

*In Her Words: The Historically Edited Diary of  
Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan,  
in the Context of the History of Southern Antebellum Women*

By

Catharine W. M. Rudnicki

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the

History

Program

Youngstown State University

Spring 2008

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Chapter One:</b>	
<b>Nineteenth Century Virginia Women: Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan’s World.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter Two:</b>	
<b>Uncovering Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan’s Voice, an Examination of Documentary Editing Theory and the Editorial Method Statement for Her Diary.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Chapter Three:</b>	
<b>Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan’s Diary.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Chapter Four:</b>	
<b>Annotations and Textual Notes.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Chapter Five:</b>	
<b>Life Through a Lens: Concluding a Diary and Elizabeth’s Legacy.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Bibliography:.....</b>	<b>72</b>

## Abstract

This thesis discusses the diary of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan, an antebellum southern plantation lady, written in 1853 and spanning from January to June. In addition to presenting a background of antebellum southern women's history and insights gained through the study of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's diary, this thesis also includes a historically edited transcription of the Bryan diary complete with contextual and textual annotations. The first chapter presents a broad historical background of antebellum southern women's history as relates to study of the Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan diary. The second chapter examines the process of historical editing, including history, practice, and methods involved in the editorial process. The second half of chapter two provides the editorial method governing the process taken in editing the Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan in detail. The third chapter is the transcription, broken up by diary entry, and later in the chapter, by original page number for easy reference to the annotations in the following chapter. Textual notes appear in this chapter as footnotes. Chapter four provides the contextual notes numbered by entry or original page number, then term. Chapter five concludes with analysis of insights gained through the study of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's diary relating to study of antebellum southern women's history and the process of documentary editing.

Chapter 1: *Nineteenth Century Virginia Women: Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's World*

*Historiographical Discussion*

The ideal of the antebellum southern woman long pervading popular culture has evolved through historical studies and with the emergence of new primary sources. Traditional popular accounts of the elite southern woman, her vivacity and charm, have long pervaded the American mythos. It would seem as if she coyly batted her eyes as she turned a corner through the magnolia-blooming garden of American history, disappearing from sight. Historians seek to illuminate the experiences of elite southern women through research and insight into primary source documents, such as diaries, correspondence, and legal and tax documents. It is the written sources meant only for self-reflection and perhaps future generations which perhaps can provide the most insight into a woman's private experience: her diary.

As women's studies issues have gained popularity in recent years, so have images of what it meant to be a woman throughout American history. Beginning in the 1970s, taking shape throughout the 1980s and 1990s and into the new millennium, historians began the challenge of capturing the history of women in the Old South. This scholarship focused primarily on elite, white women whose lasting records were more bountiful and whose allure captured hearts in popular culture classics such as *Gone With the Wind*. This reliance on such an interpretation labeled

antebellum southern women as frivolous, glamorous members of a pseudo-royalty caught up more in courting and decorum than in crops and the running of a large estate.

In 1982, Catherine Clinton examined one of the common ideals of Southern women throughout history in her substantial work, *The Plantation Mistress*. Clinton viewed the plantation mistress and her daughters as submissive to the patriarchy held by the planter and master of the household. Clinton portrayed the southern woman under extreme stresses in her care of the household, her children, and the workforce of slaves—in some cases turning to opium for succor. “These women did not inhabit mythical estates, but rather productive working plantations: the routine was grueling, life was harsh. No wonder they complained of being themselves enslaved.”<sup>1</sup> The use of slavery terminology in reference to the enslaving class adds not only an ironical twist, but a poignant parallel between the oppressors and the victims.

*The Plantation Mistress*, as illustrated by its title, dealt in the extremes of elite white womanhood and chattel slavery. In contrast, Suzanne Lebsock’s work explored the middle ground between slaves and the elite planter class, exposing the lives of middle and working class urban women, classes which until recently have been unrepresented in traditional stories of the Old South.

---

<sup>1</sup>Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman’s World in the Old South*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 35.

Lebsock's *Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860*, published in 1984, shattered the stereotypical views of antebellum women. By investigating court records, tax lists, legal transactions, bills of sale, estate records, Lebsock located the socio-economic position of southern women in urban areas. Through a systematic study of these documents, Lebsock revealed circumstances, such as the system of legal equity, that allowed some southern women a measure of choice in their lives and property. Under equity law, it was possible for a woman to own and control (either herself or through a trustee) separate property from her husband.<sup>2</sup>

Another way Lebsock departed from the traditional approach was in her case study of the Petersburg, Virginia area. By researching this specific geographic location in-depth, Lebsock revealed a segment of the nineteenth century urban population, making an exhaustive study such as this feasible. Though more than twenty years has passed since the release of *Free Women of Petersburg*, her groundbreaking insight and method has secured it a permanent place in southern women's history.

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese paralleled some of Clinton's approach in her 1988 work, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*. Fox-Genovese, a celebrated lecturer and historian, introduced the concept of "household" in her definition of the living spaces of masters, mistresses and their families, as well

---

<sup>2</sup> Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 55.

as slaves. The importance of this distinction showed a disconnect between the emotions involved in the ideal of family and home.<sup>3</sup> Fox-Genovese departed from Clinton's model in her use of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) slave narratives, a controversial source due to the collection and recording methods of in some cases prejudiced interviewers. Fox-Genovese noted this potential problem and stated that narratives were used in collusion with other established facts and data from the time period to act as a check on any erroneous or biased information.

Drew Gilpin Faust addressed the lives of elite southern women at the beginning of the antebellum era and through the Civil War in her 1996 work, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*. By incorporating and investigating the accounts of 500 elite women, Faust addressed the attitudes and ideals of women in the emerging quagmire of Civil War politics. Faust noted the ways womanhood in the Confederacy both attempted to change to fit the needs of Confederate sectionalism and retain the charm and dignity of the vanishing Old South. Faust introduced a study of popular culture using sources such as images and paintings and the fashion of women of the Old South, including hoop skirts and other impractical manners of dress, in which women were able to hide and smuggle needed supplies into the South.<sup>4</sup> The inclusion of the individual narratives of

---

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 31-32.

<sup>4</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 224.

women added a dimension of reliability and sincerity to the agency of Confederate women. Narrative sources can also provide more a more in depth look to the individuals themselves.

As Lebsack's *The Free Women of Petersburg* focused on a geographically narrow area, Anya Jabour's *Marriage in the Early Republic: Elizabeth and William Wirt and the Companionate Ideal* centered narrowly on the study of a specific relationship. The marriage and family of William and Elizabeth Wirt was a lens for exploring romantic marriage and joint parenting arrangements overall in the antebellum South. The Wirts married for love and sought to discard society's dictates which placed the husband and father as the sole ruler of family affairs.

Though the Wirt's commitment held firm early in their marriage, the pressures of society and home, William Wirt's escalating career and prestige, and a steadily enlarging family, ultimately split the two into their traditional roles:

William claimed a position as the primary breadwinner, and Elizabeth--after many protests--abandoned her role as domestic producer to become a consumer. The Wirts' family economy was transformed by these new and pressing duties from a domestic partnership to a relationship between a male provider and a dependent woman.<sup>5</sup>

Jabour unearthed the problems facing the establishment of more equal marriages through her study of the Wirts. Until society as a whole turned from the patriarchal ideal, relationships between men and women faced largely

---

<sup>5</sup> Anya Jabour, *Marriage in the Early Republic: Elizabeth and William Wirt and the Companionate Ideal* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 101.



insurmountable pressures in deviating from this norm. Despite these pressures, women in the South were also possessed political and social agency.

In Elizabeth Varon's 1998 work, *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*, Varon researched women's ventures outside of the private sphere, such as their involvement in benevolent societies like orphanages, religious groups, the Whig party and the American Colonization Society (ACS).<sup>6</sup> Notably, southern women were not generally engaged in suffrage societies or the abolitionist movement (though the ACS served an antislavery goal) in the antebellum South, as these aims were seen as deleterious to the economic viability of a paternalist southern slave society.<sup>7</sup> Paternalism was taught not only in the home, but in vacation resorts at the Virginia Springs.

Charlene Boyer Lewis, a specialist in American studies and history, centered on both men and women of the elite (or aspiring elite) planter class in her 2001 text, *Ladies and Gentlemen on Display: Planter Society at the Virginia Springs, 1790-1860*. The unique location of the Virginia Springs resort communities provided a backdrop for competition between peers, 'healthful' water and exercise regimes, and a stage for young men and women to learn the expectations of elite adulthood. This work was not specifically a female-centered study, but gendered, as men and women were both

---

<sup>6</sup> Joan R. Gundersen, "Review of: *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*." *Journal of Southern History*. 65 (Aug. 1999): 622-623.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998

explored within the chronological and geographical limits of the Virginia Springs resort communities.<sup>8</sup>

Lewis's work provided a union in the study of both men and women, and their vision of an ideal lifestyle which in reality did not exist in either the Virginia Springs or in their own homes. *Ladies and Gentlemen on Display* encompassed an inclusive study of men and women on a geographical location over time, where the American dreams they sought remained constant in an ever-changing political climate. Jesuit priest and professor of American Religious History at the Jesuit School of Theology at the University of California at Berkeley, Thomas E. Buckley's 2002 work, *The Great Catastrophe of My Life: Divorce in the Old Dominion*. Buckley's text addressed a factor harmful to the Southern family, and thus slavery: divorce.<sup>9</sup> Absolute divorce, or *a vinculo*, in antebellum Virginia was extremely difficult to obtain, and required a petition to the legislature and was administered by a case by case basis.<sup>10</sup> While alternatives were available, such as a bed and board (*a mensa et thoro*) divorce, a legal separation which inhibited remarriage, both women and men often suffered in unhappy marriages. Women, afforded inferior legal protection, were often the unfortunate victims of their circumstance, and faced situations such as abandonment, abuse, neglect, and poverty at the hands of their husbands. Buckley's large body of

---

<sup>8</sup> Charlene Boyer Lewis, *Ladies and Gentlemen on Display: Planter Society at the Virginia Springs, 1790-1860*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie eds. *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Thomas E. Buckley, *The Great Catastrophe of My Life: Divorce in the Old Dominion*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 16.

court and church documentary research resulted in a wide representation of Virginia families. Societal dictates served to inhibit elite men and women in a converse fashion than the ways they inhibited their chattel: they were prevented from dissolving marriages and slaves were threatened constantly by forced disillusion by the master class.

Peg A. Lamphier, like Jabour, centered her study on a southern couple in *Kate Chase & William Sprague: Politics and Gender in a Civil War Marriage*, published in 2003. Styled more as a relationship biography rather than Jabour's social study, *Kate Chase & William Sprague* illuminated the marriage of Kate Chase Sprague, the intelligent and outgoing daughter of Salmon P. Chase, governor of Ohio, Chief Justice of the United States, and Secretary of the Treasury during the Lincoln administration, and William Sprague, a senator from Rhode Island.<sup>11</sup>

Devoted specifically to the life of Kate Chase in the context of her marriage to William Sprague, Lamphier's work highlighted Kate Chase's political savvy and determined attention to her father's campaign. Kate Chase's unique social position, owing to her father's and husband's careers, provided an example of female political agency largely unrepresented by the body of study in the history of nineteenth century southern women.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Peg A. Lamphier, *Kate Chase & William Sprague: Politics and Gender in a Civil War Marriage*. (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Anya Jabour's 2007 work, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South* focused on the lives of girls and young women from elite and professional families in the Old South. Tentatively carving out the ages of fifteen to twenty-five as the target age of her study, Jabour also focused on turning points or significant events that characterized major changes in the life of a young woman, such as engagement, marriage, pregnancy and childbirth.<sup>13</sup> Jabour discovered the emergence of feminine agency revealed in correspondence, copybooks, albums, diaries, and journals of girls and young women. These girls acted as agents through postponement or prolonging time spent at female academies or finishing schools (where they benefited from exposure to other females of similar age as well as education), putting off engagements and marriages as long as possible, and continuing to interact with female friends after leaving the academies.<sup>14</sup> Jabour's work broke new ground in the study of the young women and girls, the subjects remained members of elite or aspiring elite families.

A recent documentary edition from 2006, *A Maryland Bride in the Deep South: The Civil War Diary of Priscilla Bond*, edited by Kimberly Harrison, helps demonstrate the value of documentary editing as a contribution to scholarship on southern women. The manuscript also makes up part of the *Southern Women and Their Families* collection edited by Anne Firor Scott.<sup>15</sup> Covering the scope of her daily

---

<sup>13</sup> Anya Jabour. *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 5.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's diary is also a part of *Southern Women and Their Families*,

life, adjustment from leaving the society of Baltimore, Maryland for a sugar plantation in Louisiana, Bond's experiences and reflections are revealed through skillful documentary editing. Through Harrison's annotations and insight into the habits of Priscilla Bond, the edited text is suited for use as a teaching aid for understanding life in the South before and during the Civil War and also as a resource for researchers into the lives of southern women.<sup>16</sup> Without these first-hand accounts from individual women such as Bond, the larger picture of southern society and day-to-day lives of the women who experienced it would remain hidden. Documentary editing allows a larger group of readers and researchers access and understanding to primary source documents, and additionally provides a guide to further study through context, annotation, and a bibliography of similar primary and secondary sources to fuel additional scholarship.

The historiography of elite southern women has evolved through different trends within the field of study. Elite and educated classes of women provide an easier starting point for research, as primary document records such as correspondence, diaries, paintings, and in some cases photographs are more likely to exist. Collections of primary sources, or diaries, such as the Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan diary provide new sources for study in illuminating individual experiences of these women, and their worldview and society in which they moved.

---

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Bramm Dunn, review of *A Maryland Bride in the Deep South: The Civil War Diary of Priscilla Bond*, edited by Kimberly Harrison, H-Net Reviews. <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/>. (March 1, 2008).

### *Historical Exposition*

Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan was born on June 25, 1805 at Elm Grove in Staunton<sup>17</sup>, Virginia to Judge John Coalter and Anne Frances Tucker Coalter, daughter of literary, legal scholar and poet, St. George Tucker. When she penned her diary in 1853, Bryan was 48 years old and lived with her husband, John Randolph Bryan on their plantation, Eagle Point, in Gloucester County, Virginia.<sup>18</sup> Her days were spent teaching her children and writing letters to her friends and to her grown daughter, Delia and son, Jack. She recorded travel to church and visits to neighbors and friends. A member of a wealthy Virginia family, the image of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan revealed in the diary offers a glimpse of the minutia of everyday in the life of a plantation mistress and mother.

Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's diary, though brief in length and chronology, spanning from 8 January 1853 to 1 June 1853, provides invaluable information about her worldview, her family, and indirectly—the society in which she moved. Within her sphere at Eagle Point, Gloucester County, Virginia, Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's thoughtful introspection and prayerful reflections were accompanied by thoughts on the weather, the daily correspondence, and occasionally the unfortunate health of family and friends. At the end of her diary, Bryan provided

---

<sup>17</sup> Delia B. Page, *Recollections of Home for My Brothers and Children*. (Wm. Ellis Jones, Printer, Richmond, Va: 1903), 50.

<sup>18</sup> Sara B. Bearss, et al. eds. "Bryan, Joseph," *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*. (The Library of Virginia, Richmond: 2001), 2: 352.

a detailed and moving description of her father and grandparents, tying the threads of her family through marriage, movement, and death to preserve her personal family history for the next generation.

Though Bryan's family connections and wealth clearly place her among the elite, her diary contains descriptions of preparing ham and purchasing food for the plantation, as well as much religious reading and introspection, and teaching and reading with her children herself, occupations a feisty Scarlett O'Hara stereotype would not willingly choose.

Though Eagle Point was a large plantation, with 100 slaves in 1860,<sup>19</sup> (four years after her death), Bryan did not include in her diary references to duties as a slave mistress. She lamented the death of an older slave, called "Daddy Frank," by the family at Eagle Point, as though he were a member of her own family.<sup>20</sup>

Bryan, as a married woman, would have shared the same legal status and "civil death"<sup>21</sup> as the women discussed in Lebsock's *Free Women*. However, she preceded her husband in death, essentially freeing her from any legal repercussions as widowed woman in need of financial support.

Delia Bryan Page, Bryan's oldest daughter, wrote an account of her life growing up at Eagle Point, as well as history of her mother's childhood and

---

<sup>19</sup> Bearss, ed., *DVB*, 2:352-354.

<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan Diary, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1853—June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1853, *Southern Women and Their Families in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Papers and Diaries*. Anne Firor Scott, ed. Series D, Part 1, Reel 1. Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1999. Microfilm. [Transcription], 2.

<sup>21</sup> Lebsock, *Free Women*, 23.

upbringing in her book, *Recollections of Home for My Brothers and Children*,<sup>22</sup> Page described stories of her mother's youth, including a pet name given to her by her mammy, Aggy, "Betty Obliging", for her sweet temper and her desire to please everyone.<sup>23</sup> In addition to these anecdotes, Page's text provided much context to the Bryan diary, especially in identifying and enhancing descriptions of family members and friends mentioned in Bryan's family history in the final entry.

The Red Sulphur Springs, discussed in Lewis's *Ladies and Gentlemen on Display*, was the site of Bryan's mother's death, Lewis's work not only provides insight into the setting of the springs lifestyle often frequented by the Coalter family, but Bryan's experiences add to understanding of the Springs lifestyle through her individual experiences.

Like Kate Chase Sprague, discussed in Lamphier's work<sup>24</sup>, Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan was well connected, with family members such as her uncle, the outspoken conservative politician, John Randolph of Roanoke, and through him ties to the distinction of the First Families of Virginia and St. George Tucker, renowned judge and author from Port Royal, Bermuda who resided in Chesterfield County, and later Williamsburg, Virginia.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Page, *Recollections* 1-109,. published in 1903

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Lamphier, *Kate Chase & William Sprague*.

<sup>25</sup> E. Lee Shepard, "Tucker, St. George," *American National Biography*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 21: 907-908



Bryan's diary can be a source to provide insight into theories of southern women's lifestyles, worldviews, and actions when combined with a larger body of like resources, statistics, or secondary source materials such as Faust's in *Mothers of Invention*. It would also make for a compelling comparison between lifestyles before and after the Civil War in the South, or even between regions if considered alongside those of northern women of the same or similar socio-economic status.

Difficulties arising from source validity are of utmost concern for the conscientious researcher. Diaries such as Bryan's are rare, and with attention to preservation of the author's voice and accurate rendering of the text will allow for easier reference, making the diary more valuable to scholars and students of southern history. Historical annotation of key people, places, and events aids in illuminating previously unseen context and relationships essential to understanding the experiences in a particular place in time, and creates a strong foundation for secondary source development and its use in scholarship. Documentary editing is an essential field for providing sources to encourage historical study and dialogue, and to enhance understanding of the lives of individual women in the past.

Chapter 2: *Uncovering Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's Voice, an Examination of Documentary Editing Theory and the Editorial Method Statement for Her Diary*

The rendering of historical documents available for a wider public consumption is comparatively new in relation to the field of history to which it is so closely tied. The method of textual editing involved critiquing or interpreting the document intended for a particular audience or to capture a particular historical trend, resulting in the creation of a new text which reflected the opinions and viewpoint of the second author.<sup>1</sup> The field of contemporary documentary editing dates to the mid-twentieth century with the publication of the *Papers of Thomas Jefferson* by Julian P. Boyd and Lyman Butterfield at Princeton University in 1950.<sup>2</sup> Also at that time, the passage of the Federal Records Act by Congress strengthened the fledgling National Historical Publications Commission, the division of the National Archives concerned with historical documents, with the creation of a permanent staff to heighten the standards of accuracy and authenticity for the fledgling field of documentary editing.<sup>3</sup>

Early documentary editors focused on the founding fathers, patriots, and politicians, topics of interest in historical research and writing throughout the nation's history, such as John Jay, George Washington, and John Adams. As the study

---

<sup>1</sup> Mary-Jo Kline, *A Guide to Documentary Editing, Second Edition* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

of history evolved in the 1970s and 1980s to include accounts of African Americans and women, professional documentary editing followed suit and provided researchers with original documentary editions from these sources such as *The Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, and the *Frederick Douglass Papers*.<sup>4</sup> Historical research trends expanded to include persons who were not imminently famous in their own right, but the voice and stories of “regular” people, men, women, and children who lived and experienced society in their own place and time. With increased interest in reaching these untold stories, documents such as the diary of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan reveal a slice of what life was like through the subject's eyes. Written by a member of the elite southern planting class, Bryan's diary provides a window into her experiences on the Eagle Point plantation, and contributes significantly to the understanding of elite women in the antebellum South.

The practice of documentary editing involves a delicate balance between establishing clarity and maintaining source authenticity. Mary-Jo Kline, author of the ground-breaking editorial text *A Guide to Documentary Editing*, described a key role of documentary editing: “for the documentary editor's goal is not to supply the words

---

<sup>4</sup> Patricia G. Holland et al, eds. *The Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, (Microfilm Edition. Del.: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1991); Louis Harlan et al eds., *The Booker T. Washington Papers* 14 Vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972-1989); John Blassingame, et. al. eds., *The Frederick Douglass Papers*, Series One, Speeches, Debates, and Interviews (5 vols., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979-1992).

or phrases of a vanquished archetype but rather to preserve the nuances of a source that has survived the ravages of time.”<sup>5</sup> The mission of the modern documentary editor and editorial team is to capture the authentic communication of a particular person or group by transcribing it into a more accessible, consistent format for use by teachers and researchers, and to make clear editorial selections of source material consistent with a specific theme, correspondent, or time period.

Transcribing the written word is a complex task, and even printed historical documents are riddled with the imperfections of time, medium, and situation, including unclear handwriting, ink blotting or smudges, document degradation or wear, and missing pieces or sections. Additionally, the idiosyncrasies within the document itself can render difficult editorial decisions for treatment such as individual symbols or shorthand, cipher, abbreviations, marginalia—writing in the margins or elsewhere on the edges of a document—super and subscripts, writing above or below lines, writing at perpendicular angles to save paper while crossing previous written lines, and many others which only become apparent with increased experience in editing or familiarity with the particular author's hand.

There are many styles available to documentary editors when choosing how to present a particular source or collection. Initially, editors must determine a scope or selection of documents to include, and the basis for including or omitting documents to the collection. *Editing Historical Documents: A Handbook of Practice* by Michael

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 2.

E. Stevens and Steven B. Burg is a helpful guide for resolving documentary dilemmas.<sup>6</sup> Selection in the case of the Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan diary was uncomplicated, as the length and scope of the diary was in effect its own collection. In other cases, such as in the *Papers of James Madison* and *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*, the editorial staff must select which documents to include in their editions.<sup>7</sup>

Truly comprehensive editions including everything written to, from, or by an individual or group present time or financial limitations, as well as an ability to locate and reproduce the documents needed for the edition, and some documents may not be interesting or historically valuable to readers.<sup>8</sup> A selection of documents, while requiring extensive editorial policy research and limitation setting, offer the researcher a set of documents with a set theme, chronology, or subject with which to seek out documents suited to their needs, along with where the originals, when known, can be found. In cases such as *The Papers of James Madison*, the editors include omitted information in footnotes, or in calendars which list documents not used.

Transcription styles also vary by scope and project, from conservative extensive transcription which follows the document's original organization, style, grammar, and spelling as closely as printing and financial limitations allow, with

---

<sup>6</sup> Michael E. Stevens and Steven B. Burg, *Editing Historical Documents: A Handbook of Practice*, (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> J.C.A. Stagg, ed. et al, *The Papers of James Madison, Congressional Series*, 17 Vols. (Richmond: The University Press of Virginia, 1962-1991); Daniel Feller, ed. et al, *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*. 14 Vols. (Knoxville, Tn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1980-2007).

<sup>8</sup> Stevens and Burg, *Editing Historical Documents*, 41.

many symbols describing text placement and meaning, to a clear text editions that present documents with contemporary spelling and grammar so documents can be read easily without textual interruption.<sup>9</sup> The former transcription is preferable to editors and scholars for fuller understanding of the author's mindset and meaning, while the latter is suited to a more general audience, or for literary sources where the readability is preferable to the author's original wording, thought process or style choices.

When editors are forced to make changes or alterations to an original document, a careful method of recording and accountability is necessary to maintain document integrity. By carefully recording any changes deemed necessary to the original document to aid in understanding or transcription for print or electronic media in the editorial method statement, the editor maintains a high level of responsibility to both the reader and to the original document. It is this high standard that allows documentary editions to be considered primary source documents. Once the document transcription is complete, the editors painstakingly review the transcribed document and compare it with the original document to make sure no inaccuracies were erroneously inserted or removed in the transcription.<sup>10</sup>

To help assure this high level of accuracy in the final transcription, editors engage in various forms of verification. They read the document out loud to each

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 72-80.

<sup>10</sup> Kline, *Documentary Editing*, 205.

other (or record their voice and play it back while reviewing), in a process known as tandem proofreading, while reviewing the transcription and original document text. This reading aloud includes the vocalizing of textual changes such as punctuation, symbols or other significant textual anomalies, and capitalization to ensure the editorial staff has been consistent throughout the document and maintained the integrity of the editorial method statement which will accompany the final transcription.<sup>11</sup>

The relationship between the researcher and the documentary source is not unlike that of a detective to evidence at a crime scene. The chain of handling and documentation must be impeccably followed to ensure that the final result can stand up to the scrutiny required for effective use in its proper venue. Researchers must be able to trust that the documentary edition on which they base their theories, theses, dissertations, and written works is an accurate rendering of the original documents and that any diversions made are accounted for and only done with the goal of clarity and consistency in mind.<sup>12</sup>

Following transcription, the second step of the process is to provide detailed annotations for people, places, things, and events mentioned in the document. While there are a variety of forms this annotation can take, including foot and endnotes, a narrative descriptive header or introduction, or an index list at the end, the function

---

<sup>11</sup> Stevens and Burg, *Editing Historical Documents*, 82.

<sup>12</sup> Kline, *Documentary Editing*, 205.

of the annotations is the same; to allow readers to better understand the context of the document and the figures, events, and locations featured within the text.

Depending on the scope of the project, the size of the collection, and financial concerns, the annotations can range from the full name for a truncated version, a short descriptive sentence with background information, or an in depth biographical or descriptive sketch which generally does not exceed around 250 words, but well acquaints the reader with the subject of the annotation and fit it into the larger framework of the document.

The editors include descriptions of these topics and their approach to creating the work in an editorial method, which often appears in the beginning of the work, the first volume of a large collection, or when any major changes in style or approach are deemed necessary.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Editorial Method—Diary of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan*

The scope of the Diary of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan is the entirety of the text, including writing on the cover, which spans from 8 January 1853 to 1 June 1853. This also includes a selection written on the last page in the hand of an unknown person, but still a physical part of the diary.

For each diary entry the date will be aligned to the left for consistency, with the text of the diary beginning on the next line. When all such information is available, the date format will be day, month, and year for consistency of research.

---

<sup>13</sup> Stevens and Burg, *Editing Historical Documents*, 60-62.



The first letter of each sentence will be capitalized, and the proper ending punctuation will be inserted at the logical line break (in some cases replacing a superfluous hyphen or dash commonly employed at the end of sentences by nineteenth century writers, which will be removed except when the author clearly used a dash for emphasis or with particular intention). The text will be double-spaced and superscripts will be brought in line. Commas will be silently added to aid in clarity for reading, with careful attention not to alter any meaning intended by the author.

Vernacular or idiosyncratic abbreviations not readily identifiable to modern readers will be spelled out for easier recognition, as well as abbreviations or other word-shortening mechanisms. These notations will be elaborated on in an editor's conclusion after the transcription. Identifiable short-hand and misspellings will be left to enhance the readers' understanding of author's voice. Any pen strokes, underlines, or other non-word notations separating diary entries will be removed. Emphasized irregular capitalizations as well as underlines will be retained. A period will be inserted in the abbreviations for formal address, as in Mr. and Mrs. or Dr.

Any editorial additions besides those mentioned, and any notation not made by the author herself will be included within square brackets [ ]. In cases where legibility is an issue, whenever possible the editor will insert the likely text within square brackets. In cases where no educated guess can be made, dashes will replace the

words within the square brackets, with one dash for each omitted word ( [--] and [-- -- ] and so on).

People, places, events, and things mentioned within the text outside of common understanding (and with significance to the author's time, location, and relationships) will be annotated and footnotes will be provided in a separate chapter following the transcription. These annotations will be organized by diary entry, for the first part of the document, and by manuscript page divisions in the later historical narrative portion. The only exceptions are in the beginning of the annotations, where there are notes for important terms not mentioned specifically by the diary, and the initials on the cover of the original text. The entries and divisions will be denoted by Arabic numerals within brackets, and appear in front of the date or entry (when no date appears). Except insignificant figures or terms mentioned multiple times or with significance, the annotations will include, when possible, the full name or title of a person or place, and a short description of their relation to the author. Significant entries will have a longer description, but will not exceed 250 words.

Textual notes will also appear in the annotation chapter, and include physical descriptions of the document, when strike outs, blotches, or other physical damage or distortion occur. The presented transcription will be verified through proofreading between the editor and a reader to ascertain that the integrity of the historical edition is assured.

Chapter 3: *Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's Diary*

[JRB in script on cover]

[First page X and delta symbol, underlined with "la" underneath in script, symbol at bottom center]

[1]Saturday, Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>, 1853.

Mr. Bryan & Delia set out for Savannah.

Parted also with Jack Page who went

with them on his way to Mississippi.

Hung up all the bacon but the hams.

In the evening Miss S. [For-----] came

back in the carriage from W. Hall.

[2]Sunday.

Day at home.

[2]Monday.

Rode with Miss S. to see

Mrs. Page. Found her gone to see Mrs.

Curtis. Rode on to Mrs. Selden's. Had

an agreeable visit & ride. Day very fine.

[3]Tuesday.

At home, Day very fine.

[4]Wednesday.

Rain, day at home.

-1-

[5]Thursday.

Still raining. Got the mail & in it a letter from Jack with a sermon. Wrote to Mr. B. &

Delia.

[6]Friday.

Weather cleared off Cousin S. returned to North [Pines] having made a visit of 2

weeks very pleasant to us & I trust also to her.

[7]Saturday, Jan 15<sup>th</sup>.

Day cloudy. Sent for the mail & wrote to Mr. B. enclosing a letter from his Aunt A. F. Also letters for Jack & De sent to office. Got a letter from Jane Bryan. F. T. one from Jack.

[8]Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup>.<sup>1</sup>

Went to church. Had a short but very good sermon. Small congregation.

[9]Monday, 17<sup>th</sup>.<sup>2</sup>

This morning Daddy Frank died very suddenly. He had no apparent disease & had been as

-2-

well as common the day before. During the night he became [aeslly] & died just after breakfast. Mrs. Clarke & the girls & boys came & dined with us sociably of their own accord.

[10]Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup>.

Day cold & clear.<sup>3</sup> Got a little ice today. The main ponds however were not frozen.

Daddy F. buried—Poor old man! Went with the girls to Warner Hall. Mrs. Byrd there. Left the girls to spend the night & came home alone. Wrote to Henry Coalter &

---

<sup>1</sup> [corrected from 14, possibly]

<sup>2</sup> [Date cancelled and superscripted]

<sup>3</sup> [cancellation, misspelling of word "Got"]

St. George. Saw Judge Cabell's death in the newspaper. It will be 16 years next month since my father, his dear friend, died.

[11]Wednesday.

At home. Mrs. Page dined here & [Maid, mail] came in the evening to bid us goodbye. Weather fine.

-3-

[12]Thursday.

Day fine. Heard from Mr. Bryan & Judy. He & De got to Savannah & found all well on Wednesday[,] 11<sup>th</sup> Jan.

[13]Friday.

Weather still good.

[14]Saturday.

Wrote to Mr. B. De & Jack. Georgia got a letter from Jack. No letter besides from anyone. Rode with Mrs. Clarke to Belle Farm. Called on Mrs. A. Robins as we came back. Dined at W. Hall. Dinner on table when we got to the door. Rain.

[15]Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup>.

At home. Spent a quiet day with the children. Made the girls read to me.

[16]Monday.

Fanny & Georgia went to Dr. Byrd's to stay 'til Thursday. Hung up hams. Taught little boys at night and to them "Alladin & the wonderful Lamp".

-4-

[17]Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup>.

Day clear & cold. Mrs. J. H. Tabb & her daughter came to see me. In evening the boys rode to Mrs. Selden's & got their [boats/boots]. At night cloudy & windy. [Ran] read aloud 'till bedtime.

[18]Wednesday.

Wrote to Mr. B. & taught the boys. It turned very cold.

[19]Thursday.

The girls came back. Got letters from Mr. B. & Delia. Georgia sick.

[20]Friday.

Georgia still sick. Finished my letter to Mr. B. .

[21]Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup>.

Georgia still sick. Letter from dear Jack. Weather very fine.<sup>4</sup> A paper from Carrington Cabell.

[22]Sunday.

Day very fine. Went to church. Pretty good congregation.

-5-

[23]Monday.

Last day of January. Day fine. Fanny rode & past the day with Miss Jones. Sowed peas.

[24]Tuesday, Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>.

Went to W. House & got 50 lbs. clarified sugar for [8. c / & 50] of loaf for 11 ½ cents.

Dined at Mrs. Mann's. Found Mrs. Selden & Mrs. Byrd there. Got home late & very tired. Heard of Typhoid fever at Mrs. Roys. Rain in the night & Georgia went with me.

[25]Wednesday.

Still threatening rain. Georgia with very bad cold today.

---

<sup>4</sup> [cancelled, smudged] between "very fine" and "A paper"



[26]Thursday.

Got letters from Mr. B. Delia [,] Jack.<sup>5</sup>Cousin Kitty, Henry C. St. George & Mrs.

Jennett. A rich mail. Mrs. J. Tabb & Mrs. [Prosser T.] & Mrs. Selden here when mail arrived.

[27]Friday.

At home teaching the children. Rose & Colin rode down in the evening.

-6-

[28]Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> of Feb.<sup>6</sup> 1853.

Got another letter from Mr. Bryan. Rode in the evening with the girls & took tea at Warner Hall.

[29]Sunday.

At home. Slight rain & very warm.

[30]Monday.

Rain.

---

<sup>5</sup> Actually underlined twice

<sup>6</sup> [mark]

[31]Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup>.

Warner Hall family & Mrs. Cain dined here en famille.

[32]Wednesday.

Teaching the boys. Mrs. Jennett did not come. Was sick. Is to come to:morrow week.

[33]Thursday<sup>7</sup>

A poor mail. Only a letter from Jack. A paper also contained an obituary of Catherine Randall.<sup>8</sup> So many of my own age & time gone. Of that family Laura, Robert, Henry, Agnes, Rosa & now Catherine[,] children of Wm. Wirt. Only 4 left.<sup>9</sup> (wrote to Mr. B. & Jack & Fanny to Delia. [Mrs. Suiant] called in the morning.)

-7-

[34]Friday, Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>, 1853.

Girls looked for Sue Byrd but she did not come. Had a very merry evening together tho' alone & tho' I was quite unwell.

[35]Saturday.

---

<sup>7</sup> [+ in superscript]

<sup>8</sup> [mark]

<sup>9</sup> [+]

Went to the P.O.. Sue Byrd came just before we set out & went with us. Got a dear letter from De. Called on Mrs. Delaney also at White Marsh. Quite sick all the evening & night.

[36]Sunday.

Unable to go to church. The young people all went. Had a quiet time for reflection & prayer but my eyes & head would hardly let me read. Sometimes I have found that to be shut out even from books is good. Our minds & hearts then work for themselves & God sometimes draws near & blesses us with softened & [intervened] affections.

-8-

[37]Monday.

Girls went visiting. I at home teaching.

[38]Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup>.

Went with Mrs. Clarke to see Maria Jones. Addy [,] Colin & P. Page here at night.

[39]Wednesday.

Rain all day. Addy & Colin went home late in the evening. Had a very pleasant day with Addy. Poor Fanny T. very sick with tooth ache.

[40]Thursday.

Day fine. Sent the carriage & Ran for E. Magill. Wrote by this mail to Jack, De, Mrs. Cabell & Ada [Serene]. Gave Mrs. Deal a receipt for 30 dollars [le] paying [I O] & having paid Mr. Gayle 10[, ] his rent for<sup>10</sup> 1852.

[41]Friday.

Evy came [up/to] today. Letter from Mrs. B.. Sent for Dr. C. for poor F. T.

-9-

In the evening the dentist came & drew her tooth.

[42]Saturday.

Snow all day. Got another letter from Mr. Bryan.

[43]Sunday.

At home.

[44]Monday.

Sent for Mrs. Jennett who did not come.

[45]Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup>.

---

<sup>10</sup> [cancelled 3 words "for school" two of cancelled words, superline "for"]

Day cloudy. Yesterday the vessal returned with the oysters on board. [Chandler] had sold 180[bash/basket] for 59 dollars & brought the rest back. A letter from [Mrs] Kyle who had paid sponsor the captain 70 & Chandler 20. 5 of the 20 to be used for us].

[46]Wednesday.

Last night Mrs. Jennett came. It rained hard when she got here & all night

-10-

but the day after was warm & clear with occasional showers. It turned cold in the night & became clear.

[47]Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup>.

Morning bright & cold. My dear Delia's twentieth birthday. No letters. I sent a long one to Mr. B. directed to Savannah.

[48]Friday.

All the morning looking over letters. Read some of my mother's written when a girl. Some very clever from Holmes Conrad. Some of Mr. B.'s before our marriage. Tied up 4 bundles that can never have an addition death having put his seal on them since I last [sorted] my letters. C. Moncure[,] Mrs. McLanahan [,] Cousin B. Gordon & Catherine [Wist]. My time will come & then my children will find proofs of my having had friends.

-11-

[49]Saturday.

Letters from Jack & Delia. None from my dear Mr. B. I was sick all day with headache. The girls rode up in the evening<sup>11</sup> to W. Hall & walked back late with Mr. Cain & Colin. Heard that Maria Jones was ill.

[50]Sunday.

Went to church. Saw Mrs. Page. Heard from poor Maria who has lost her little baby. Mary Mann came home with us from church to see Evy. Sent for Dr. C. to see [Fanny/Nancy].

[51]Monday.

At home. Rain. Reading to Mary & Evy. In evening Colin came.

[52]Tuesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Rain & a thunder storm in the night.

-12-

[53]Here ends this diary. My husband & Delia got back;<sup>12</sup> on Thursday the 17<sup>th</sup> of March. My dear Jack got home to stay with us about two months. Then came Unexpected—Death—Grief. Oh what grief--he was taken from us June 1<sup>st</sup>.

---

<sup>11</sup> ["at night" cancelled]

-13-

I have often thought that I would note down for my children & my brother's children something of their grandfather's history. He was born in Aug 20th, 1769 in Rockbridge to: (then Augusta) on Walker's creek at the foot of the Jump Mountain. His father had 8 children, 4 sons and 4 daughters. One son David, (who married, & settled in S. Carolina & afterwards moved to Missouri & was the father of [Mrs. Parston, Mrs. Harper, Mrs. Means, Mrs. Gamble, Mrs. Bates General John D. Coalter & Dr. Beverly Coalter) & two daughters, Mrs. Naylor & Mrs. McPheeters (Mother of Dr. James Augustus McPheeters of Natchez) were older than my father. The other children (James & [Micajaa] who both died unmarried, & Peggy & Polly (the former married Mr. Ward of Kentucky & the latter my mother's brother B. Tucker) are younger. My father's mother was Elizabeth Moore. For an account of the

-14-

[54] Moore family see Virginia Historical Register. She died of consumption when my father was not grown. She was a pious woman, neat & thrifty & well suited to be the wife of a poor man with a large family of children. Her mother was a woman of great piety & firmness. She gave calm & considerate directions for the comfort of those attending her death bed & who would be at her funeral & was found dead with her hand on her own eye lids. It is said that General George Washington closed his own eyes. My grandfather, Michael Coalter, was a brave & sensible man. Once in a

---

<sup>12</sup> [cancelled]

hunting expedition he was bitten in the thick part of the leg by a rattle snake. He was alone & far from home. He instantly cut out the part with his knife & applied the actual cautery from his hunting fire using a coal.

-15-

[55]He then returned home & felt no harm from the poison. On another occasion a neighbor having had both legs & an arm broken by the falling of a tree, my grandfather (there being no surgeon's in that wild country) cut off the broken limbs with a common knife & saw & dressed them & safed the man's life; tho' it was in August that the accident happene'd. The children of this family were trained to habits of industry & economy which so far as I have been able to trace them followed them thro' life. My father received as good an education as the schools of the valley country at that time afforded—learning Latin & a little Greek & mathematicks from Parson Brown. At eighteen years of age he left his father's house dressed in plain homespun with an indifferent horse & saddle & five guineas in his packet. This was his stash in the world. His aim

-16-

[56]was to get to Petersburg where he had a distant relation, with whom he wished to study medecine. This was Dr. Hall of Petersburg. In passing thro' Richmond his interest & curiosity were much roused by the debates in the Legislature which he attended daily 'till his money [was/he] [banded] with the utmost care for he allowed himself nothing to eat but bread & a mug of cider (tho' he took good care of his horse



who, as he said could not feed, as he did, on the debates) was gone--or nearly so. Only once did he break thro' his rule & then on walking thro' the market one morning he saw an old woman with a table before her on which there was something so savory that he asked her what she would charge him for a breakfast. She said nine pence & he ate it with her. He was always out at meal times & only

-17-

[57]went to his lodging house at night. It was a small house at Bacon Quarter branch. On reaching Petersburg Dr. Hall dissuaded my father from studying medecine & told him that he knew a gentleman at that time in want of a teacher for small children who was a lawyer & with whom he could study the law. This was my grandfather St. George Tucker. With him my father engaged & became the teacher of my mother then between 8 & 9 years old & her 2 brothers Henry & Beverly Tucker. My father could not have fallen into better hands. My grandfather Mr. Tucker was a Bermudian. His father Henry Tucker of Port Royal on the Island of Bermuda was; (according to the account that I received from my uncle Mr. John Randolph who had spent some months (I think 2 years ) in Bermuda, at his house & under his care) a most perfect gentleman & a man

-18-

[58]of cultivated mind & literary taste. He had several sons & 2 daughter's all distinguished for intelligence, goodness of natural disposition & a sort of native taste & refinement. My grandfather was the youngest child & came to this country at the

age of 18 to be educated at William & Mary college. His brother Dr. Thomas Tudor Tucker had preceded him & settled in Charleston S.C.. He was made Treasurer of the U.S. by General George Washington when he was made president & continued in that office 'till his death which took place in 1828, a few months before the close of J.Q. Adams' administration. Change & "Rotation in office" had not then become the order of the day. But to return—my grandfather was a man of warm temper & lively affections, highly cultivated mind, refined taste[,] studious habits—a thorough gentleman

-19-

[59]of the old school. Brave & chivalrous to women courteous & gentle in the extreme. Most liberal as a master & as bounteous to the poor as a man could be. In his early days the fashion of the times & perhaps his English training (for the English are more strict with the young than Americans) had made him as I have been told a rigid parent (tho' as the same time a devoted one) but in my day it was not so. I think of him squeezing himself into my baby house to "shown" (sit down) with me", standing in the corner with his face to the wall; because he had affronted me, by calling my Mammy "Black" to tease me, holding me up on his head to the top of his [pars] to get peaches which he had put there for me, singing & teaching my sister & myself to dance in the back passage at Williamsburg & as I grew up as being

-20-

[60]the most loving & tender parent to me. In the society of such a man my father could not but improve. He lived with him several years studying his profession & teaching the children that I have named. And here I would say Chancellor Wythe lived at this time in Williamsburg (to which place my grandfather removed at the death of my grandmother, which occurred soon after my father went to live with him) & I have heard my father say was never too busy to answer any question on which he would consult him, always kindly inviting him to come to him for assistance in his studies tho' laboriously engaged in the duties of his calling & often obliged to deny those who only visited him for pleasure. There was a young woman living with my grandfather named Maria Rhind. She had been brought up by my grand

-21-

[61]mother having been early left an orphan. She was poor. As soon as my father got his licence to practise the law they were married & went to Staunton. They lived in a small house & had no servant but a half grown white girl who was bound to them. My father worked hard. His wife was cheerful, good temperd, industrious & well taught. They lived very plainly but happily. When living at Chatham one night my father was reading the story of some man who had risen from small beginnings to wealth & who was contrasting the quiet of his poor home with the bustle & fatigue of his higher position. I saw my father wipe his eyes & asked what he was reading. He told me & then drew such a picture of the wife of his poverty & his youth as warmed

my heart to her & I resolved to remember her & to transmit her name to my children.  
She died in one year after her marriage at

-22-

[62]the birth of her first child (born dead) & is buried in the Episcopal graveyard  
Staunton. After the death of his wife my father quietly & industriously pursued his  
profession & grew in the confidence of all who knew him. After the lapse of 4 years  
he returned to Williamsburg [,]courted & married a young lady of very superiour  
attainments. She was the daughter of Mrs. Davenport whose early history full of  
romantick incidents has furnished stories for my children who like their mother can  
never forget Grandmama Davenport. This young lady & her mother returned to  
Staunton with my father. She only lived a little more than a year. Her mother lived  
with my father as his mother 'till her death Jan. 1816. This was my father made a  
second time a widower at 28 years of age. Again he remained single 4 years &

-23-

[63]then going back to the place where all of his strongest attachments seem to have  
been formed. He married my mother June 1802. In some respects his union with her  
was most happy. She was affectionate & gay in her temper, witty, clever, of a most  
noble nature, "your mother seemed incapable of a mean thought--she was the noblest  
woman I ever knew" said my father's niece Mrs. Harper to me & she knew her well.  
But her health was always bad & for many years hopelessly bad. By this time from  
industry & uprightness my father had won his way to comfort, independence & high

respectability in his profession. He was first made Circuit Judge & then in the winter of 11-'12 Judge of the Court of Appeals. He spared no expense or trouble for my mother's restoration. At home she had every comfort & indulgence. Every winter he brought her to the low

-24-

[64]country, the mountain climate being two severe & in the heat of the summer carried her to the Springs[,] himself the most tender & untiring of nurses. All was in vain. September 1813, she died at the Red Sulphur Spring in Monroe County. Her remains were brought back to Staunton & lie in the church yard at the side of the orphan reared by her mother & who took care of her after her mothers death. At her feet rest the remains of my only sister Frances Lelia who died aged 18, Aug 11<sup>th</sup>, 1821. Her death had left me very desolate. "We had still slept together, Rose at an instant, learne'd played ate together; and, where so e'er we went, like Juno's Swans, still we went coupled & inseparable." She was of a grave & sensitive nature [pondered] & studious & wise beyond her years. Such a friend was a great blessing to one

-25-

[65]of my volatile nature & her love for me & mine for her was so great that it seemed that we were but one, tho' of 2 natures, which alternately enlivened & controuled each other. I was very ignorant on the subject of religion. My mother was a true Christian but died when I was 8 years old. Grandma D. when I was but little older. My sister however had, thanks be to God, been found out I truly believe by his Spirit

& enabled to put forth a living faith in her Saviour I remember much, which I did not then understand, which leads me to think so.

[66] [In a different hand]

Judge Coalter died at Chatham in February 2, 1838. His Son St. George Tucker [1] died near Chatham at Stafford in Aug. 1839.

Judge Coalter['s] 4<sup>th</sup> marriage was in Jan 31, 1822 to Mrs. Hannah H. Williamson, only daughter of William Jones of Ellwood.

--no issue--

Chapter 4: *Annotations and Textual Notes*

**Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan (25 June 1805-1856)/** Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan was the second daughter of Judge John Coalter and his third wife, Anne Frances Tucker Bryan. As a youth, she grew up at Elm Grove, very close to her sister Frances Lelia, who was two years older, and brother St. George Tucker, born in 1809. She was talented at music and school, had long beautiful hair, and once secretly kept a flying squirrel as a pet. She was nicknamed “Betty Obliging” by her mammy, Aggy, for her pleasant nature and eagerness to please. Her family frequently visited the Virginia Springs owing to the poor health of her mother, who died when she was only eight. She married John Randolph Bryan in 1830, and lived at Eagle Point Plantation with twenty five slaves, purchased by her husband that same year. She was much favored by her maternal uncle, John Randolph of Roanoke, who later left her a carriage and two horses in his will. As an adult, she spent much time reading to and teaching her children (she gave birth to ten, seven living to maturity) John “Jack” Coalter, Randolph “Ran”, St. George, Joseph, Fanny Tucker, Delia, and Georgia. The family also spent summers in their second plantation, Carysbrook, in Fluvanna County. She is buried at Pine Island, a small islet in the river near the Eagle Point property; her daughter Delia Bryan Page closed her eyes in death.

Delia B Page, *Recollections of Home for My Brothers and Children*  
 (Richmond: Wm. Ellis Jones, Printer, 1903), 4, 5, 7, 13, 30, 31, 42, 46, 50,  
 58.

**Eagle Point Plantation, Gloucester County, Virginia**/Eagle Point was home to John Randolph Bryan and Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan and held by the Bryan family from 1830 until 1862. It was previously known as “Vue de l’eau” [view of the water] by Col. John Lewis, the previous owner. A family graveyard resides on Pine Island, a small island in the middle of the river, which was part of the original property. Robert A. Lancaster Jr. *Historic Virginia: Homes and Churches* (1915; reprint Spartanburg: The Reprint Company, 1973), 251 ; “A Paper on the Ante Bellum Period in the Life of Abington Church,” presented at Homecoming on Sunday, August 2, 1959 by R. Mann Page. Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia, MSS2P1453a2.

[i] **JRB**/ John Randolph Bryan (1806- 13 Sept. 1887), husband of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan and married in 1830. He was born in Georgia, son of Joseph Bryan, Godson of John Randolph of Roanoke, who encouraged his match with Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan. He purchased Eagle Point plantation on 11 September 1830 with twenty five slaves. He also read and



taught Latin. He is buried at Pine Island, a small islet in the river near the Eagle Point property Page, *Recollections*, 7, 8, 43, 57.

[1] **Mr. Bryan/** John Randolph Bryan, see [i]

**Delia/** Delia Bryan Page (1833-1903), Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's oldest daughter, twenty years old at the time this diary was composed. She married Dr. Jack Page 30 October 1856. She wrote a book, *Recollections of Home for My Brothers and Children*, in which she described her family history, including collected stories about her mother's youth. She was also the one to close her mother's eyes after her death. Page, *Recollections*, 76, 50.

**Jack Page/** Dr. Jack Page(?-?) was a physician who studied medicine in Paris. He attended school at Eagle Point as a child. He married Delia Bryan 30 Oct 1856 and lived with her at Carysbrook plantation, also owned by the Bryan family. Page, *Recollections*, 76, 72.

**W. Hall/** Warner Hall was the home of the Clark family in Gloucester County, who were neighbors of the Bryans at Eagle Point. The estate dates back to the mid 1600s when it was obtained by Augustine Warner. In

contemporary times, the house was three stories with a basement, and two smaller houses on the property. In 1841 and 1849, fires destroyed the main structure. Lancaster, *Historic Virginia*, 247.

[3] **Mrs. Page**

**Mrs. Curtis**

**Mrs. Selden/** Mrs. Selden was the wife of Henry Selden, and a friend and neighbor. Page, *Recollections*, 80.

**Miss S.**

[6] **Cousin S**

**North Pines**

[7] **Jack/John Coalter Bryan** (?-1 June 1853), was the first child of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan and John Randolph Bryan. He was much favored by his mother. He attended Mr. Coleman's School as a youth, where he took

care of a classmate who had typhoid fever. He was possibly a physician or student of medicine, in a narrative composed by his mother, she mentioned he spent the winter of 1851-1852 at a medical lecture in Richmond. He died a young man of dysentery and typhoid fever in 1853, with his family at his side. Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan, "Recollections, from the Cradle to The Grave, of our first born—our precious Jack," 1 June 1853, Vi Hi, MSS1G8855d171.

**Aunt A.F./** Possibly Aunt Florida, John Randolph Bryan's sister. Page, *Recollections*, 69.

**Jane Bryan/**John Randolph Bryan's sister. Bryan. Page, *Recollections*, 69.

[8] **Church/** Abington Church, a colonial church in Gloucester County. Lancaster, *Historic Virginia*, 254.

[9]

**Daddy Frank/** Daddy Frank was a slave and an old man at the time this diary was written. He traditionally belonged to the oldest of the Bryan

family, who at this time was John Randolph Bryan. Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan took a special interest in him, and made and mended clothes for him. Page, *Recollections*, 41.

**Mrs. Clarke**/Mrs. Clarke was the wife of Colin Clarke, friends and neighbors who lived at Warner Hall where the Bryans often visited. The Clarke children were sent to school at Eagle Point. Page, *Recollections*, 55.

[10]

**Mrs. Byrd**

**Henry Coalter**

**St. George**/Many people in Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's family shared the name St. George. It seems it was most likely her younger brother, St. George Tucker Coalter, born in 1809. Page, *Recollections*, 5.

**Judge Cabell**

[12] **Judy**/ Possibly Aunt Judy Coalter. Page, *Recollections*, 88.

De/ Delia Bryan Page.

- [14] **Georgia**/Georgia Bryan, daughter of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan and John Randolph Bryan. Page, *Recollections*, 7.

**Belle Farm**/Home of Mrs. Taylor, a family friend and neighbor. Page, *Recollections*, 57.

**Mrs. A. Robins**

- [16] **Fanny**/ Frances Tucker Bryan, daughter of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan and John Randolph Bryan. She married Dr. Carmichael on 19 December 1861. Page, *Recollections*, 7.

**Dr. Byrd**

- [17] **Mrs. J. H. Tabb**/ Evelina Matilda Prosser Tabb, of White Marsh in Gloucester County, Virginia. Lancaster, *Historic Virginia*, 242-3.

[21]

**Carrington Cabell**/Possibly Joseph C. Cabell. Page, *Recollections*, 94.

[23] **Miss Jones/** Possibly Miss Maria, the housekeeper. Page, *Recollections*, 49.

[24] **Mrs. Mann**

**Mrs. Roys/**Possibly either Ann or Sue Roy, friends of the Bryan family.

Page, *Recollections*, 49.

[26] **Cousin Kitty**

**Henry C./**Henry Coalter.

**Mrs. Jennett**

**Mrs. [Prosser T.]**Possibly Mrs. Evelina Matilda Prosser Tabb, of White

Marsh in Gloucester County. Lancaster. *Historic Virginia*, 242-3.

[27] **Rose**

**Colin**

[31] **Mrs. Cain**

*en famille.* [French for “with family”]

[33]

**Catherine Randall**/ William Wirt’s daughter, Catharine Wirt Randall, who died in the year 1853. Anya Jabour, *Marriage in the Early Republic: Elizabeth and William Wirt and the Companionate Ideal*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 165.

[mark] following Catherine Randall

**Laura Wirt**/ Laura Wirt was a childhood friend of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan. Page, *Recollections*, 52.

**Wm Wirt and his children, Robert, Henry, Agnes, Rosa & Catherine**/

William Wirt (8 Nov. 1772 - 18 Feb. 1834), politician and lawyer and his wife, Elizabeth Gamble Wirt (30 Jan. 1784 – 1857) were the parents of Robert (d. 1824), Henry (d. 1850), Agnes (d. 1830), Rosa (d. 1849), and

Catherine Wirt (d. 1853). Jabour, *Marriage in the Early Republic*, 10, 15, 119, 145, 161, 166.

[Mrs. Suiant]

[35] Sue Byrd

Mrs. Delaney

**White Marsh/** Home of Mrs. Prosser in Gloucester County, Virginia, She settled the property on her daughter, Evelina Matilda Prosser, who married John Tabb. The home was well known for the terraced garden created by Mrs. Tabb. Lancaster, *Historic Virginia*, 242-3.

[38] **Maria Jones/** Possibly Miss Maria, the housekeeper, See **Miss Jones**, [24].  
Page, *Recollections*, 49.

**Addy**



**P. Page**

[39] **Fanny T**/Fanny Tucker Bryan, Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's daughter.

[40] **Ran**/Randolph Bryan, Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's son.

**E. Magill**/Evy Magill, daughter of Cousin Ann Magill. Page, *Recollections*, 99.

**Mrs. Cabell**/ Mrs. Mary "Polly" Cabell, wife of Joseph C. Cabell and step daughter of St. George Tucker. Page, *Recollections*, 5, 6.

**Ada** [Serene]

**Mr. Gayle**

[41] [**Evy**]/ Evy Magill, daughter of Cousin Ann Magill. Page, *Recollections*, 99.

**Dr. C.**

**F. T./Possibly Fanny Tucker**

[45]      **[Chandler]**

**[Mrs] Kyle**

[48]      **Holmes Conrad**/Holmes Conrad was the husband of Nancy Carr, one of ETCB's childhood friends. He later died in the Civil War. Page, *Recollections*, 52, 91.

**C. Moncure**/Catharine Ambler, wife of Henry Moncure, was one of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's childhood friends. Page, *Recollections*, 52.

**Mrs. McLanahan**/The McLanahans lived at Warner Hall and were neighbors and good friends of the Bryan family at Eagle Point. Page, *Recollections*, 55.

**Cousin B. Gordon**

Catherine [Wist].

[49] **Mr. Cain**

[50] **Mary Mann**

[53]

**Grandfather**/Judge John Coalter (20 Aug. 1769 - 2 Feb.1838), father of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan, lived at Elm Grove in Staunton, Virginia and Bush Hill in Richmond. In 1807 Coalter was judge of the Western District of Virginia, and in 1811 Judge of the Court of Appeals. He studied law under St. George Tucker, and also tutored his children, among them Anne Frances Tucker, who became his third wife and the mother of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan. Page, *Recollections*, 5 ; John Coalter, "Copy of a Sketch of John Coalter," in His Own Hand Writing; Augusta County Historical Society. Its Bulletin. Staunton, Va. v.4, no.2 (1968):17-19.

**Walker's creek**

**Jump Mountain**

**David**/David Coalter, son of Michael Coalter and older brother of John Coalter. He was described by John Coalter as being often in poor health and suffered from rheumatism, making him generally unfit for the occupation of farming. He eventually settled in South Carolina, where his rheumatism eased. Coalter, "Copy of a Sketch of John Coalter," 17-19.

**James**/James Coalter, Michael Coalter's son and older brother of John Coalter. He is described by John Coalter as always being in poor health, and unfit for farming. Coalter, "Copy of a Sketch of John Coalter," 17-19.

**Micajaa**/ Micajaa Coalter

**Peggy**/ Peggy Coalter

**Polly**/ Mary "Polly" Coalter, married to Nathaniel Beverly Tucker, son of St. George Tucker and uncle of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan. [See note "Beverly Tucker" [58] ]

**Mr. Ward**

**B. Tucker**/Nathaniel Beverly Tucker [See note "Beverly Tucker" [58] ]

**Elizabeth Moore**/Elizabeth Moore Coalter, wife of Michael Coalter, paternal grandmother of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan. Bearss, et al eds, *DVB*, 2: 316.

[54] **Michael Coalter**/Michael Coalter was Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's grandfather, and the father of John Coalter, her father. He was a farmer and lived in Rockbridge County, Virginia, on Walker's Creek at the foot of Jump Mountain. He had eight children and two or three slaves, according to accounts of his son, John Coalter. He also fought in skirmishes against the Native Americans in 1774. Coalter, "Copy of a Sketch of John Coalter," 17-19.

[55] **Parson Brown**

[56] **Dr. Hall**

[57] **Bacon Quarter Branch**

**St. George Tucker**/Grandfather of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan, St. George Tucker (10 Jul. 1752-10 Nov. 1828) was born in Bermuda. He was a

lawyer and became law professor in 1790. He was elected judge to the Court of Appeals in 1803, and held this post until 1811. Two years later, he was made federal court judge for Virginia by President James Madison. Additionally, he wrote legal and literary works, and he composed poetry about Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan which was published by her daughter, Delia Bryan Page. Page, *Recollections*, 5, 17, 52, 59. E. Lee Shepard, "Tucker, St. George," *American National Biography*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 21: 907-908.

**Mother**/Mother of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan, Anne Frances Bland Tucker(1779 -12 Sept.1813), half sister to John Randolph of Roanoke. She was tutored by John Coalter as a child, who would become her husband in 1802, and had three children, Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan, Frances Lelia (1803) and St. George Tucker (1809). Also referred to as "Frances". She died of consumption at The Red Sulphur Springs in Monroe County, Virginia. Page, *Recollections*,, 4, 5. Bearss, et al eds. "Coalter, John." *DVB*, 2: 317.

**Henry Tucker**/Henry St. George Tucker (29 Dec. 1780-28 Aug. 1848), was the son of St. George Tucker, grandfather of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan. He was a lawyer in Winchester Virginia, and a U.S. Congressman

from 1815—1819. Cobin, David M. “Tucker, Henry St. George,” *ANB* 21: 894-895.

**Beverly Tucker/** Nathaniel Beverly Tucker (6 Sept. 1784-26 Aug. 1891), was the son of St. George Tucker, grandfather of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan. He married John Coalter’s sister Mary “Polly” Coalter. He was a lawyer in Williamsburg before moving to Missouri where he became a Circuit Court judge. He also wrote two novels, *The Partisan Leader* and *George Balcombe*, both printed in 1836, which advocated secession twenty five years before the Civil War. Robert J. Brugger, “Tucker, Beverly.” *ANB* 21: 891-892. Brent Tarter, “Making History in Virginia,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. Vol. 115, No.1. 2007: 11.

**Henry Tucker of Port Royal/**Henry Tucker, father of St. George Tucker, was a Bermudian merchant. His wife and St. George Tucker’s mother was Anne Butterfield Tucker. Shepard, “Tucker, St. George,” *ANB* 21: 907-908.

**Mr. John Randolph/** John Randolph of Roanoke( 2 Jun. 1773-24 May 1833) was famous Congressman and Virginia statesman, Randolph is most noted for his conservative defense of states’ rights and penchant for caustic gibes

at his political opposition. Also known as “Jack”, he favored his niece, Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan. Her daughter attributed this to Elizabeth as a young child at the family table very politely offering him either coffee or tea to drink, and thus distinguished her as a pleasing and mannerly child. Page, *Recollections*, 32. Robert Dawidoff, “Randolph, John.” *ANB* 21:129-131. Russell Kirk, *John Randolph of Roanoke: A Study in American Politics* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), 2-9.

[58] **Dr. Thomas Tudor Tucker/** Dr. Tucker was the brother of St. George Tucker. In addition to being physician, he represented South Carolina in the Continental, and First and Second Congresses. He was Treasurer of the United States under President Jefferson, not George Washington as the narrative stated. *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=T000403>, accessed 3 Mar. 2008.

[59] **Mammy/** Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan’s Mammy was named Aggy. She gave Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan the nickname “Betty Obliging” because of her eagerness to please. Page, *Recollections*, 13.



[60] **Chancellor Wythe**/Possibly George Wythe, professor of law at the College of William and Mary, colleague of St. George Tucker and instructor of John Coalter. Bearss, et al eds., “Bryan, Joseph.” *DVB*, 2: 316.

**Grandmother**/ Frances Bland Randolph was a widow when she married St. George Tucker with three children from her previous marriage, including John Randolph of Roanoke. She had three children with St. George Tucker, Anne Frances Bland Tucker (Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan’s mother), Henry St. George Tucker(1780-1849) and Nathaniel Beverly Tucker(1784-1851). Page, *Recollections*, 5.

**Maria Rhind**/Also spelled Maria Rind, Maria Rhynd, was the first wife of John Coalter, whom he married in the autumn of 1791. Page, *Recollections*, 5. Bearss, et al eds, “Coalter, John” *DVB*, 2: 316.

[61] **Staunton**/Staunton, Virginia, County Seat of Augusta County located on the edge of the Piedmont

**Chatham**/Chatham, located in Stafford County, was one of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan’s childhood homes, and was also where she was married and had four of her children. A colonial mansion, Chatham in its

long history previous to its Bryan affiliation hosted General George Washington on several occasions during the ownership by William Fitzhugh. The property came into the hands of John Coalter through marriage to his fourth wife, Hannah H. Williamson in 1822, whom he married after the death of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's mother in 1813, when she was eight years old. Page, *Recollections*, 48. Lancaster, *Historic Virginia*, 350.

- [62] **daughter of Mrs. Davenport**/Margaret Davenport, born in 1795 and resided in Williamsburg, noted in Delia Bryan Page's book as dying two years after marriage to John Coalter. Page, *Recollections*, 4.

**Mrs. Davenport**/Grandma Davenport, mother of Margaret Davenport, second wife of John Coalter. Her daughter's death preceded hers, and she continued to live with John Coalter's family until her death in 1816. Bearss, et al eds, "Bryan, Joseph." *DVB*, 2: 316.

- [63] **Mrs. Harper**

- [64] **The Red Sulphur Springs in Monroe County**/One of the many Virginia Springs resorts designed to serve elite clientele and claimed to promote

good health and treat and cure disease. Along with Hot Springs, Red Sulphur Springs gained the reputation for curative treatments. Red Sulphur Springs' waters were discolored by the presence of sulphur and were rumored to have sedative properties. Charlene M. Boyer Lewis, *Ladies and Gentlemen on Display: Planter Society at the Virginia Springs, 1790-1860* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 50, 62.

**Frances Lelia**/ Frances Lelia Coalter, sister and companion of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan in her youth. According to Delia Bryan Page's book, Frances was near-sighted and often in poor health, but also was very studious and wrote poetry. She died at Warm Springs in the Virginia Springs. Page, *Recollections*, 23, 30, 33.

### **Juno's Swans**

[65] **Grandma D./Mrs. Davenport**

[66] **Judge Coalter/John Coalter** [see "Grandfather" [54]]

**St. George Tucker/** Possibly referring to Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's son St. George or Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's brother, St. George Tucker. Page, *Recollections*, 5, 58.

**Mrs. Hannah H. Williamson/**The fourth wife of John Coalter whom he married 14 FEB 1822 who lived at Chatham in Fredericksburg. She was also called "Grandma Chatham" by Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's children. Page, *Recollections*, 5, 49.

**William Jones of Ellwood/**William Jones was the father of Mrs. Hannah H. Williamson, John Coalter's fourth wife. He deeded the Chatham property to John Coalter upon marriage to his daughter. Lancaster, *Historic Virginia*, 350.

Chapter 5: *Life Through a Lens. Concluding a Diary and Elizabeth's Legacy*

*“May God give me grace ever to remember his great mercy! I never had such a sense of his love nor such love for Him as the moment when he was taking my Precious child from me. Those sayings others heard, but ‘his Mother laid them up in her heart’ and has written them for her children.”*

–Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1853.<sup>1</sup>

Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan’s diary entries ended on the day her son, John “Jack” Coalter Bryan died. She also penned a short narrative history of her son, composed on that same day. As is stated at the end of the narrative, as well as the purpose for the historical description of Bryan’s family, her intention was to record these histories for benefit of future generations of her family. It is this purpose that allowed such a clear understanding of her family to emerge from her diary.

No doubt, she never intended that her diary should be seen through the lens of a stranger, nor studied and annotated using the family history her daughter prepared almost fifty years later. Bryan did not mention contemporary names and birthdates, nor record occupants of neighboring estates or plantations, or list her children in birth order and by full name---doubtless, because the immediate recipients of her work would be her children, and possibly her nieces and nephews, who would be intimately familiar with these mundane details.

---

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan, “Recollections, from the Cradle to The Grave, of our first born—our precious Jack” 1 June 1853, (Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia) 4-5.

However, it has passed into the hands of strangers, far from Eagle Point, Gloucester County, and chronologically distant from the Randolphs of Turkey Hill, one of the First Families of Virginia connected to Bryan through her paternal grandmother, Frances Bland.<sup>2</sup> The occupation of liberating her script from the pages of her diary, and supplying annotations for readers to understand the context falls to the documentary editor. It is necessary to root out the unsaid names and places, to piece together how Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's world appeared as she penned her diary, and discover the hidden histories of the correspondents mentioned within the entries.

Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan was an amateur historian, as was her daughter Delia Bryan Page after her. Though their famous relatives, such as St. George Tucker, John Coalter, and John Randolph of Roanoke have been researched and studied by previous historians, personal recollections remain vacant from these works, recollections from a granddaughter, a daughter, and a favorite niece increases our knowledge about these important men as well as the life of Bryan herself. Documentary editing illuminates such personal works, letters, papers, and other written material that enrich the understanding of famous figures. Editing of diaries of little known individuals also supplies a voice to people previously unmentioned in the historical record.

---

<sup>2</sup> Robert. Dawidoff, "Randolph, John." *American National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 21: 129-131.

Though Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan enjoyed the benefits of an elite social status, the wealth of successful plantations, the love and favor of talented and powerful relatives, and the company of her children and friends, her story provides insight into not only her world view, but the personal experiences of her place and time. As historical trends have moved to include women, African Americans, and other forgotten people and places, documentary editing illuminates primary source materials for dissemination and use to a wider audience of researchers, teachers, and interested scholars.

The evidence provided by Bryan's diary serves as a useful example to compare to earlier theories from the authors of antebellum women's history. Catherine Clinton's *The Plantation Mistress* falls within the scope of Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's world, as she was the mistress of Eagle Point plantation, as well as Carysbrook, another of John Randolph Bryan's holdings.<sup>3</sup> Though Bryan recorded the purchases she made for the home as well as chores including sowing peas and tending to the ham, she did not record any of the ennui, desperation, or sense of being trapped in an unsavory life. Her spirituality and sense of duty, as well as a strong commitment to reading and education filled her days with purpose, as well as the regular visiting and correspondence with family and friends. Unlike Clinton's *Mistress*, religion was not used to subjugate slaves or reinforce racial hierarchy, but to

---

<sup>3</sup> Delia B. Page, *Recollections of Home for My Brothers and Children* (Richmond: Wm. Ellis Jones, Printer, 1903), 9.

comfort herself and her family throughout their daily lives and in times of particular sorrow such as at the death of her son, Jack. Bryan was also well educated and highly literate, and valued education in the lives of all her children. As the daughter of a tutor, she passed along her love of reading and knowledge to her children, while Clinton's work decried the lack of education in plantation ladies.<sup>4</sup>

Suzanne Lebsack's *The Free Women of Petersburg* discussed the legal and financial constraints placed on women; it was also ground-breaking in that it focused not on the history of elite women in the Old South, or even women in Virginia, but the experience of women in one town: Petersburg, Virginia. Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's diary not only featured the personal family history of her relations, but provided a glimpse of the neighborhood, and of her friends and her church community in Gloucester County. This specialized local history enhances understanding of a particular geographical area during a given period of time, in this case roughly six months, providing an understanding of place similar to that put forward by Lebsack. While broad themes and theories provide a wider context to compare groups of people of a region, a time period, or economical situation or class station, the study of the Bryan diary and the information presented allows for closer analyses of her specific experience, which can either aid in supporting or rejecting earlier interpretations, and help in developing new ideas about life in the Old South, antebellum Virginia, Gloucester County, or even at Eagle Point plantation.

---

<sup>4</sup> Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 90.



Like Anya Jabour's *Marriage in the Early Republic* and Peg A. Lamphier's *Kate Chase & William Sprague*, Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's diary inherently contains the focus on her individual experiences. Like Lebsack's work, Jabour and Lamphier implemented a smaller focus field, namely two marriage partners. The primary sources used for such works include letters between the couples, and to close family and friends. The Bryan diary can be viewed as a self correspondence, illuminating and recording details of life, the important and the mundane. Though entries such as those containing only references to weather conditions or sentences describing reading aloud to the children, or attending church may appear to be routine and ordinary, they were nonetheless important enough for her to take the time to record them.

The relationship between weather and plantation life is a matter of livelihood, for the crops grown and the time needed for sewing and harvesting. It also represented whether conditions were favorable for travel outdoors, or for visitors to venture to Eagle Point. Church and religion featured prominently in Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan's life. In one of her more expressive entries, she elaborated on the benefit and value of quiet reflection and prayer. During her son Jack's illness, she often conversed with him about God and forgiveness, both with her own prayers, and in comforting and preparing Jack for his approaching death.<sup>5</sup> As the daughter of a

---

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan, "Recollections, from the Cradle to The Grave, of our first born—our precious Jack" 1 June 1853, (Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.)

tutor, one who in fact tutored her mother previous to their marriage, Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan benefitted from an education and an enjoyment for reading she shared with her children. She spent many days reading at home with the children, and in cases where the entries were smaller and only mention of these reading lessons were made, it no doubt was a very valuable experience in her eyes.

Anya Jabour's recent work, *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South*, employed extensive use of the diaries and personal journals of the young women she studied. Combined in a collection of similar sources, works such as *Scarlett's Sisters* add much to the scholarship of understanding the experiences of women in the Old South, or can be expanded through comparisons with women from other states, from the north, or even from other countries.

All scholarship begins at the ground and works upward, from the primary sources to the creation of large works and theories. Where historical interest leads, documentary editing follows: researching and revealing more sources, making connections within existing context and discovering new sources for scholarly interest. As Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Bryan wrote her thoughts and experiences, and those anecdotes from her life and the lives of her relations, she created her personal history. Documentary editors, in a sense, focus the lens on such personal histories, transcribing and annotating, and publishing, disseminating these histories to fuel new and exciting scholarship.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

Bryan, Elizabeth Tucker Coalter. "Recollections, from the Cradle to The Grave, of our first born—our precious Jack," 1 June 1853, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

Bryan, Elizabeth Tucker Coalter Diary, January 8, 1853—June 1, 1853, *Southern Women and Their Families in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Papers and Diaries*. Anne Firor Scott, ed. Series D, Part 1, Reel 1. Bethesda, Md: University Publications of America, 1999. Microfilm.

Coalter, John. "Copy of a sketch of John Coalter in his own Hand Writing." In: Augusta County Historical Society. Its Bulletin. Staunton, Va : 4, no.2 (1968):17-19. Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

Page, Delia B. *Recollections of Home for My Brothers and Children*. Wm. Ellis Jones, Printer, Richmond, VA: 1903.

Scott, Anne Firor, ed. *Southern Women and Their Families in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Papers and Diaries*. Series A-H. Bethesda, Md: University Publications of America, 1999.

### Secondary Sources

A Paper on the Ante Bellum Period in the Life of Abington Church, presented at Homecoming on Sunday, August 2, 1959 by R. Mann Page. Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

Adams, Henry. *John Randolph*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1898.

Ayers, Edward L. "Virginia History as Southern History: The Nineteenth Century." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. 104, (1996): 129-136.

- Bearss, Sara B., John T. Kneebone, J. Jefferson Looney, Brent Tarter, and Sandra Gioia Treadway, eds. "Bryan, Joseph." *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*. 3 Vols. The Library of Virginia, Richmond: 2001.
- Bearss, Sara B., sr. ed. "Coalter, John." *Dictionary of Virginia History*. Richmond, Virginia: The Library of Virginia, 2006.
- Betts, Edwin Morris and James Adam Bear, Jr. eds. *The Family Letters of Thomas Jefferson*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1966.
- Blassingame, John W, ed. et al, *The Frederick Douglass Papers*. 5 Vols. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979-1992.
- Brown, Kathleen M. *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches & Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Brugger, Robert J. "Tucker, Beverly." *American National Biography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 21: 891-892.
- Buckley, Thomas E. *The Great Catastrophe of My Life: Divorce in the Old Dominion*. University of North Carolina Press, 2001.
- Clinton, Catherine. *The Plantation Mistress: Women's World in the Old South*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1982.
- Clinton, Catherine. *The Other Civil War: American Women in Nineteenth Century*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1984.
- Clinton, Catherine and Michele Gillespie eds. *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Clinton, Catherine and Christine Lunardini. *The Columbia Guide to: American Women in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Cobin, David M. "Tucker, Henry St. George," *American National Biography*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 21: 894-895.
- Dawidoff, Robert. *The Education of John Randolph*. New York: Norton, 1979.

Dawidoff, Robert. "Randolph, John." *American National Biography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 21: 129-131.

Diedrich, Maria. *Love Across the Color Lines: Otilie Assing & Frederick Douglass*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1999.

Dunn, Elizabeth Bramm. review of *A Maryland Bride in the Deep South: The Civil War Diary of Priscilla Bond*, edited by Kimberly Harrison, H-Net Reviews. <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/>.(Accessed 1 March, 2008).

Edwards, Laura F. *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Faust, Drew Gilpin. *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Feller, Daniel ed. et al, *The Papers of Andrew Jackson*. 14 Vols. Knoxville, Tn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1980-2007.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

Gillespie, Michele and Catherine Clinton, eds. *Taking Off the White Gloves: Southern Women and Women Historians*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998.

Gundersen, Joan R. Review of: *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*." *Journal of Southern History*. 65, (Aug. 1999): 622-623.

Harlan, Louis et al eds., *The Booker T. Washington Papers*. 14 Vols. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972-1989.

Holland, Patricia G. et al, eds. *The Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*, Microfilm Edition. Del.: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1991.

- Jabour, Anya. *Marriage in the Early Republic: Elizabeth and William Wirt and the Companionate Ideal*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Scarlett's Sisters: Young Women in the Old South*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Kierner, Cynthia. *Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South, 1700-1835*. Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Kirk, Russell, *John Randolph of Roanoke: A Study in American Politics*. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964.
- Kline, Mary-Jo. *A Guide to Documentary Editing*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.
- Lamphier, Peg A. *Kate Chase & William Sprague: Politics and Gender in a Civil War Marriage*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2003.
- Lancaster Jr., Robert A. *Historic Virginia: Homes and Churches*. 1915, reprint. Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1973.
- Lebsock, Suzanne. *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1985.
- Lebsock, Suzanne. "A Share of Honor, Virginia Women 1600-1945," Essay for the *Virginia Women's Cultural Project*, 1984.
- Lewis, Charlene M. Boyer. *Ladies and Gentlemen on Display: Planter Society at the Virginia Springs, 1790-1860*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2001.
- Lewis, Jan. *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Mathias, Frank F. "John Randolph's Freedmen: The Thwarting of a Will." *The Journal of Southern History*. 39, (May, 1973): 263-272.
- Rothman, Joshua. *Notorious in the Neighborhood: Sex and Families Across the Color Line in Virginia, 1878-1861*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

- Russell, Kirk. *John Randolph of Roanoke; a Study in American Politics, with Selected Speeches and Letters*. Chicago: Regnery, 1964.
- Scott, Anne Firor. *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics: 1830-1930*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Shepard, E. Lee "Tucker, St. George," *American National Biography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 21: 907-908.
- Snyder, Terri L. *Brabbling Women: Disorderly Speech and the Law in Early Virginia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- Sokoloff, Alice Hunt. *Kate Chase for the Defense*. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1971.
- Stagg, J.C.A. ed. et. Al, *The Papers of James Madison, Congressional Series*, 17 Vols. Richmond: The University Press of Virginia, 1962-1991.
- Stevens, Michael E. and Steven B. Burg. *Editing Historical Documents: A Handbook of Practice*. New York : AltaMira Press. 1997.
- Tarter, Brent. "Making History in Virginia." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*. 115, (2007): 4-51.
- "Tucker, Dr. Thomas Tudor." *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*.  
<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=T000403>.  
 (Accessed 31 March, 2008).
- Varon, Elizabeth. *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Southern Lady, Yankee Spy: The True Story of Elizabeth Van Lew, A Union Agent in the Heart of the Confederacy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.