

up in the yard. During the intense battle, the house caught fire, forcing the women and children to flee from the home among the confusion and chaos of the battle. Even in her old age, Sue was unable to forget the scenes of terror as she watched her childhood home burn to ashes among the dead and dying soldiers.

Although the Southerners suffered approximately thirteen thousand casualties (22 percent), the Battle of Chancellorsville ended as a decisive Confederate victory, and it led Lee to decide to take the offensive into Pennsylvania. With Union casualties numbering around seventeen thousand (15 percent) and in the face of another terrible morale collapse, President Abraham Lincoln replaced Hooker with General George Gordon Meade.

Kristina K. Dunn

*See also* Civilian Life; Confederate Homefront; Southern Women.

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**Chesnut, Mary Boykin (1823–1886)**

Prominent South Carolinian Mary Boykin Chesnut kept an extensive diary during the Civil War, recording her views on politics, people, and the momentous events around her. Chesnut carefully revised, reworked, and expanded the journals that she had begun compiling in early 1861 for future publication.

Mary Boykin Miller was born on March 31, 1823, near Camden, South Carolina. She was the first of the four children of Mary Boykin and Stephen Decatur Miller, an early proponent of states' rights who was elected to the governorship in 1828 and later to the United States Senate. Her father owned three plantations and hundreds of slaves in Mississippi, and in 1835 he resettled his family there.

Mary was taught at home, then sent to school in Camden until she was twelve. When her family left South Carolina, Mary entered Madame Talvande's French School for Young Ladies in Charleston, where she learned to speak French fluently and studied literature, natural sciences, German, and history with the daughters of South Carolina's plantation elite. When rumors that recent Princeton graduate James Chesnut Jr. was courting her reached her father, he took her to Mississippi. In 1837 she returned to Madame Talvande's, but her education ended with the 1838 death of her father. Mary and James Chesnut married on April 23, 1840, and went to live at Mulberry, the Chesnut plantation near Camden.

Although she had married the heir to a great fortune, Mary found that her father-in-law controlled the family assets. James's mother and two spinster sisters managed the household, which had more slaves than they could usefully employ. James was busy with his law practice and service in the state legislature. Mary's only responsibility was to produce children, but, to their sorrow and frustration, the couple remained childless. Bored with the elegant but dull life at Mulberry, Mary longed for clever companions.

James Chesnut was elected to the United States Senate in 1858. In Washington, Mary was at last surrounded by influential people who shared her interest in literature and politics and who admired her as a conversationalist and hostess. She was acutely aware that a woman's status depended on the success of her husband. In those two years she formed lasting friendships with Southern politicians and their wives—most notably Jefferson and Varina Davis. On November 10, 1860, to his wife's dismay, James Chesnut became the first Southern Senator to resign his Senate seat following Abraham Lincoln's election.

James helped draft South Carolina's ordinance of secession. Mary accompanied him to Montgomery, Alabama, for the first Confederate Congress and then to Charleston when he became an aide to General Pierre G. T. Beauregard in the weeks before the bombardment of Fort Sumter. The Chesnuts next went to the new Confederate capital, Richmond, for



Prominent South Carolinian Mary Boykin Chesnut kept a diary of her experience during the Civil War which was published posthumously (1823–1886). (Chesnut, Mary, *A Diary from Dixie*, 1905)

a few months. Mary reestablished her friendship with Varina Davis and worked briefly in a Confederate hospital. She chafed at her husband's aristocratic refusal to actively seek office or political appointment. When James was not elected to the Confederate Senate, President Davis sent him back to Columbia as a member of the powerful Council of Five to oversee South Carolina's defenses. Mary convalesced at her sister's home in Flat Rock, North Carolina, for much of this period, recovering from "hospital fever" contracted in Richmond.

James's commission as a colonel on President Davis's staff took the Chesnuts back to Richmond. They lived in rented rooms near the White House of the Confederacy and saw the Davises almost every day. This period of the war was the most interesting for Mary. Her parlor was an oasis of what she called "the old life," a distraction from the

Confederacy's shortages, dimming prospects, and mourning. The flirtations of her houseguests, the Preston sisters of Columbia, provided the romantic interest in *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*. She also chronicled political infighting in the Confederate government and military.

In April 1864, James was promoted to brigadier general and sent back to Columbia. As General William Tecumseh Sherman's forces approached South Carolina, James sent Mary to safety in Lincolnton, North Carolina, and then in Chester, South Carolina, where in her threadbare quarters she continued to provide a gracious welcome to old friends.

The Chesnuts returned penniless to Mulberry. The family fortune, chiefly slaves and Confederate bonds, was gone. They would struggle financially for the rest of their lives. While her husband involved himself in postwar conservative politics, Mary oversaw daily life at Mulberry and ran a small butter and egg business with her maid. In 1873, Mary and James moved into Sarsfield, a new home in Camden built with bricks salvaged from outbuildings at Mulberry. Mary wrote drafts of two novels, one about the war and another recounting her student days. Neither was ever finished or published. In the 1880s, using techniques she had learned writing fiction, she began rewriting her journals. The task was largely completed when James died in February 1885 and her mother a few days later. Exhausted and grieving, she lost everything but Sarsfield and a few cows in the settlement of her husband's debts. Mary turned her attention to putting her husband's papers in order and died of heart disease on November 22, 1886. Her rewritten journal, given to a close friend, was first published in 1905.

Mary's views on Southern society come through in her journals. She hated slavery, chiefly because of the sexual license it gave to men and the suffering this caused their wives and daughters, but she was dependent on slaves. She enjoyed flattery and deference, but disapproved of men's legal power over their wives' assets and activities, as well as of men who thought their sex conferred superior intelligence and wisdom.

Nancy Gray Schoonmaker

**See also** Confederate Homefront; Davis, Jefferson (1808–1889); Davis, Varina Banks Howell (1826–1906); Diaries and Journals; Hospitals; Plantation Life; Politics; Secession; Slaveholding Women; Southern Women.

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**Chickamauga, Battle of  
(September 19–20, 1863)**

The Battle of Chickamauga, Georgia, was one of several pivotal engagements in 1863. The battle pitted the Union Army of the Cumberland against the Confederate Army of Tennessee, the two primary adversaries in Tennessee throughout the conflict. Although militarily a Confederate victory, it prompted the Union to unite three of its armies. This consolidation ultimately led to a decisive Union victory at Chattanooga, Tennessee, in November 1863. Women took part in the Battle of Chickamauga, as they did in many Civil War battles, participating as soldiers and medical personnel. In addition, many women and their families witnessed and were displaced by the fighting because much of it literally took place on their farms.

By late summer 1863, Major General William S. Rosecrans's Army of the Cumberland occupied a

front facing General Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee. Their positions had remained roughly the same since their winter engagement at Murfreesboro, Tennessee. On the heels of victories at Vicksburg, Mississippi, and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, President Abraham Lincoln and the Union high command began to pressure Rosecrans to attack the Confederates in eastern Tennessee. In August 1863, Rosecrans and his men threatened the Confederate supply center at Chattanooga. Bragg retreated, allowing Chattanooga to fall on September 6, 1863. Simultaneously, Union Major General Ambrose Burnside's Army of the Ohio moved south from Kentucky and took control of Knoxville, Tennessee.

The loss of these two rail centers prompted Confederate President Jefferson Davis to pressure Bragg to attack Rosecrans. As Rosecrans prepared to move into Georgia, Bragg advanced to monitor both him and Burnside. Reinforcements were ordered to assist Bragg, who began to look for a way to destroy Rosecrans's army.

After taking Chattanooga, Rosecrans marched his men toward the Georgia mountains to flank Bragg again. This time, Bragg maintained his position and looked for an opportunity to strike at the Union flank. The Confederates missed two opportunities to attack Rosecrans as his troops advanced through the mountains, and an alerted Rosecrans pulled his corps back to Chattanooga. By September 18, Bragg's Confederates were on the eastern side of Chickamauga Creek, while Rosecrans marched his army to Chattanooga on the west side.

On September 19, a Union division probing toward Chickamauga Creek ran into Confederate cavalry and forced their retreat. The fighting soon escalated, and by nightfall every unit of Rosecrans's army was involved in the fighting, as well as all but two of Bragg's. That evening, Bragg received additional reinforcements from Virginia. After a few hours' delay the following morning, the Confederates pitched into the Union divisions and started to work their way around the Union left flank. In the midst of fierce fighting, a confused Rosecrans mistakenly ordered Brigadier General Thomas Wood's division to shift to the left and cover Thomas's right. Wood disengaged his division, which had been skir-