

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

MULBERRY PLANTATION

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: MULBERRY PLANTATION (JAMES AND MARY BOYKIN CHESTNUT HOUSE)

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 559 Sumter Highway

Not for publication:\_\_\_

City/Town: Camden

Vicinity: X

State: South Carolina

County: Kershaw

Code: 055

Zip Code: 29020

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X
Public-Local: \_\_\_
Public-State: \_\_\_
Public-Federal: \_\_\_

Category of Property

Building(s): \_\_\_
District: X
Site: \_\_\_
Structure: \_\_\_
Object: \_\_\_

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing
4
0
0
0
4

Noncontributing
5 buildings
1 sites
1 structures
0 objects
7 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 4

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: n/a

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**4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Commenting or Other Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic: DOMESTIC

Sub: Single dwelling

Current: DOMESTIC

Sub: Single dwelling

**7. DESCRIPTION**

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal

## MATERIALS:

Foundation: BRICK

Walls: BRICK

Roof: STONE: Slate

Other: WOOD; METAL: Copper, Wrought Iron; STONE: Marble

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**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.****Setting**

The James and Mary Boykin Chesnut House, known as Mulberry Plantation, is located about three miles south of downtown Camden, South Carolina at 559 Sumter Highway. At its height in the first half of the nineteenth century, the plantation measured approximately five miles square, making it one of the largest, contiguous inland plantations in the Southeast. Presently, Mulberry consists of 4,834 acres of land on the east bank of the Wateree River, between Big Pine Tree Creek, Interstate 20, and Black River Road on the north and Town Creek on the south. Of that total acreage, approximately 4,100 acres are included within the National Historic Landmark boundaries. Excluded areas include a 500-acre parcel on the north side separated from the larger parcel by Interstate 20, and an out-parcel of approximately 230 acres, now used as pasture land, adjoining the southeast corner of the boundary of the property. Within the National Historic Landmark boundaries are the main plantation house, which was constructed about 1820, three contributing outbuildings associated with the antebellum plantation, five non-contributing buildings, one non-contributing structure, and one non-contributing site.

The topography of the plantation is manifestly flat, with only a moderate east to west slope toward the Wateree River. The most distinctive natural feature is Belmont Neck, an oblong tract of land encircled, save for a narrow causeway, by the Wateree River. Within the past twelve years more than 1.5 million pine trees have been planted on the plantation. These trees, along with extensive existing stands of hardwoods are the most recent crop on the property. They are planted in the fields originally cleared in the late eighteenth century for indigo production, succeeded primarily by cotton after 1800, along with sugar cane, tobacco, rice, corn and barley. More recently, before the planting of the trees, the fields were used for grazing cattle.

The main house and its associated outbuildings are set back about one-quarter mile from Route 521 on top of a low hill that forms the highest point on the property. The driveway leading to the house is accessed through a wrought iron gate attached to large brick piers. The name Mulberry is spelled out in wrought iron within a rectangular box set within the bars. Constructed in the early twentieth century, the gate post-dates the period of significance for the property, and is therefore a non-contributing structure. From the gate the drive traverses a causeway between a clear pond on the south and a tupelo swamp on the north, and then proceeds directly west toward the main house.

The area immediately surrounding the main house consists of a neatly manicured lawn planted with a variety of flowering bushes and trees. During the nineteenth century, an allee of oak trees led from the front of the house to Highland Field to the south. While none of those old trees survive today, the allee has been maintained over the years through replacement with newer oaks. Directly southwest of the main house is a formal garden of blooming shrubs. Other

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vegetation includes magnolia, laurel, mulberry, live oak, pine, and fruit trees and azalea, camelia, and a wide variety of evergreen shrubs.

The land that would later become Mulberry Plantation was surveyed as part of the first inland township in South Carolina in 1733-34. Settlement, however, was slow and the English Crown granted the land to several individuals in the late 1730s. In the 1760s, James Chesnut, a native of Virginia who had migrated to South Carolina with his family in the 1750s, acquired a number of contiguous tracts of land in the area of the original townsite for the purpose of establishing a plantation, which he named Mulberry. After James' death, the land became property of his brother, John Chesnut, who was also an owner of extensive property in the Camden area. The first crops grown at Mulberry were indigo and tobacco, but after the invention of the cotton gin, cotton became the primary cash crop. John Chesnut died in 1818, leaving Mulberry and the adjoining Belmont and Town Creek plantations to his son, James Chestnut, II.<sup>1</sup>

James, II was born in Camden in 1773 and attended Princeton, from which he graduated in 1792. In 1796, he married Mary Cox, daughter of Revolutionary War hero Col. John Cox of Philadelphia, in 1796. He served several terms in the South Carolina House of Representatives (1802-06, 1808-10, 1814-16) and Senate (1810-12, 1832-36).<sup>2</sup> While under his management, Mulberry became one of the most successful inland cotton plantations in South Carolina. By the 1840s, James, II had increased the size of his initial holdings to more than 12,000 acres, and his contiguous lands measured some five miles square.<sup>3</sup>

Soon after inheriting Mulberry, James began to make plans for the erection of a large residence that befit a planter of his stature. In 1820 James hired master builder David Bartling of Philadelphia to supervise construction. In March of that year Bartling wrote James that he expected to be in Camden to commence work on the house the following month. He also mentioned that he would be bringing the remaining architectural plans for the house drawn by a "Mr. Strickland."<sup>4</sup> It is all but certain that the reference was to nationally prominent architect and engineer, William Strickland, who is most famous for his numerous monumental Greek Revival style buildings in Philadelphia. Evidence suggests that Robert Mills, who trained with Strickland under Benjamin H. Latrobe and later went on to serve as Federal Architect and designed the Washington Monument, may also have been involved in the design. While in Camden working on Mulberry, Bartling also supervised construction of Mills' design for Bethesda Presbyterian Church, which was listed as a National Historic Landmark in 1985.<sup>5</sup>

Description of Mulberry House

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas J. Kirkland and Robert M. Kennedy, *Historic Camden* (Columbia SC: The State Company, 1905, 1926) vol. 1, pp. 10, 366-68.

<sup>2</sup>Reynolds and Faunt, *Biographical Directory of the Senate of South Carolina*, 196.

<sup>3</sup>Hope Boykin, "Plantations in Lower Kershaw County," in University of South Carolina Department of English, *Names in South Carolina*, vol. XVI, Winter 1969 (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press) 48.

<sup>4</sup>David Bartling to James Chesnut, March 20, 1820.

<sup>5</sup>John M. Bryan, *Robert Mills, Architect* (Washington, DC: The American Institute of Architects Press, 1989) 167-169.

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## Exterior

An example of the Federal style of architecture, Mulberry House is three-and-one-half stories in height, including an above-ground basement story. The building has a square main block that measures 60 feet on all sides and two rear 22 by 25 feet additions. The main block has a pedimented side gable roof with slightly overhanging eaves and a simple dentil cornice. The additions have gable roofs with returns. All of the roof units are surfaced with gray slate. Three gable dormers with single double-hung sash windows set in segmental arched openings pierce the forward and rear slopes of the main roof. The dormer windows are flanked by fluted pilasters and the gables are outlined with dentil molding. A total of five on the east and three on the west end, interior chimney stacks with simple corbeled caps rise above the roof line. The walls of the building are constructed of red brick, measuring about two feet in thickness at grade level. The brick, which was produced on the plantation by slaves, is laid in Flemish bond with alternating headers and runners.

### Facade (South Elevation)

The facade of the building is symmetrical and radiates around a central entrance. The second story contains five evenly spaced double-hung sash windows with six-over-six lights. The windows have masonry sills and are bordered by working wood shutters. The main entrance is comprised of a pair of heavy oak panel doors set in an arched opening. The door is surmounted by a half-round fanlight and is flanked by fluted pilasters and sidelights with delicate tracery-work. Two single double-hung sash windows with six-over-six lights are located on either side of the door. The facade is bracketed by flat Doric pilasters and copper down spouts topped with catchment boxes, each embellished with a circular cipher, "J.C." for James Chesnut, above the date 1820," the year the house was completed.

The lower portion of the facade is dominated by a raised, shed roof, end porch with a dentil cornice. The porch roof tern metal, standing seam surfacing. The porch is divided into five bays by fluted Doric columns. Above each of column is a bulls eye block medallion. A turned baluster balustrade runs between the columns. The porch is reached by an eleven-step marble stairway with wrought iron railings. The foundation of the porch is brick with arched openings underneath each of the porch bays.

### West Side

The west side of the house has a decidedly asymmetrical appearance caused by the offset placement of the southernmost windows on the first and second floors. Two upper half-story windows and a blind arch opening are framed by the pediment of the gable end. The first and second story windows have stone sills and working wood panel shutters. The lower level of the house is accessed through a single door entrance at the northwest corner of the elevation.

### Rear (North Elevation)

The second story of the rear elevation of the house contains a central tri-partite window, consisting of a six-over-six double-hung sash and flanking two-over-two sidelights set in a segmental arch opening. The center window is divided from the sidelights by fluted pilasters. A half round arch formed by header bricks is located above the center window. Two identical

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gable roof additions (ca. 1940) with simple molded cornices and returns extend from the corners of the elevation. Each has an end, interior ridge chimney. Two quarter-round vents are located in the gable ends. The first story windows are six-over-six double hung sash, while those on the lower level are three-over-three double hung sash. The two additions are connected by a screened, three-bay, shed roof entrance porch with tern metal, standing seam surfacing and Tuscan column supports.

### East Side

Unlike the west side of the house, the fenestration of the east side is symmetrical. The difference in the appearance was probably governed by the fact that the east side was the first elevation of the residence that visitors saw when driving up to the house. Thus, while the irregular placement of the windows on the west side was a pragmatic concession to the arrangement of the interior spaces, the east side required a more formal appearance. This is reinforced by the appearance in the gable end of a decorative arched, tri-partite window instead of the two simple rectangular windows on the west gable end. The single six-over-six windows on the east side are stacked on top of one another in four bays. All have masonry sills and working wood panel shutters.

### Interior

With the exception of the rooms added to the rear of the house with the construction of the two wing additions, the interior spaces of Mulberry have been preserved in much the same configuration as when Mary Boykin Chesnut lived there. There are a total of thirteen bedrooms and seven bathrooms. Other major spaces include a drawing room, dining room, study, library, kitchen, pantry, nursery, locker room, game room, den, office, laundry, and furnace room. All of the rooms within the main block of the house retain their original woodwork in the form of crown moldings, window and door trim, wainscoting, and wide, heart-of-pine board flooring.

### First Floor

The original portion of the first floor is divided into five rooms, all reached by an elegant entrance hall with especially fine woodwork that runs the width of the interior. The hall features a central arch with recessed wood panels that rests upon two freestanding, elliptical, fluted Ionic columns. Five doorways with classical wood surrounds consisting of flat hoods, dentil molding, raised panels, circular bulls eye medallions, and fluted Ionic pilasters lead to the rooms on either side of the hall. A sixth, false doorway, is located in the center of the west wall, and was placed to maintain the symmetry of the entrance hall. The jams of the doorways are adorned with recessed wood panels and the door knobs are made of silver. Wood panel wainscoting topped by chair rail runs around the base of the walls. At the north end of the hall is a graceful winding, oval staircase, which leads to the upper two floors. Over the stairwell is a framed oval medallion with a dogwood blossom motif, illuminated by the center dormer window, which itself is not visible from below. The risers are adorned on the outside of the stairs with decorative scroll appliques.

The drawing and dining rooms make up the two rooms on the east side of the hall. Notable features include a pair of heavy oak panel doors that when closed divide the otherwise flowing space into separate rooms and two fireplaces with surrounds of grey marble, quarried at King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, and cast-iron firebacks. The fireplaces continue the classical motif of the

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hallway door surrounds, featuring overhanging flat mantles supported by rectangular blocks on Ionic columns.

On the west side of the hall are the study, library, and a first floor bedroom. Originally, the room now known as the study was the library. The present library was the master bedroom, which opened into the back room, which served as the nursery. The built-in bookcases of the study are original to the house, while those in the present library were added in the early twentieth century.

### Second Floor

The second floor is divided into five bedrooms and three baths, reached by a central hall that is simpler in terms of applied ornament than that of the first floor. The bedroom doors are set deep in the openings of the thick, load-bearing interior walls and have simple wood surrounds. Similarly, the windows are set flush with the exterior portions of the walls, allowing for the creation of window seats. James and Mary Boykin Chesnut's room was the southeast bedroom, which Mary wrote of fondly in her memoir<sup>6</sup>

### Third Floor

The third floor contains a nursery, nursery kitchen, and four bedrooms. Again, the rooms are accessed by a wide hall. The rooms at the corners have slanted ceilings that follow the pitch of the main roof and are lighted by the dormer windows. The center bedroom on the east side of the hall is the largest of the third floor rooms and features a fireplace with a classical-motif wood mantle flanked by the windows of the west side gable end. The two eaves bedrooms on the southeast and southwest also have fireplaces.

### Lower Level

The lower level of the house has seven major rooms, including an office, servant's apartment, furnace room, game room, locker room, and den. The floors of the two added wings and an original, but resurfaced, game room and den are glazed brick. The locker room floor consists of original soft handmade brick. Some portions of the ceilings are open, revealing thick, heart-of-pine joists with plainly visible adz and saw marks.

### Alterations to the Main House

After James and Mary Chesnut constructed a new home in 1873, Mulberry was left vacant for a number of years. In his will, James left the plantation to David R. Williams, II, the son of his sister Ester Serena Chesnut Williams and her husband John Nicholas Williams. The grandson of David R. Williams, a Brigadier General of the War of 1812, former governor of South Carolina, and owner of large plantations near the village of Society Hill, South Carolina, David, II spent much of his youth with his Chesnut grandparents at Mulberry after the death of his mother. In turn, David passed Mulberry on to his four children, Mary Harrison Ames, S. Miller Williams, David R. Williams, III, and Kate W. Kirkpatrick, upon his death in 1907.

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<sup>6</sup>C. Vann Woodward, ed. *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981) 250.



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David R. Williams, III bought out his siblings in 1908 with the intention of making the plantation house his primary residence, and set about restoring the house to its former elegance. As part of the renovation, new pipes were installed to replace the original hollow tupelo log plumbing system. Gas lights, followed by electrical service, were also put in. A brick kitchen was added to the rear of the house to replace the original separate kitchen building, which had been torn down to supply bricks for Sarsfield, the final home of Mary and James Chesnut. A bathroom was added in the first floor northwest bedroom, which originally served as a nursery. A window in the northwest corner of the dining room was removed and a swinging door hung in its place to access the kitchen.

In 1927, David R. Williams, IV, Miller Williams' son, purchased the property from his aging uncle and retained it for more than 40 years. Under his stewardship the lands, which had been sold off in parcels during Reconstruction, were reassembled to something approaching the plantation's antebellum proportions. In the early 1940s, he razed the 1909 kitchen and erected two identical 22 by 25 feet additions at the northeast and northwest corners of the house. The additions were joined by a shed roof porch. The 1909 bathroom in the nursery was moved to the northwest addition and the room was returned to its original configuration. The northeast, rear-facing window in the dining room was replaced by a door that leads into a kitchen in the northeast addition. In 1964, an elevator that travels from the lower level to the second floor was added in the back stair hallway, providing access to three floors.

### Contributing Outbuildings

At its height in the mid-nineteenth century, the plantation contained numerous slave cabins, grouped in scattered locations in the manner of small villages. There were grist and lumber mills, stables, barns, forges, a wheelwright shop, cotton gin, smokehouse, dairy, ice house, and a number of other small ancillary buildings associated with a working plantation. A large, two-story, brick building, which housed the kitchen and quarters for house servants, was located to the rear of the main house. There was also a Methodist Chapel, where both blacks and whites worshiped. Most of those early buildings and structures were removed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The kitchen was torn down in the 1870s and the brick was used to construct "Sarsfield," at 130 Chesnut Street in the Kirkwood section of Camden. Sarsfield, the last of three "townhouses" constructed by James and Mary Boykin Chesnut, was modeled after a Norman villa and featured a large library where Mary did much of the editing of her journal for publication.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, three buildings dating from the period of significance survive. Two rough-hewn log barns that date from about 1840 are located northwest of the main house. To the rear of the main house is a U-shaped, brick building, the western half of which is the only surviving building associated with slave housing on the property. Known as "Hannah's Cabin," the building was expanded by an addition on the east in the 1940s and now serves as a residence. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1970.

### Non-contributing Buildings

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<sup>7</sup>Elisabeth Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut, A Biography* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press) 140-141.

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Non-contributing buildings on the property include a stable; four, small concrete block farm buildings; and a caretaker's house. Constructed in the 1940s, the stable is a truncated U-shaped, brick building with a center gable extension containing a living apartment. The concrete block storage sheds were constructed about the same time. The two-story caretaker's house dates from the early twentieth century.

The property also encompasses a ten-acre parcel of land that was sold by General James Chesnut, Jr. to a group of his former slaves for use as a place of worship. The core of the present Wesley Chapel was the original Methodist Chapel that was located at the "Old Yard" of the plantation, now known as Highland Field. It was moved to its present site on the west side of U.S. 521 near the junction of S.R. 261 when the elders of the congregation purchased the land in 1870 from General James Chesnut, Jr. It was reconstructed in the 1890s, with several small additions erected in the twentieth century. It has a front-facing, pedimented gable roof, enclosed hip roof belfry, two double-door entrances with transoms, and regularly spaced pointed arch windows with 12-over-12 lights. An African-American cemetery dating from the period after the relocation of the church surrounds the church on the north, south, and east. Although the church property is no longer part of the plantation, it is within the National Historic Landmark boundaries of the plantation and is therefore counted as a non-contributing element.

#### Archeological Investigation at Mulberry Plantation

Strong evidence exists that the land encompassed by the plantation had served as the paramount Indian ceremonial center and town of significant size known as "Cofitachequi" from approximately A.D. 1250 to 1670.<sup>8</sup> The Mulberry site has been the subject of numerous archaeological investigations since it was first recorded in 1848 in a Smithsonian Institution survey of important sites in the Mississippi Valley.<sup>9</sup> The site consists of two platform mounds and an associated village that measures at least 320 x 700 meters along the banks of the Wateree River. It is one of the few sites that can be tied to specific early historic visits, including those by explorers Hernando de Soto in 1540, Juan Pardo in 1566-1568, and Henry Woodward in 1570, and is extraordinary in the fact that it survived 130 years of European contact, which often led to almost immediate devastation through disease or war. Because it was occupied for more than 400 years, the Mulberry site offers a rare chronological view of the evolution of a chiefdom during prehistoric period and may yield further evidence of how late historic chiefdoms adapted to changes in a lifestyle that resulted from contact with the Europeans. A portion of the site, known as the McDowell Site, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1970.<sup>10</sup> Because of the significance of the McDowell site does not contribute to the national significance of Mulberry Plantation, this archeological site is considered to be a non-contributing resource.

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<sup>8</sup>Chester B. DePratter, "Cofitachequi: Ethnohistorical and Archaeological Evidence," in Albert C. Goodyear and Glen T. Hanson, eds., *Studies in South Carolina Archaeology: Essays in Honor of Robert L. Stephenson*, Anthropological Series 9, Occasional Papers of the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, The University of South Carolina (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989) 141-144.

<sup>9</sup>E.G. Squier and E.H. Davis, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* (New York: Bartlett & Welford, 1848) 107.

<sup>10</sup>Gail Wagner to Stephen Olausen, Letter, May 12, 1997, located in the Mulberry Plantation Archives. Ms. Wagner is an Associate Professor of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of South Carolina. She has studied the Mulberry site for more than a decade and currently conducts bi-annual archaeological field school there.

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**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.****Summary**

Mulberry Plantation possesses national significance under as the most important site associated with the writing of Mary Boykin Chesnut's remarkable first hand account of southern society during the Civil War. With her husband, James Chesnut, Jr.—a prominent official in the Confederate government and heir to Mulberry, one of the largest plantations in the state—Mary Chesnut traveled in a circle that included the most influential people of the southern elite. The diary she kept to record her experience during the war and later revised with an eye toward publication, is acknowledged by literary scholars of the subject as the most important piece of literature produced by a Confederate author. Historians also have long recognized the journal's value as a rich source of information concerning the people and events of the war and life in general on the southern home front. Placed in the context of the time and place in which it was written, the diary is remarkable for its candor and its superior contribution toward understanding one of the most important events in America's history.

Mulberry is the site most closely associated with Chesnut and her work, because it was her primary residence during the period of significance (1865-1873). It was here that she collected much of the material for and wrote the majority of her diary. Chesnut lived here longer than any other single place in her lifetime, and it played a pivotal role in forming her life view. Although she seldom wrote favorably of her life on the plantation during the early years of the war, near the end of the conflict, when the once solid society of the old guard planter elite was crumbling around her, she came to view Mulberry as a symbol for all that the South had lost.

Three houses that she and her husband constructed in Camden during their life together are extant. Two—"Frogden" on Union Street and "Kamschatka" on Kirkwood Lane, constructed in 1848 and 1854, respectively have no association with the diary because they were sold before the war. The third, "Sarsfield," which was constructed on Chesnut Street in 1873, shares a claim to significance because it was the place where she extensively revised the diaries for publication. Sarsfield, however, has integrity issues, including the loss of its historical setting when most of its original property was subdivided and developed in the early twentieth century. Conversely, Mulberry Plantation, retains a high degree of its integrity with its historically and architecturally significant main house set within a still functioning agricultural landscape of nearly 5,000 acres.

**Importance of the Diary**

Mary Chesnut kept the diary of her wartime experiences between February 18, 1861 and June 26, 1865. With the exception of a very hectic period in 1863 and early 1864, she was faithful to her resolution during its initial entry to keep a record of the times.<sup>11</sup> Seven volumes of her original journal survive, though it is known that at least five additional volumes existed. The passages in them are often cryptic references to people and events, written hastily between a schedule of endless social gatherings, frequent trips, and bouts of illness. The work that was ultimately published was a result of two edits by Chesnut during two periods in the mid-1870s and early 1880s. Though the final version was much more polished and showed the author's

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<sup>11</sup>Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, 1.

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desire to create a more readable piece of literature, the basic form of the book followed that of the original diary. There is little in the way of foreshadowing. The element of surprise of a writer who has no knowledge of the impending events of the following day is intact. Major events often occupy space next to the mundane of everyday life. Conscious from the start of the historical importance of the moment, she took pains to paint a complete and accurate picture of the rise and fall of the Confederacy. Through her travels with her husband and a certain amount of luck, she was an eyewitness to a number of important events during the formation of the Confederacy and its operation afterward. As she put it in her diary in the latter stages of the war, "It was a way I had, always to stumble in upon the *real show*."<sup>22</sup>

The following passage from Mary Chesnut's journal is one of her most vivid descriptions of Mulberry and her life there during the early years of the conflict:

My sleeping apartment is large and airy--has windows opening on the lawn east and south; in those deep window seats, idly looking out, I spend much time. A part of the yard which was a deer park once has the appearance of the primeval forest--the forest trees having been unmolested...are now of immense size. In the spring the air is laden with opopanax, violets, jasmine, crab apple blossoms, roses. Araby the blest never was sweeter perfume. And yet there hangs here as in every Southern landscape the saddest pall. There are browsing on the lawn, when Kentucky bluegrass flourishing, Devon cows and sheep, horses, mares and colts. It helps to enliven it. Then carriages are coming up to the door and driving away incessantly...

I take this somnolent life coolly. I could sleep upon bare boards if I could once more be amidst the stir and excitement of a live world. These people have grown accustom to dullness. They were born and bred in it. They like it as well as anything else.<sup>33</sup>

In another passage Mary provided a glimpse of the opulent lifestyle kept up at Mulberry despite the war.

At Mulberry the house is always filled to overflowing. And one day is curiously like another. People are coming and going--carriages driving up or driving off. It has the air of a watering place where one does not pay and where there are no strangers. At Christmas the china closet gives up its treasures. The glass, china, silver, fine linen reserved for grand occasions, comes forth. As for the dinner itself--it is only a matter of greater quantity. More turkey, more mutton, more partridge, more fish, &c, and more solemn stiffness. Usually a half-dozen persons unexpectedly dropping in makes no difference. They let the housekeeper know--that is all.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>ibid., 535.

<sup>3</sup>Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, 250.

<sup>4</sup>Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, 349.

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Near the end of the war, Mary began to view Mulberry in a different light. The place and its occupants symbolized the gentile society of the old guard planter elite, which she often criticized but could not help to feel nostalgia for on the eve of its demise. In December 1864, leaving to spend some time at a house that she and James rented in Columbia, she wrote, “Took a last fond farewell of Mulberry--once so hated, now so beloved.”<sup>55</sup>

In writing about Civil War literature in the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, Lewis P. Simpson echoed the views of previous scholars on the subject, most notably Edmund Wilson and Daniel Aaron, when he wrote that “one of the greatest anomalies of the American literary imagination has been its inability—in spite of the vast amount of ink consumed in the effort—to derive a major poem, novel, or play from the central crisis in national existence.”<sup>66</sup> The most effective literature, Simpson goes on to write, to come out of the Confederacy was largely unknown for a generation after the conflict and was in the form of diaries, journals, and letters. Among the most valuable were the diaries of Sarah Morgan Dawson, Kate Stone, and Mary Chesnut.

Dawson’s account was first published in 1913 under the title *A Confederate Girl’s Diary* and focused on her experiences in Baton Rouge and New Orleans during the war. Stone wrote of the war from the vantage point of a northern Louisiana plantation and, after the flight of her family in the van of Federal invaders, from the east Texas town of Tyler. Her diary was published under the name *Brokenburn: The Journal of Kate Stone* in 1955. Neither of those works, however, approaches in terms of scope and literary quality the importance of Chesnut’s account of Confederate society.<sup>77</sup> Aaron, in his work on the subject, *The Unwritten War*, singled out only three authors, the poet Henry Timrod, novelist George Washington Cable, and Chesnut, as having come close to maintaining the necessary detachment and insight about the southern cause to be effective in their writing. He believed that Chesnut was the most likely of all her contemporaries to have had the ability to write the “great War novel.” Dawson agreed with Wilson that Chesnut’s diary, despite being a work of non-fiction, “is more genuinely literary than most Civil War fiction.”<sup>88</sup> In his Pulitzer-prize winning edition of Chesnut’s work, historian C. Vann Woodward summed up the significance of the diary in the following passage:

The importance of Mary Chesnut’s work...lies not in autobiography, fortuitous self-revelations, or opportunities for editorial detective work. She is remembered only for the vivid picture she left of a society in the throes of its life-and-death struggle, its moment of high drama in world history...The enduring value of the work, crude and unfinished as it is, lies in the life and reality with which it endows people and events and with which it evokes the chaos and complexity of a society at war. Her cast of characters includes slaves and brown half brothers, poor whites and sandhillers, overseers and drivers, common soldiers and solid yeomen, as well as the very top elite of state, military, and society that thronged her drawing room and saw her daily. She brings to life the historic crisis of her age with the literary techniques she learned in the meantime...<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>ibid., 697.

<sup>6</sup>Lewis P. Simpson, “Civil War in Literature,” in Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris, eds., *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989) 851.

<sup>7</sup>ibid., 851-852

<sup>8</sup>Daniel Aaron, *The Unwritten War: American Writers and the Civil War* (New York, 1962) 227-228, 259.

<sup>9</sup>Woodward, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, xxvii.

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The value of Chesnut's work to historians lies not so much in the recording of events but in her characterizations of people of all classes and social stature and their reactions to the toppling of their society. Elisabeth Muhlenfeld, in her biography of Chesnut, wrote that the diary "owes much of its fascination to its juxtaposition of the loves and griefs of individuals against vast social upheaval and much of its power to the contrasts and continuities drawn between the antebellum world and a war-torn country."<sup>100</sup> During the war Chesnut came in contact with nearly all the Confederacy's most influential leaders. She wrote particularly vivid and historically valuable portraits of close friends and acquaintances such as Jefferson and Varina Davis, the Lees, Louis T. Wigfall, C. Clement Clay, the Prestons, Stephen R. Mallory, John Bell Hood, Wade Hampton, Robert M.T. Hunter, and Joseph E. Johnston. Chesnut also painted rich pictures of lesser known and common folk, who struggled to come to grips with the rapidly changing world around them. Through vignettes and observances of hundreds of ordinary people, she created an incredibly rich picture of life on the southern homefront.<sup>111</sup>

Chesnut's personal views and observations about a wide range of topics regarding the war and life in the south are another important aspect of the diary as a historical document. The most enduring themes, and those which have been mined most often by historians, are her opinions on slavery, which she opposed, and the role of women in the male dominated society of the antebellum south. Chesnut's opposition to the institution of slavery was formed at a young age and sprang in part from her inability to see slaves as anything but humans cruelly taken from their homes and forced into a demeaning life of servitude. Mary had been taught by slaves, and had in turn, taught them. She had close relationships with some of her servants, and had befriended a young mulatto girl who attended school with her in Charleston. "God forgive us," she wrote, "but ours is a *monstrous* system and wrong and iniquity."<sup>122</sup> The single greatest factor in her hatred of slavery was that the system undermined the morals of southern men. She wrote frequently in her journal about her disgust toward men she knew to have used slaves for sexual gratification.<sup>133</sup> Among the most vicious passages on the subject in the diary are two where she accuses her father-in-law of miscegenation with a slave girl named Rachel. Using a veiled reference from the Book of Genesis to allude to the act she wrote, "So it is—flocks and herds and slaves---and wife Leah do not suffice. Rachel must be added, if not married. And all the time they seem to think themselves patterns—models of husbands and fathers." And again, "Rachel and her brood make this place a horrid nightmare to me—I believe in nothing, with this before me."<sup>144</sup>

Chesnut often equated the position of women within the male-dominated Southern culture with that of slaves, believing women suffered nearly as much from the deprivation of liberty, property, civil rights, and equal protection under the law. "There is no slave after all like a

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<sup>10</sup>Muhlenfeld, "Mary Boykin Chesnut," in Wilson and Ferris, eds., *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, 1574.

<sup>11</sup>Richard N. Current, ed. *Encyclopedia of the Confederacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993) 300.

<sup>12</sup>Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, 31.

<sup>13</sup>Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 112.

<sup>14</sup>Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, 31, 72.



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wife,” she wrote in one passage. In another she went further, stating “All married women, all children and girls who live in their father’s houses are slaves.”<sup>155</sup>

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut (1823-1886)

Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut was born in Stateburg, South Carolina to Mary Boykin and Stephen Decatur Miller on March 31, 1823. Her mother’s father, Burwell Boykin, served as an officer in the Revolutionary War under Francis Marion and established one of the largest upcountry plantations in the state before his death in 1817. Mary Boykin was seventeen when she married Stephen Decatur Miller in 1821.<sup>166</sup> Then a rising star in southern politics, Miller had risen from meager circumstances to become a prominent South Carolina lawyer and had already served a term in the U.S. Congress. In 1824, he introduced a resolution that launched the South Carolina States’ Rights Party, and was elected governor on the strength of that movement at the height of the nullification controversy of 1828. His 1829 speech to the South Carolina legislature is commonly regarded as the first significant expression of the “positive good” position on slavery. In 1830, he returned to Washington, D.C. as a U.S. Senator. His position, however, as the leading radical proponent of states’ rights was soon eclipsed by the rise to prominence of John C. Calhoun. The combination of his waning political fortunes, ill-health, and a strong desire to return to his family probably prompted his decision to resign his seat in 1833 and return to his law practice in South Carolina. Two years later, he decided to move his family to Mississippi, where he had acquired three plantations and hundreds of slaves.<sup>177</sup>

Mary Boykin Miller grew up in the family’s modest country house in Stateburg called Plane Hill and attended school in Camden, South Carolina. When she was twelve years old, her family moved to Mississippi. Mary, however, stayed behind and was enrolled in Madame Talvande’s French School for Young Ladies in Charleston. While there, she garnered an excellent education, becoming fluent in German and French. She also acquired the grace and poise that made her popular at social gatherings, and the ideals that contributed to her intellectual independence. She formed lasting friendships with many other daughters of the planter elite, including her closest friend Mary Serena Chesnut Williams, a niece of James Chesnut, Jr. The son of one of the state’s largest landholders, Chesnut had recently graduated from Princeton and was in Charleston studying law. He often dropped by to visit his niece and soon became enamored with Mary Boykin Miller. Exaggerated rumors of the intentions of Chesnut prompted Stephen Miller to remove his daughter from the school in the fall of 1836 and bring her to Mississippi to join the rest of the family.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 14.

<sup>17</sup>Emily Berenger Reynolds and Joan Reynolds Faunt, *Biographical Directory of the Senate of the State of South Carolina, 1776-1964* (Columbia, SC: South Carolina Archives Department, 1964) 224; Woodward, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, xxxi.

<sup>18</sup>Margaretta P. Childs, “Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut,” in Edward T. James, ed. *Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary* (Radcliff College, 1971) 274; Woodward, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, xxx-xxxii).

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The change from the stratified, cosmopolitan life of Charleston to the more egalitarian Mississippi frontier was drastic. Mary later viewed the Mississippi journey as an adventure that altered her attitudes toward Indians, slaves, and whites. She wrote in her autobiographic memoir that Mississippi was where, “I received...my first ideas that negroes were not a divine institution for our benefit—or we for theirs.”<sup>199</sup>

She returned to Madame Talvande’s school in the fall of 1837, but following the death of her father in March 1838, accompanied her mother back to Mississippi to settle financial affairs there. During the months required to reconcile the estate, James Chesnut often wrote and sent presents of books to help Mary pass the time. Despite stiff competition from other suitors, Chesnut convinced Mary to marry him upon her return to South Carolina in March 1839. The wedding, however, was delayed indefinitely when James accompanied his older brother, John, to Europe to consult with physicians there about John’s failing health. The trip proved unsuccessful and John died in December 1839, leaving James the only surviving male heir to the Chesnut fortune.<sup>200</sup>

James Chesnut and Mary Boykin Miller were finally married on April 23, 1840 at Mount Pleasant, her grandparents’ plantation, near Mulberry. James took his 17-year-old bride to live at Mulberry, the chief country seat of the Chesnuts, located three miles south of Camden.<sup>211</sup> Life at Mulberry was gracious, staid, and, from Mary’s point of view as a young woman with cosmopolitan tastes, tedious. The couple shared the large, Federal-style home with James’ parents, James Chesnut, II and Mary Cox Chesnut, and his two sisters, Sarah and Emma, eleven and ten years her seniors, respectively. Accustomed since childhood to being the center of attention, her situation at Mulberry produced intense anxiety and frustration. She often felt inadequate and childish under what she perceived as the reproachful watch of her in-laws.<sup>222</sup>

Mary spent much of her time at Mulberry reading her way through the Chesnut library, one of the finest private collections in the south at that time. Her tastes in books ranged from the works of prominent European philosophers to what would have been considered by many of her contemporaries as decadent novels. Reading was her primary means of escape and sharpened her powers of observation. Other activities included visiting or entertaining her many relatives in the area and helping Mary Cox Chesnut in small ways to manage the plantation staff. The stagnation of plantation life, however, took a toll on Mary’s psyche and may have contributed to her frequent bouts with illness. In 1845, she became seriously ill with what she termed “gastric fever,” one of the recurring maladies that plagued her throughout her adult life. Concerned for her health, James decided to take Mary on a trip to the fashionable resorts of Saratoga and Newport in hopes that a change of scenery would lift her spirits and thereby improve her health.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Woodward, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, xxxii.

<sup>20</sup> Childs, “Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut,” 327-328.

<sup>21</sup> Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 42-43

<sup>22</sup> Woodward, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, xxxiv-xxxv.

<sup>23</sup> Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 46-54.

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Almost as soon as she and James had boarded the ship in Charleston for the voyage north, Mary began to show signs of recovering. She enjoyed the bustling activity of the northern cities, and after visiting for a month at the resorts, the couple decided to travel to Europe. Upon their return to Mulberry, Mary resolved to make such trips to the north as often as possible. She and James also decided that they should have a home of their own closer to the Camden town center. In 1848, they moved into "Frogden," a relatively modest wood frame house that still stands at 101 Union Street. Six years later, they constructed a much larger and more elegant house in the prestigious Kirkwood section of town called "Kamschatka," after the remote Siberian peninsula by that name. The largest and most ornate of the three homes that James and Mary constructed in Camden, Kamschatka, located at 108 Kirkwood Lane, remains one of Camden's finest antebellum residences.<sup>244</sup>

James Chesnut's political career began in 1840 when he was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives. He served four terms in that capacity from 1840 to 1846 and 1850 to 1852. In the latter year he was elected to the South Carolina Senate and served as its president from 1856 to 1858.<sup>255</sup> He garnered a reputation as a solid, though an uninspiring orator and became an acknowledged leader of the conservative wing of the southern states' rights movement. His popularity as a politician stemmed from his cool and reserved demeanor, which allowed for reasoned thought even in times of considerable political ferment. His unanimous election to the U.S. Senate in 1858 was considered a victory for the moderates over the fire-eaters.<sup>266</sup>

Mary actively participated in James' career. She took pride in his position and helped with his correspondence and speeches, though she reserved the right to, and often did disagree with his conservative views. Her own political views, she admitted in a letter to James while he was serving as a South Carolina representative to the Nashville Convention to discuss the Wilmot Proviso of 1850, were "heterodox." Though a daughter of a framer of the positive good position on slavery and wife to the son of one of the largest slave owners in South Carolina, she was against slavery. She felt deep compassion for the plight of slaves, and believed that gradual emancipation was the correct solution to the problem.<sup>277</sup> At the same time, however, she was an avowed fire-eater on the question of states' rights, despised northern abolitionists for their moral judgements against southern society, and was squarely behind South Carolina's move to secede from the Union.<sup>288</sup>

After James' election to the Senate, the Chesnuts sold Kamschatka and moved to a house on H Street in Washington, D.C. Mary later wrote of the brief two-year stay in the city as "delightful" and "eventful." She naturally gravitated to a social circle that contained the wives of many of the south's most influential politicians. Among her closest friends were the wives of Senators Louis T. Wigfall of Texas and Clement Clay of Alabama. She also formed a close and lasting relationship with Jefferson Davis' wife, Varina. She made regular appearances at balls, dinners,

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<sup>24</sup>Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, xxxvii.

<sup>25</sup>Reynolds and Faunt, *Biographical Directory of the Senate of South Carolina*, 196.

<sup>26</sup>Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, xxxvii-xxxviii.

<sup>27</sup>Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 59.

<sup>28</sup>Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, 4.

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and teas and gained a reputation among both the men and women of the Southern “mess” as a charming hostess and excellent conversationalist.<sup>299</sup>

Mary was on her way home from a two-week visit to her sister’s home in Florida in November 1860, when she learned that Abraham Lincoln had been elected president and her husband had been the first southern senator to resign his seat.<sup>300</sup> Having grown accustomed to the bustle and excitement of Washington, D.C., Mary had mixed feelings about leaving the city to return to South Carolina. Of James’ decision to resign Mary wrote, “I thought him right—but going back to Mulberry to live was indeed offering up my life on the altar of the country.”<sup>311</sup>

James was intimately involved with the formation of the Confederacy and served in a variety of high-level posts. Immediately after resigning from the Senate, he went to Columbia to assist in the organization of the South Carolina Secession Convention. He was a delegate to the convention when it convened in mid-December in Charleston, and served as a member of the committee charged with drafting the Ordinance of Secession. When the Confederacy formed a provisional Congress at Montgomery, Alabama early the next year, Chesnut helped draft the nation’s permanent constitution. During the siege of Fort Sumter, Chesnut served as an aide to General P.G.T. Beauregard and, together with Stephen D. Lee, rowed at night across Charleston Harbor to relay evacuation orders to Major Robert Anderson of the occupying Union force and was later present with Louis T. Wigfall to accept Anderson’s surrender when the fort fell. He continued as Beauregard’s aide until after the Battle of First Bull Run. He then served a similar position on Jefferson Davis’ staff, and attained the rank of colonel. In 1864 he received a commission as a brigadier general and commanded the South Carolina reserves until the end of the war.<sup>322</sup>

The busy schedule that Mary maintained during the war offered an outlet for the pent up energies and frustrations that had been building through years of living in the conservative shadow of her husband and his family. Mary accompanied James to his various posts throughout the war, and acted as his administrative aide and hosted or attended an endless round of social gatherings. In addition, she made frequent trips to relatives and friends, knitted shirts for soldiers and sewed sandbags for coastal defense, and raised supplies for Richmond hospitals.<sup>333</sup> The diary she determined to keep in February 1861 was a way for Mary to manage and preserve for later reflection the events of her life during a period that she knew would alter the course of history. Charming, outgoing, intelligent, and inquisitive, she had an ability to extract first-hand, often sensitive, information from a litany of political and military leaders that

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<sup>29</sup>ibid., xxxviii, 1; Childs, “Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut,” 328.

<sup>30</sup>Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 96.

<sup>31</sup>Woodward, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 5.

<sup>32</sup>Edward G. Longacre, “James Chesnut, Jr.,” in Patricia Faust ed., *Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986) 135-136; Current, *Encyclopedia of the Confederacy*, 299.

<sup>33</sup>Woodward, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, xl.

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she came into contact with on an almost daily basis through the many social gatherings she hosted or attended.<sup>344</sup>

In its original form, the diary was an uneven, sometimes cryptic collection of passages, written in a free-flowing stream of consciousness during brief lulls in an extremely hectic schedule. Kept under lock and key, it contained Mary's most private thoughts and was clearly intended for her eyes only. It was peppered with frank, often critical remarks about Southern leaders, people within her social circle, and even her friends and family. She also expressed views that could be considered heretical in terms of her opposition to slavery and the place of women within the male dominated society. Such revelations, should they have become public during the Civil War or its immediate aftermath, would have caused great harm to her social standing.<sup>355</sup> It was not until a decade after the war, therefore, that Mary began seriously thinking about editing the diary, which in its raw form filled numerous notebooks of varying size and amounted to more than 400,000 words.<sup>366</sup>

Throughout the war, Mulberry was Mary's primary residence, though James' duties required extended trips to Richmond and Columbia. When Federal forces were closing in on Columbia during the final stage of the conflict, Mary moved to relative safety in Chester, South Carolina. While there, news of Lee's surrender at Appomattox arrived. As had been commonplace throughout the war, a number of prominent people in the Confederate hierarchy, including John Bell Hood, Clement Clay, and Varina Davis and her children, came to the house she had rented for discussion and comfort. "Night and day," she wrote, "this landing and these steps are crowded with the Elite of the Confederacy—going and coming—and when night comes...more beds are made on the floor of the landing place...The whole house is a bivouac."<sup>377</sup>

When the war ended, Mary and James returned to Mulberry, which had been partially damaged by a Union raiding party. James' father died at the age of 93 in 1866, leaving the plantation to James, but stipulating that it pass to the eldest male heir in the family at the time of James' death. Since Mary and James had no children, the plantation would pass to one of their nephews. James spent his time trying to get the plantations, which were heavily in debt, back in order and again assumed a prominent role in local and state politics. Though bitterly upset by the shattered society around her and often suffering bouts of depression and physical illness, Mary ran the household and started a small dairy business with an outlet in Charleston that for some time was the only family income. In between, she corresponded with old acquaintances, especially Varina Davis whom she had grown very close to during her time in Richmond, and worked on her writing.<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 97.

<sup>35</sup>Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 100; Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, xix.

<sup>36</sup>Peggy Robbins, "Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut," in Patricia Faust, ed. *Historical Times Encyclopedia of the Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986) 136.

<sup>37</sup>Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 127.

<sup>38</sup>Childs, "Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut," 329.

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In 1872, James and Mary began construction of their final home, which they named “Sarsfield.” Because materials were expensive and scarce, James had the separate kitchen building behind Mulberry razed and the bricks used to erect their new home. The house, which is located at 130 Chesnut Street in Camden, was built with considerable input from Mary, and featured a comfortable library with a bay window that looked over the grounds. It was in that room that Mary did most of her revisions for what was ultimately to become the final version of her journal.<sup>399</sup> The property surrounding Sarsfield originally amounted to more than 50 acres, most of which was sold off and developed as the Sarsfield Country Club Golf Course in 1909. In the 1930s the golf course was subdivided into residential home lots.<sup>400</sup> The house now sits on a block of land measuring about four acres. The exterior of the building retains much of its original appearance, but the interior was remodeled by a subsequent owner in the 1930s.<sup>411</sup>

Mary revisited the diary in the early 1870s while still living at Mulberry and began to think seriously about revising it for publication. After moving to Sarsfield, she began writing in earnest, but switched her attention from the diary to writing fiction. Her first attempts were two novels that were written simultaneously during the years between 1872 and 1876. One was autobiographical, centering on her experiences in Mississippi, and named “Two Years of My Life.” The other was a war novel called “The Captain and the Colonel.”<sup>422</sup>

Realizing that the material she collected during the Civil War offered a much more interesting story than the fiction she was attempting to write, Chesnut abandoned the novels in 1875 and began the arduous process of paring down the diary.<sup>433</sup> By the spring of 1876, she had made an initial edit of the years between 1861 and 1864, and then abruptly stopped work.<sup>444</sup> Despite her efforts to be succinct, Chesnut’s first version of the revised diary, had it been completed through the end of the war, would have amounted to well over two thousand pages. It is possible that she stopped work on the diary because she felt that the material was still too controversial to publish.<sup>455</sup>

In the early 1880s, despite failing health that often confined her to her bed, Mary resumed the process of editing her wartime journals. It is not known exactly how many of the original journals she had in front of her when she compiled the work that ultimately was published as her diary. Portions of the original journal that survive today span from February 18, 1861 through December 8, 1861, January through February 1865, and May 7 through June of 1865. There

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<sup>39</sup>Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 140-141.

<sup>40</sup>Historic Property Associates, Inc. “Historic Resources Survey of Camden, South Carolina” (report prepared for City of Camden Landmarks Commission and South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1996) 21.

<sup>41</sup>Historic Property Associates, Inc. “Sarsfield,” South Carolina Department of Archives and History Statewide Survey Form No. CAM0797, 1996.

<sup>42</sup>Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 141-142.

<sup>43</sup>*ibid.*, 157.

<sup>44</sup>*ibid.*, 158.

<sup>45</sup>Woodward, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, xxii.

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were undoubtedly other volumes, though there were probably several extended periods during the busy years of 1863 and 1864 where she made few, if any, entries. To fill those gaps when revising her journal, she used newspaper clippings, correspondence that she saved, and her memory to recreate events and conversations.<sup>466</sup>

The resulting work is an understated masterpiece of Southern literature. The practice that she had in her earlier attempts at fiction served her well when rewriting the journal. She had become accomplished at characterization and dialogue and used several different narration techniques, alternating between the first and third persons. Her intention was to eliminate all of what she deemed trivial and personal and to provide a solid historical accounting of her experiences. She took many liberties with the original material, sometimes omitting important elements and substituting new passages in their place. Events that occupied two sentences in the original journal were often expanded to occupy several pages of text.<sup>477</sup>

James Chesnut died in February 1885. Their relationship, which Mary admitted in her journal had been strained at times, had, through many shared experiences of happiness and tragedy, grown into one of deep mutual understanding and love. Grief stricken, Mary became intensely depressed, fell ill again, and died the following year. The two are buried side by side in the Chesnut family cemetery at Knights Hill in Camden.<sup>488</sup>

Some months before her death, Mary gave the unfinished journal to her close friend, Isabella D. Martin, and asked that she oversee its publication. It was not until nearly 20 years later, however, before a New York journalist, Myrta Lockett Avary, stumbled upon the work and convinced Martin to co-edit and publish it. Though the editing of the resulting book, titled *A Diary from Dixie*, was sloppy and heavy-handed, the genius of Chesnut's writing shone through, and the work was a popular success.<sup>499</sup> It was subsequently reissued in two vastly different edited versions in 1949 and 1981. The 1949 version was edited by novelist Ben Ames Williams, and though he included more material than the previous publication, it fell far short of conveying the full breadth and import of Chesnut's work. The 1981 version, edited by prominent historian C. Van Woodward and entitled *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, is considered the most reliable edition and won the Pulitzer Prize for History in 1982. In 1984 Woodward and Chesnut's chief biographer, Elisabeth Muhlenfeld, published additional excerpts of the original diaries in *The Private Mary Chesnut: The Unpublished Diaries*.

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<sup>46</sup>ibid., xvii.

<sup>47</sup>Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, lvi.

<sup>48</sup>Woodward, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, xliv-xlv.

<sup>49</sup>Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 214-215, 222.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

Previously Listed in the National Register.

Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.

Designated a National Historic Landmark.

Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #

Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other (Specify Repository): Mulberry Archives, Mulberry Plantation, Camden, South Carolina

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of Property: 4,778 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description:

The attached acreage map shows the National Historic Landmark boundaries for Mulberry Plantation. T

The property is bounded roughly as follows:

Begin at a point on the north bank of Big Pine Tree Creek at its confluence with the Wateree River; then south along the east bank of the river to a point at the south end of an open pasture, approximately three-quarters of a mile south of Belmont Neck; then southeast approximately 2,000 ft to a point at the southeast corner of the pasture; then northeasterly along an unimproved road to a point approximately 300 ft east of an abandoned Southern Railroad right-of-way (r.o.w.); then north along the unimproved road approximately 600 ft; then south east approximately 60 feet; then northeast approximately 1,000 ft to a point on the east side of U.S. Highway 521; then southeast approximately 800 ft; then northeast approx. one-half mile; then northwest approx. one-half mile; then northeast approx. 3,690 ft; then northwest approx. 800 ft to a point on the southeast corner of a home lot known as the Daniels property; then southwest to the southwest corner of said lot; then northwest to the northwest corner of said lot; then northeast to the northeast corner of said lot; then northeast approx. 2,000 ft; then northwest to a point on the east bank of Town Creek; then northwesterly along said creek to its intersection with the Interstate 20 r.o.w.; then west along said r.o.w. to its intersection with Big Pine Tree Creek; then southwesterly along the north bank of said creek to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary was drawn to include all the contiguous area that retains historical integrity from the period of significance and was part of Mulberry Plantation during the period in which Mary Boykin Chesnut resided there. Included within the boundary is a 10-acre parcel owned by Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church. Tracts of property belonging to Mulberry, Inc., but not included in the NHL boundaries consist of an approximately 230-acre tract attached to the southeast corner of the property and an approximately 500-acre tract separated from the main parcel by Interstate 20.

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name/Title: Stephen Olausen

Telephone: 401-886-5767

Date: 7/15/98

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**List of Photographs**

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2. Kershaw County, South Carolina
3. Stephen Olausen
4. May 18, 1997
5. Mulberry Plantation, Camden, South Carolina
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**JAMES AND MARY BOYKIN CHESNUT HOUSE**

Camden, Kershaw County, South Carolina

View of back lawn, facing southeast

Stephen Olausen. 1997

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**JAMES AND MARY BOYKIN CHESNUT HOUSE**

Camden, Kershaw County, South Carolina

Facade (south elevation), facing north

Stephen Olausen. 1997

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**JAMES AND MARY BOYKIN CHESNUT HOUSE**

Camden, Kershaw County, South Carolina

Rear (north elevation), facing south

Stephen Olausen. 1997

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**JAMES AND MARY BOYKIN CHESNUT HOUSE**

Camden, Kershaw County, South Carolina

Contributing antebellum shed, facing northwest

Stephen Olausen. 1997



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**JAMES AND MARY BOYKIN CHESNUT HOUSE**

Camden, Kershaw County, South Carolina

Excluded Wesley Chapel, facade (east elevation) and north side, facing southwest

Stephen Olausen. 1997

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**JAMES AND MARY BOYKIN CHESNUT HOUSE**

Camden, Kershaw County, South Carolina

First floor main hall, facing north

Stephen Olausen. 1997

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**JAMES AND MARY BOYKIN CHESNUT HOUSE**

Camden, Kershaw County, South Carolina

Detail of oblong staircase and dogwood blossom medallion, facing up from first floor

Stephen Olausen. 1997

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**JAMES AND MARY BOYKIN CHESNUT HOUSE**

Camden, Kershaw County, South Carolina

Detail view of Pennsylvania marble fireplace, first floor drawing room, facing east

Stephen Olausen. 1997