 12th birthday. A month or so earlier, the family had visited Gettysburg and Dr. Blake and her mother being descendants of William Alexander, a well-known Copperhead in the Columbus, Ohio, area, were stirred anew by the defeat of the Confederate forces there and the emotional and professional devastation felt by Gen. Lee and his Confederates as they withdrew down the long road southward which, as Gen. Lee must have known marked the beginning of the end. Rosanna and her mother stood and wept, and she later remarked that it was the only thing she remembered about that visit.

William Alexander, whose family had moved to Ohio from Buena Vista, Rockbridge County, Virginia not long after the opening of the Northwest Territories, would have gone South to fight had he not lost an arm in a train wreck. Family "history" relates that he was involved in General Morgan's escape from the Ohio penitentiary.² It seems unlikely, however, because, due to his outspoken Confederate sympathies, he would have been one of the first people suspected.

Dr. Blake began collecting cheap editions of biographies of Gen. Lee, the occasional magazine articles, and any other Lee material she could find. Birthdays and Christmases added more important biographies. In fact, to this day, friends from the earlier period still refer to the library as the Lee Collection.

After becoming a lawyer, she was able to add gradually to the library and as the Lee material grew until it was difficult to find, she began to branch out into other aspects of Confederate history. She never missed an opportunity to add to the library. Indeed, she and her husband, Fred E. Hulse, went to

¹Rosanna Blake used many cryptic abbreviations in this rough draft, which have been expanded here for readability. For example, for Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia., she used M.U., H.,W.Va.

²Confederate General John Hunt Morgan escaped from the Ohio State Penitentiary at Columbus, Ohio in November of 1863.

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Richmond and Washington and Lee [University] on their honeymoon! Mr. Hulse is a Connecticut Yankee whom Rosanna met at a college in North Carolina. Now and then someone asked her jokingly how she could marry a Yankee. She would answer, also jokingly, that she could not hold that against him because he didn't choose his place of birth and because, when he grew up he saw the "error" of his ways and went south to college. Some of her friends called him a naturalized Southerner. One or more of his relatives fought in the Northern Army and one of his pieces of equipment was a heavy wash basin. A number of years ago, his family rather hesitatingly asked if Rosanna and Fred would like to have it even if it was carried by a Yankee. Rosanna accepted it with the greatest of pleasure for, although it was used by a Yankee, it had a Confederate bullet hole in it! Finally, Rosanna, who loathed cold weather, explained that one of the things which attracted her to him first was the fact he had never, to her knowledge, talked about the "invigorating New England climate." Mr. Hulse was a willing supporter in the hunt and frequently it was he who would climb up a ladder to check the books on the very top shelves and more than once he called down to her, "There's nothing up here you want, they all have 'rebellion' in the titles."³

Fortunately, her position as a government attorney included the handling of government cases in all the United States Courts of Appeals throughout the entire continental U.S. and she was usually able to use a few days of leave to search for books. One of the cities visited was Chicago and she was amused to discover the books featured in the front of the Abraham Lincoln Book Store were all Confederate.⁴

As Gen. Lee material became more difficult to find she branched out to other military manuals, medical, and naval material. But she soon began to emphasize material concerning the Confederate constitution and government such as that recording the activities of the civil government including the executive branch, and reports of the various departments such as the Patent Office, the Congress, including the reports of the Congressional investigation committees, and the Journal of the Confederate Congress, foreign and diplomatic affairs. This led to the decision to add material concerning all aspects of the Confederacy such as publishing, including the publishing of Dickens novels, music, and school texts including the famous arithmetics.

The Library contains a substantial number of books about battles, both big and small, both on land and at sea, and about individual generals, some whose names are completely unfamiliar to all but a comparative few such as General Albert Gallatin Jenkins of Greenbottom, West Virginia, who resigned

³The term "War of the Rebellion" is generally shunned by Southern collectors, authors, and history buffs.

⁴The Abraham Lincoln Bookstore still exists at 357 West Chicago Avenue.

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from the United States Congress to join the Confederate Army, who was involved in many of the battles or skirmishes in West Virginia, was wounded at [Cloyd's Mountain, Va.] and was thereafter elected to the Confederate Congress.⁵

There is material concerning guns and other military equipment, spies, northern prisons (which compared favorably, at least with southern prisons, particularly in view of the lack of supplies for the Confederates, themselves).

Rosanna would sometime tease her northern friends that she wished she collected Northern material. She would say that it was so much cheaper, but not nearly so interesting.

Rosanna remarked that she knew she would enjoy seeing the library properly housed and cared for at Marshall University and that it would be used for its basic purpose from the beginning, i.e. a research library.

⁵Albert Gallatin Jenkins was mortally wounded in action at the Battle of Cloyd's Mountain, Pulaski County, Virginia in May of 1864. He served in the Confederate Congress for six months in 1862.

EPILOG

For the twenty five years prior to Rosanna Blake's death in 1987, presidents and other administrators of Marshall University worked with Rosanna Blake and Fred Hulse to obtain and solidify Rosanna's commitment to bequeath her collection to Marshall. Under the terms of her will, Dr. Blake's entire Confederate collection was left to Marshall. Also perpetuated by her will was the graduate scholarship in Confederate History.

Since the collection arrived it has been significantly expanded. Inquiries today come in from all over the United States and foreign countries for some of the rare documents found in the Rosanna Blake Confederate Collection.