

**“For Country and For Home”:
Elite Richmond Women and Changing Southern Womanhood
during the First World War**

Anne Leslie Greenwood

Thesis submitted to the faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State
University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Masters of Arts
in
History

Marian Mollin, Chair
Peter Wallenstein
Kathleen Jones

April 21, 2008
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: World War, 1914-1918 – Women – United States – History, Women –
Virginia – History, Women – Southern States – History, Women and War –
United States – History, Women – United States – History – 20th Century

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ABSTRACT

Using Richmond as a case study, this thesis seeks to answer the following question: what was the effect of the First World War on elite white Richmond women’s roles as southern women? This thesis argues that, while white southern women’s roles had been changing since the Civil War, it was not until World War I that southern women’s traditional roles were challenged by ideas of national patriotism and citizenship. This thesis traces the trajectory of change from the last decades of the nineteenth century, when Richmond women began to join women’s organizations and participate more fully in public life, through World War I. This thesis argues that during the war, national organizations that formed chapters in Richmond challenged the predominant ideas about women’s public responsibilities, which had focused on their city, state, and region. This war relief work with the Red Cross and governmental programs like Liberty Loan drives encouraged women to work beyond traditional domestic roles and challenged conceptions of southern womanhood. This thesis contends that, while some women adapted more fully to these changes, all Richmond women integrated new ideas about national womanhood into their identities, creating a new southern woman who was both southern and American.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many individuals to whom I am greatly indebted for helping me research and write this thesis. First and foremost would be my advisor, Dr. Marian Mollin. I would like to extend to her my gratitude for her guidance during this long and arduous process. Her ability to provide thoughtful critiques draft after draft has been my greatest source of help. Her love of history has provided me with inspiration and encouragement, and I am forever grateful for all the advice she has given to me over the course of writing this thesis. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Peter Wallenstein and Dr. Kathleen Jones, for their many helpful comments on my drafts. Their expertise has added much depth to this thesis, and I am very grateful for their guidance and assistance.

None of this would have been possible without a travel grant from the Virginia Tech Department of History. Thank you to the staff at the Newman Library's Interlibrary Loan Office, the Library of Virginia, and the Virginia Historical Society. Thank you to the Richmond *Times-Dispatch* for allowing me to use two images from the *News Leader*. I would like to express a very special thanks to John Coski and the staff at the Museum of the Confederacy.

Many thanks should be given to my parents, John and Mary Ann Greenwood, and my boyfriend, Steve Skutnik, who read many drafts of my thesis. I'd also like to thank my fellow graduate students Tara Ashley, Paul Lee, Gail Marney, and Karen Mackey for providing moral support when I needed it most. I will forever be grateful to Leslie Williams for reading my drafts, providing insightful criticism, and for acting as a sounding board. Finally, I'd like to thank the park managers and staff at Historic Oak View County Park for their coffee and encouragement: Emily Catherman, Sara Drumheller, Nealy Andrews, John Jackson, Jenny Litzelman, Kaitlin Lloyd, and Jim McPherson.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCL – Co-ordinate College League
CEA – Cooperative Education Association
CMLS – Confederate Memorial Literary Society
DAR – Daughters of the American Revolution
ESL – Equal Suffrage League
IVNA – Instructional Visiting Nurses Association
NCF – National Civic Federation
NLWS – National League for Woman’s Service
UCV – United Confederate Veterans
UDC – United Daughters of the Confederacy
VAOWS – Virginia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage
VWRA – Virginia War Relief Association
WAWCCS – Woman’s Auxiliary, War Camp Community Service
WCCND – Woman’s Committee, Council of National Defense
WCTU – Woman’s Christian Temperance Union
WPP – Woman’s Peace Party
YWCA – Young Woman’s Christian Association

INTRODUCTION

After the First World War, Henrietta F. Williams, chairman of the Hospital Supplies Committee of the Richmond Chapter, American Red Cross, filed a report with the Virginia War History Commission.¹ In the report, she detailed the work of her committee, praising the “enthusiastic and whole-hearted” cooperation of its voluntary workers. Some of those volunteers were young society women who attended training in Washington, D.C., in order to assist workroom supervisors. Others were “enthusiastic, eager, but decidedly amateur” needlewomen who spent long hours in Red Cross workrooms mending pajamas.² Williams’ report is evidence of elite white Richmond women’s commitment to the war effort. In many ways, their voluntary work making bandages and other hospital supplies echoed their work during the Civil War. Yet, they also participated in many activities that were new to them, from working long hours to accepting hands-on supervisory positions. The First World War gave Richmond women the opportunity to engage in new activities that often tested white southern women’s traditional roles. Despite the challenges, Richmond women embraced what one member of the Virginia Council of Defense called a “universal spirit of patriotism” that propelled them into difficult wartime activities.³ For Richmond women, their efforts during World War I marked a changing point in their lives as southern woman and as American women.

¹ The Virginia War History Commission was created in January 1919 by Governor Westmoreland Davis to survey the extent of Virginia’s participation during the Great War. Each of Virginia’s 100 counties and 21 independent cities had local branches established to collect information, though not every county submitted detailed records of their wartime service. Fortunately, the Richmond branch kept very good records detailing many aspects, from participation in war relief work to economic and agricultural conditions in the city, who was drafted, and the occupations of nearly every white Richmond housewife. See also Virginia War History Commission, 1917-1931, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia (hereafter LVA).

² “History of the Hospital Supplies Committee,” Virginia War History Commission, 1917-1931, Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) Economic Conditions and the Red Cross, Box 75 Folder 38, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

³ Rosewell Page, “The Social Life of Richmond during the World War,” Virginia War History Commission, 1917-1931, Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) Economic Conditions and the Red Cross, Box 75 Folder 26, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

Using Richmond, Virginia as a case study, this thesis examines the changing nature of southern womanhood during World War I. The participation of elite and middle class white women in women's clubs, Progressive reforms, and memorial societies in the years following the Civil War gave them new agency but allowed them to retain their distinct southern heritage. With America's entrance into the First World War, however, the conventions of southern womanhood were challenged by the country's intense national patriotism, which manifested itself in southern women's participation in war relief activities that incorporated them into the national war effort. From food conservation to charity social events, they supported the war effort in ways that embraced traditional gender roles while simultaneously testing them. Richmond women's actions and words during the Great War demonstrate how white southern women's roles had changed after the Civil War and would change further as they became new southern women.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Richmond and the South

The course of the US South was irrevocably altered with the Civil War. In the decades after the war, the southern states underwent a reconstruction that allowed some ideas, like the growth of industry and the development of an urban middle class, to flourish and redefine the region. At the same time, however, racist beliefs about the proper place of recently freed slaves within southern society caused other ideas, like civil rights and racial equality, to fail. In the midst of all of this was the lingering memory of the Confederacy, perpetuated by Confederate memorial societies and epitomized in the idea of the Lost Cause.

Soon after the Civil War ended, the former Confederate states began a period of military reconstruction that resulted in the upheaval of southern society and spurred significant economic, political, and social changes. After the war, many ambitious manufacturers and businessmen set up new factories in the southern states. By the end of the nineteenth century, the region was well on its way to becoming the “New South,” a nickname it earned as it underwent significant changes. Gone were the days of a strictly agrarian economy, limited industry, and truncated railroad lines. By the end of the nineteenth century, the South grew into an important business and manufacturing center with well-developed transportation routes.⁴ The economic boom and arrival of new businesses also created an urban middle class in southern cities. This “better class” of businessmen and professionals differed from the manufacturing elites and remnants of the planter class in their new status and lack of old social networks, yet they still held significant political and economic power compared to the working classes.⁵ The comfortable standard of living that the middle class possessed allowed middle class men and women to pursue club membership and other public activities in their leisure time. All of these economic changes helped propel the South forward from its antebellum past into the twentieth century.

The New South was marked by more than just the growth of business and a new middle class, as race relations remained delicate between newly emancipated African Americans and the white population. While African-Americans gained political power and some civil rights during military reconstruction, their opponents sought to overturn the changes by the end of the nineteenth century. Fueled by intense racism and a desire to reclaim political control, southern

⁴ C.Vann Woodward, *The Origins of the New South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1951) 107-141.

⁵ Janette Thomas Greenwood, *Bittersweet Legacy: The Black and White “Better Classes” in Charlotte, 1850-1910* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994) 5, 15; Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

Democrats created a racial discourse that condemned their former slaves as violent savages whose very presence threatened white women and, as a result, white society.⁶

By setting white women as the epitome of the white race and emphasizing their purity and virtue, white southern men were able to create a discourse of white supremacy that used miscegenation fears to regain political power. As a result, by the end of the nineteenth century African-American citizens across the South lost many of the rights they gained through Reconstruction to the *de jure* segregation of Jim Crow laws, which took many forms like disenfranchising black voters and encouraging lynch mobs. The vigilante justice reinforced white men's belief in their racial superiority, as well as defined white women's own position in southern society as the postbellum equivalent of their pure and modest antebellum ancestors. This belief also influenced how white women viewed their femininity and conducted their public work. Many elite female reformers strongly believed their social work for the benefit of poor black men and women was a way for them to help those who could not help themselves.⁷

In the midst of both industrial growth and racial segregation, the legacy of the Confederacy lingered in the public's consciousness. As white southerners struggled to understand the loss of the Civil War amidst the changes of Reconstruction, many sought solace in remembering the antebellum South. By romanticizing the antebellum years as a special time and place that the Confederate Army had sought to protect, southerners developed the idea of the Lost Cause, a "southern civil religion" created to make peace with defeat.⁸

⁶ Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

⁷ Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jesse Daniels Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).

⁸ Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980).

Southerners sought to remember the Confederacy by memorializing its valiant leaders and humble soldiers. This began after the war, as elite southern ladies formed memorial societies to bury the Confederate dead in their home states. Soon, ladies memorial societies and Confederate veterans associations formed. They erected statues and participated in elaborate memorial services to commemorate important battles. Elite white women played a significant role in remembering the Confederacy, as it was a socially acceptable way for them to participate in public activities. It also significantly affected the other activities they engaged in. The formation of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), the premier society for memorializing the Lost Cause, had a tremendous impact because all white southern women of good standing and Confederate ties were eligible to join. Participation in UDC activities was acceptable because in their efforts, southern women did their own part to help rebuild southern society after the war.⁹

In many ways, Richmond, the capital city of Virginia, embodied all the attributes of the New South, from its place as a prosperous city to its racial segregation and remembrance of Confederate history. Located on the James River, which flows into the Chesapeake Bay and provides access to the Atlantic Ocean, the city acted as a transportation center for north-south trade as well as trader further west through its many tributaries. Antebellum Richmond was home to many flour, tobacco, iron and metal manufacturers. Postbellum, the rebuilding of industries, such as Tredegar Iron Works, as well as repairing of railroad tracks and introduction

⁹ Nancy Angelyn Parrott, “‘Love Makes Memory Eternal’: The United Daughters of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia, 1897-1930,” M.A. Thesis, University of Virginia 1989; Karen L. Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).

of new businesses like banking, helped Richmond retain its status as a major southern city in the early twentieth century.¹⁰

Like other southern cities after the Civil War, Richmond dealt with racial tension. In the decades after the war, a black middle class established itself in the city, forming churches, mutual aid societies, and fraternal organizations. Prominent leaders arose, including Maggie Lena Walker, president of Saint Luke's Penny Savings Bank and first female bank president in the nation. Richmond society in the early twentieth century was segregated and, in many ways parallel, as elite black Richmond women engaging in public activities similar to those undertaken by elite white Richmond women. Elite white women internalized the racial superiority preached by white supremacy, however, as they worked for, rather than with, the African American community. Even suffragists like Lila Meade Valentine, who was forward-thinking in nearly all her actions, believed the city's black population unable to help themselves without white assistance.¹¹ Some elite white women, like Women's Club founder Mary-Cooke Branch Munford, wanted interracial cooperation, but she remained in the minority as Richmond society remained separated well into the twentieth century.¹²

Memories of the Lost Cause lingered in Richmond well into the twentieth century, as the former capital city of the Confederacy sought to preserve its legacy. Women played an important role in this effort, forming memorial societies such as the Ladies Hollywood Memorial Association to maintain the graves of those interred in Hollywood Cemetery, the city's most

¹⁰ Steven J. Hoffman, *Race, Class, and Power in the Building of Richmond, 1870 – 1920* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., Publishers, 2004), 5.

¹¹ Marjorie Spurill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1993), 104.

¹² Sandra Gioia Treadway, *Women of Mark: A History of the Woman's Club of Richmond, Virginia 1894-1994* (Richmond: The Library of Virginia, 1995), 47; Lewis Randolph and Gayle T. Tate, *Rights for a Season: The Politics of Race, Class, and Gender in Richmond, Virginia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003).

prestigious burial ground.¹³ By the end of the nineteenth century, these women also formed the Confederate Memorial Literary Society (CMLS), whose sole purpose was to transform the White House of the Confederacy into a Confederate museum.¹⁴ This was not the sole Confederate memorial society in the city, however, as by 1896 a chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy also formed in the city.¹⁵ In addition, there were numerous veterans' organizations with ladies auxiliaries. These organizations remembered the Confederacy in its former capital by erecting monuments to General Robert E. Lee and Confederate President Jefferson Davis on Monument Avenue, a prominent street that would soon become the beacon of Confederate memory.¹⁶ Nearly every elite white Richmond woman participated in the UDC because of her own Confederate legacy.¹⁷

Elite white Richmond women were similar to their counterparts elsewhere in the South in that their lives followed socially acceptable routes. Most women mentioned in this thesis were married or widowed housewives, with their work restricted to voluntary participation in clubs, memorial societies, and some other community organizations. Very few were librarians or teachers or belonged to other professions. Elite women possessed the economic means to forgo work and join women's associations in their free time. Born into established Richmond families, they were educated at prestigious female seminaries and southern women's colleges. Their husbands were doctors, lawyers, druggists, and politicians. Most of these women identified themselves as housekeepers, though they usually employed cooks and servants to take care of the majority of domestic duties. Elite Richmond women were conservative, both politically and

¹³ Ladies' Hollywood Memorial Association, *Our Confederate Dead* (Richmond: Ladies Hollywood Memorial Association, 1916) 10.

¹⁴ Confederate Memorial Literary Society Papers, Eleanor S. Brockenbrough Library, The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia (hereafter MOC).

¹⁵ Parrott, "Love Makes Memory Eternal," 25.

¹⁶ Peter Wallenstein, *Cradle of America: Four Centuries of Virginia History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007) 275.

¹⁷ Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*.

socially: even in their pursuit of suffrage, they embraced southern social conventions such as gentility and white supremacy.¹⁸

When war was declared on April 6, 1917, Richmond had a population of roughly 155,000, with thirty-two percent being African American. There were 138 churches, 42 public schools, 19 banks and 16 hotels throughout the city.¹⁹ Beginning in 1916, local relief organizations had days set aside to collect donations, directed by the War Relief Association which handled local work. By January 25, 1917, the Virginia Commission on Belgian Relief had collected \$450,990.53, an exceptional amount that would be exceeded during the war.²⁰ When Congress declared war in April 1917, Richmond had sixteen National Guard units, as well as a Home Guard for the city.²¹

Changing Womanhood, North and South

The lives of American women changed in the late nineteenth-century with the expansion of urban areas, an influx of foreign-born immigrants, the rise of the middle-class, and growth of industry as well as labor unions. With these changes, it became socially acceptable for women to attend college and embark on new careers as social workers or teachers. Some women also agitated for social reforms such as suffrage and prohibition on local and national levels. New domestic technology made household chores easier, and as family incomes increased, women hired servants to help with domestic chores -- an indulgence which gave them time to join literary societies and women's clubs. At the end of the nineteenth century, American women

¹⁸ Treadway, *Women of Mark*; Virginia War History Commission, 1917-1931, Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) War Work and Relief Organizations, State Records Collection, LVA; United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection, MOC.

¹⁹ Arthur Kyle Davis, *Publications of the Virginia War History Commission Source Volume VII: Virginia Communities in War Time, Second Series* (Richmond: Virginia State Government, 1927), 254.

²⁰ Davis, *Virginia Communities in Wartime*, 250.

²¹ Davis, *Virginia Communities in Wartime*, 282.

found that their perceptions of themselves had changed. Artist Charles Gibson personified the independence, confidence, and fearlessness of the “New Woman” with his famous “Gibson Girl.” Dressed in sporty clothes, she embodied the changing lives of American women – and, coincidentally, was modeled on Irene Langhorne, Gibson’s wife, who was from a prestigious Virginia family.²²

Southern women of the early twentieth century, in contrast, were defined by strict gender roles rooted in nineteenth-century ideals. Southern society prior to the Civil War had perpetuated a vision of womanhood that made white women dependent upon and submissive to white men. The ideal “Southern Lady” was expected to be innocent and obedient, perpetuating the idea of southern women’s modesty and virtue in all her actions. She was loyal to her husband, and did not openly care for public activities, such as politics, which were deemed the realm of men. This constructed ideal of southern femininity often deviated from the truth. White southern ladies married for either convenience or love, bore their husbands children, and took on subordinate positions within their households. As wives and mothers, they had many responsibilities, from managing slaves and other household staff to overseeing their children’s education. Wives of yeomen farmers joined their husbands in the fields, while wives of plantation owners did not, yet all southern women understood that their duties were primarily domestic. They used their modesty and domesticity to participate in benevolent activities like

²² Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000); Gail Collins, *America’s Women: Four Centuries of Doils, Drudges, Helpmakes, and Heroines* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003); Jean A. Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman: The Women’s Movement in America, 1875-1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Publishing, 2003); Kathy L. Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn of the Century New York*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Nancy A. Hewitt and Suzanne Lebsack, eds. *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993) The “New Woman,” a reaction to Victorian gender roles, came with some caveats. Race and class often restricted women’s ability to attend college or participate in clubs, though it did not prevent women from engaging in new leisure activities which came with increased public activities. New York City, Chicago, and other urban centers attracted numerous organizations and allowed for endless possibilities unavailable to rural women. Furthermore, not all “new women” pushed for liberal reforms such as suffrage and sexual freedom, choosing to remain conservative in their political beliefs.

charities, which were appropriate extensions of women's nurturing instincts. This idealized Southern Lady defined the standards by which elite white southern women lived by, though it did not always explain the intricacies of their lives. While southern women adhered to this archetype, they often expressed dissatisfaction and sought more education and public activities.²³

The Civil War changed the lives of southern women on the home front in many ways. White women on farms and plantations whose husbands fought in the war often assumed their husbands' responsibilities, such as running the estates and handling finances. The advancing Union Army and subsequent loss of slaves also changed the domestic lives of southern women, from urban ladies to plantation mistresses, who all struggled without household help. After the war, in the midst of devastation, all southern women found themselves in a state of flux as they reevaluated their view of themselves, their families, their domestic responsibilities, and the cost of war on their lives.²⁴

One change after the Civil War was elite white women's entrance into wage work. During the Civil War, many women sought employment in order to feel useful, demonstrating a newfound self-sufficiency developed through wartime situations. Teaching was one of the first professions to open to southern women due to shortages of male educators. Nursing, a predominantly male profession prior to the war, also needed women workers as the war sent available male nurses into battle. Soon, hospital administrators and doctors relied on women's nurturing and compassionate nature to help tend to wounded soldiers. Southern women's new

²³ Elizabeth R. Varon, *We Mean to be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Carol Bleser, eds. *In Joy and In Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South, 1830-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

²⁴ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, ed. *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

opportunities, however, threatened the very beliefs of southern society. In receiving money for their actions, southern women tested the boundaries of southern gender conventions that dictated female dependency on male support.²⁵ While work was an option for many young women, not all entered into paid employment. The after effects of the war would be felt for years to come, as the staggering loss of young men resulted in a generation of women without husbands.²⁶ Because of this, many of these single women were forced to support themselves through work. Some women did marry and start families. All white southern women of the middle and upper classes had the opportunity to join women's organizations and receive better educations.²⁷

The club movement was slow to take root in the South, as southern men and women often perceived clubs and other women's organizations as a threat to female domesticity and, in turn, southern society.²⁸ Clubs seemed extravagant wastes of time in a society that stressed the importance of women's domestic duties. Many southern women identified themselves as housekeepers, whose unpaid work centered on household chores and attending to their families. They legitimized their participation outside of their household by referring to their involvement as "municipal housekeeping," turning their public activities into an extension of women's domestic chores.²⁹ Missionary and philanthropic work became part of municipal housekeeping,

²⁵ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 24, 83-94; Jane Turner Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865-1895* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003).

²⁶ Jane Turner Censer discusses Robert Kenzer's study of Virginia's Civil War widows, stating that after the war they married men much older or much younger than themselves. Censer also discusses how many daughters of Virginia's elite families of age after the war remained unmarried, demonstrating that the casualties of the war made it impossible for many women to marry. See Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood*, 32.

²⁷ Grace Elizabeth Hale, "'Some Women Have Never Been Reconstructed': Mildred Lewis Rutherford, Lucy M. Stanton, and the Racial Politics of White Southern Womanhood, 1900-1930." In *Georgia in Black and White: Explorations in the Race Relations of a Southern State, 1865-1950* ed. John C. Inscoe (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994).

²⁸ While Sorosis, the first woman's club, was founded in New York in 1868, the earliest clubs in the South formed in the 1880s. Most social movements, like suffrage and clubs, seemed to lag behind in the southern states. This might be due to the region's strict cultural constructions of women's roles. See Green, *Southern Strategies*, 23

²⁹ Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 141-142; the term "municipal housekeeping" defined activities women undertook within their communities. They were encouraged by reformers and social workers like Jane Addams, who believed women's

though memorial societies remained ways that women participated in rebuilding southern society through remembering the past. Participation in municipal housekeeping and memorial societies did not remove women from the household for frivolous reasons, whereas clubs that focused on entertainment and self-enrichment seemed to pose an overt threat to women's home life.³⁰ Confederate memorial societies were the one exception because of their prominence in southern culture.

By the early twentieth century, white southern women's lives had undergone significant change. They had joined clubs and other women's organizations, accepted waged work, and engaged in public activities. These changes would continue during the twentieth century as many events including the First World War, the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, and other social and cultural changes, propelled them forward.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

In order to understand southern women's changing identity, it is important to survey the historical literature on American women during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, concentrating on their organizations, their public activities, and the idea of the "New Woman". It is also important to understand the similarities and differences of southern women's experiences during the same time period, which were directly influenced by their regional concerns, including Confederate memorialization and racial segregation.³¹ Finally, in order to

duties could no longer be contained within their home. This new focus resulted from the problems that arose as urban areas grew.

³⁰ Scott, *The Southern Lady and Natural Allies*; Joan Marie Johnston, *Southern Ladies, New Women: Race, Region and Clubwomen in South Carolina, 1890-1930* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004); Janet L. Coryell, Thomas H. Appleton, Jr., Anastatia Sims, Sandra Gioia Treadway, eds., *Negotiating Boundaries of Southern Womanhood: Dealing with the Powers That Be* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000).

³¹ The word "region" can serve to represent many things. In this thesis, I will use "region" when referring to states within a specific geographic area – in this case, the U.S. South. These states, from Texas east through Virginia,

contextualize southern women's experience with war, it is important to survey their Civil War involvement as well as the involvement of American women in World War I.

American Women

Numerous monographs exist on topics like working women, educated women, African-American women, immigrant women, socialist women, Progressive women, suffragists and anti-suffragists, advocates for labor reform and birth control. Most of the historical literature on the "New Woman" concentrates on women in northern cities who held jobs, attended college, involved themselves in social reforms such as temperance, suffrage, or settlement work, and belonged to women's organizations. While the scholarship on American women in the early twentieth century continues to grow, one area of interest for this thesis is the literature on women's voluntary associations.

Voluntary associations, historians argue, served several purposes. Karen J. Blair argues in *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914*, that women's clubs acted as feminist institutions since they promoted women's activities and involvement outside the domestic sphere. They also fostered education, friendship, and autonomy for women.³² Some associations, specifically anti-vice societies and suffrage organizations, had an obvious political agenda, while others such as women's literary clubs existed for social reasons, not political activism. In *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History*, Anne Firor Scott argues that women joined these organizations to become politically active while

share a unique heritage in that they once composed the Confederate States of America. As such, the word "region" applies to both their geographic location and their heritage.

³² Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1980).

disenfranchised.³³ While here is a history of women's involvement in benevolent organizations for political purposes, women's own desire for self-enrichment contributed to their club participation.

Reform societies such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union promoted very different agendas from women's cultural and literary societies, focusing on social change and moral responsibility instead of self-improvement. For example, Ruth Bordin's *Women and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* surveys one of the most important women's organization of the late nineteenth century, the WCTU. Bordin argues that the WCTU provided women with a voice for social activism while acting as a vehicle for social change, stressing the importance of the organization in the lives of American women. Women's desire to advocate for social change led many women into progressive politics, as Theda Skocpol examines in *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origin of Social Policy in the United States*. Skocpol argues that the movement towards maternalist social policy, as advocated by elite women concerned for working class mothers, demonstrated a new emphasis on women and politics in social reform. American women used both direct ways, like the WCTU, and indirect ways, like some women's clubs, to push for change.³⁴

The literature on American women often focuses on northern cities, and can sometimes forget to incorporate southern women into the national narrative. A separate and equally rich body of literature on southern women also presents regional studies of southern women's changing lives after the Civil War. As a result, scholarship on both American women and southern women tends to neglect the nuances of southern women's identities as American

³³ Scott, *Natural Allies*.

³⁴ Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873- 1900* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981); Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origin of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1992).

women.

Southern Women

Like the literature on the “New Woman,” the historiography on southern women covers a broad range of topics, from African American women to white women, working-class women to social reformers, from Texas to Virginia. Many historians focus their research on white southern women of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century who engaged in new public activities such as municipal housekeeping or social reforms. Southern women’s historians agree that women’s associations played a major role in women’s lives regardless of their geographic location. While clubs and organizations enabled southern women to transition easily from their domestic sphere to public life, they kept their objectives and goals within the socially acceptable boundaries of southern women’s roles.

The Civil War marks a point of transition in white southern women’s lives. In *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930*, Anne Firor Scott’s groundbreaking 1970 monograph, she argues that the challenges of the Civil War provided southern women with the opportunity to assume new roles and responsibilities, like club work. Widespread post-war poverty, the staggering casualties of a war which claimed a generation of young men, and lack of household servants forced more women into activities and employment outside the home, an argument Jane Turner Censer echoes in *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865-1895*. Censer argues that privileged southern women born after 1820 developed a new economic self-sufficiency as part of their experience during the war. They also participated in public activities, such as voluntary associations, and women’s clubs, and even traveled more than

their mothers and grandmothers.³⁵ Yet, in *Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction*, Laura F. Edwards finds elite women used antebellum gender norms, especially women's domestic roles, to comprehend their changing lives. As evidenced by these studies, elite white southern women oscillated between embracing their new opportunities, and reclaiming stability through domesticity.³⁶

Historians also study the intersections of race and femininity, especially as it relates to southern society. In *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896 to 1920*, Glenda Gilmore demonstrates how the racial discourse created by white men restricted white women's public involvement to socially acceptable activities, while giving African American women more space to work for change, since the discourse did not apply to them.³⁷ Surveying the literature on white southern women and white supremacy demonstrates how white supremacy greatly defined southern womanhood for both white and black women. In *The Power of Femininity in the New South: Women's Organizations in North Carolina, 1880-1930*, Anastatia Sims argues that white and black women aspired to true southern womanhood found in the idealized version of the "Southern Lady", but while white women used it to justify their endeavors outside the home, black women used it to break down racial barriers in the South. The political power of femininity and the Southern Lady helped the Democratic government justify white supremacy, and kept elite white women within socially acceptable roles.

³⁵ Censer, 10, 15, 178-181.

³⁶ Laura F. Edwards, *Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

³⁷ Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920*.

Almost every aspect of white southern womanhood was affected by white supremacy, from the southern suffrage movement to women's clubs.³⁸ According to Marjorie Spurr Wheeler's *New Women of the New South*, the first and second generation of southern suffragists embraced their roles as attractive, well-bred, and intelligent elite white women, the epitome of southern womanhood. They also embraced the racial rhetoric and white supremacist beliefs of their male counterparts. To many white suffragists, granting white women's suffrage was a way to keep African-American men and women disenfranchised. To anti-suffragists, preventing female suffrage was another way to keep African-Americans disenfranchised. Elna C. Green argues in *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* that white supremacy influenced the suffrage movement, with anti-suffragists seeking to preserve the Lost Cause of the South from northern progressive ideals espoused by their pro-suffrage counterparts.³⁹

Race was not the only characteristic that defined southern womanhood, as Confederate memorialization and commemoration helped create southern identity. After the war, historians argue, ladies memorial associations like the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) exerted tremendous influence on elite southern women's public activities. Karen J. Cox argues in *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* that UDC members formed identities as southern women based on Confederate identity, which Joan Marie Johnson agrees with in *Southern Ladies, New Women: Race, Region and Clubwomen in South Carolina, 1890-1930*. What Johnson finds remarkable about progressive southern clubwomen was how they blended their social reform work with the Lost Cause in an attempt to justify their new public engagement. The UDC and similar

³⁸ Anastatia Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South: Women's Organizations and Politics in North Carolina, 1880-1930* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997).

³⁹ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*; Green, *Southern Strategies*.

organizations rationalized their reform work using Lost Cause rhetoric to reinforce white supremacy and build southern group identity, a tactic used in the suffrage movement as well.⁴⁰

The literature on upper and middle class southern women surveys an impressive range of activities from municipal housekeeping to the United Daughters of the Confederacy. This historical scholarship also considers the affects of the Civil War and Reconstruction in white southern women's lives. The result is a portrait of a southern lady in flux clinging to the memory of the Confederacy and southern tradition while experimenting with new ideas like women's clubs and suffrage organizations. Southern women who belonged to conservative organizations like the UDC are characterized as socially conservative, even though that is not universally true. Because many monographs focus on spans of thirty to fifty years, events like World War I can be lost in the process. The specificity of these monographs also prevents the contextualization of southern women and their peers throughout the United States. By dwelling on the uniqueness of southern women, some analysis is lost – something which this thesis hopes to regain.

Women and War

Much of what created white southern women's identity in the twentieth century was forged during the Civil War. With homes near battlegrounds, their experiences were different from their northern peers. Historians often consider war to be a “gendering” experience in that it reinforces idealized gender roles of men as warriors and women as nurturers, but at the same

⁴⁰ Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*; Johnson, *Southern Ladies, New Women*.

time, it also upset gender roles by leaving women behind on the home front, giving them typically male duties to perform.⁴¹

The American Civil War changed southern life not only because of the potential husbands lost, but because of the new tasks southern women took on during the war. In *The Southern Lady*, Scott argues that during the war, elite white southern women worked to support themselves and their families as well as the Confederacy's soldiers. In *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*, Drew Gilpin Faust studies the effect of the Civil War on elite white women, arguing that the war led to personal transformations through war work, home front struggles, love and loss. While elite southern women did become more independent, Faust believes they never shook the vestiges of their elite past, including retaining their paternalistic beliefs about race and gender. Laura F. Edwards also finds southern women retaining their elite heritage in *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era*. Edwards argues that their entire lives had been disrupted by war, and all that was left were kinship and community ties.⁴²

Like the Civil War, the First World War also tested American women's resolve, sending men abroad in large numbers to fight in a foreign conflict.⁴³ Barbara Steinson's *American Women's Activism in World War I* primarily surveys the Women's Peace Party (WPP), the peace movement, and its leaders. Steinson also analyses the preparedness movement, which encouraged militarization. Analyzing both federal departments such as the Woman's Committee, Council for National Defense (WCCND) and private organizations such as the

⁴¹ Margaret Randolph Higgonnet, eds., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) 20.

⁴² Faust, *Mothers of Invention*.

⁴³ American soldiers had fought in Cuba during the Spanish-American war, as well as in the Philippines afterwards, but the scale and scope of the Great War made the conflict unique. See Kristin L. Hoganson's *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

National League for Woman's Service (NLWS), Steinson explores the constant conflict between organizations vying to be the leading women's wartime organization in the United States during the war. Contrasting the preparedness movement with the peace movement presents a portrait of the activities of women from 1914 through the Armistice.⁴⁴ William J. Breen's *Uncle Sam at Home: Civilian Mobilization, Wartime Federation, and the Council of National Defense, 1917-1919*, focuses on the Council of National Defense and the home front. Breen analyzes the Woman's Committee, the ladies auxiliary to the Council, demonstrating the intricacies of a federal agency that did not have a clear explanation of its duties. Breen uses the Illinois State Woman's Committee as an example, but its work outshone most other state committees, especially those in the South, Breen's analysis opens up interesting questions about state Woman's Committees that regional and local studies can hopefully answer.⁴⁵

Several historians have done studies of women who served overseas during World War I. *Into the Breach: American Women Overseas in World War I*, by Dorothy Schneider and Carl J. Schneider, Susan Zeiger's *In Uncle Sam's Service: Women Workers with the American Expeditionary Force, 1917-1919*, and Lettie Gavin's *American Women in World War I: They Also Served* examine the women who volunteered to serve abroad, either as auxiliary members of the military or with the Red Cross and Salvation Army. According to historians, these women came from elite families, and chose to work overseas for excitement and adventure - a dramatic departure for many women, as it not only sent them abroad but also placed them in a war zone.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Barbara Steinson, *American Women's Activism in World War I* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1982).

⁴⁵ William J. Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home: Civilian Mobilization, Wartime Federation, and the Council of National Defense, 1917-1919*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984).

⁴⁶ Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider, *Into the Breach: American Women Overseas in World War I* (New York: Viking Press, 1991); Lettie Gavin, *American Women in World War I: They Also Served* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1997); Susan Zeiger, *In Uncle Sam's Service: Women Workers with the American Expeditionary Force, 1917-1919*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

Another area of discussion for historians of the First World War is working class women and their involvement in war industries. Maurine Weiner Greenwald's monograph, *Women, War and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women's Work in the United States*, argues that while many women accepted new work during the war, prewar employment trends foreshadowed how women were employed during the war, specifically in regard to how management tactics and organized labor hired and dismissed women over the course of the war. Certain jobs, like telephone operators, were more open to women's employment, while others like the railroads were not. Carrie Brown's publication *Rosie's Mom: Forgotten Women Workers of the First World War* compares World War I wage workers with their counterparts during World War II, arguing that the scale of World War II causes the contributions of women workers during the First World War to go largely unnoticed. Both of these monographs focus very broadly on the experiences of women in paid work.⁴⁷

Another topic studied by women's historians is the emphasis on patriotism and sedition. During the First World War, ideas about the role of a loyal citizen underwent scrutiny, as Kathleen Kennedy describes in *Disloyal Mothers and Scurrilous Citizens: Women and Subversion During World War I*. Kennedy examines Kate Richards O'Hare and other women charged with subversion, arguing that their public actions defied proper gender norms and, as a result, made them seem threatening to homefront unity. Part of this reasoning stemmed from the belief that women's wartime roles as mothers complimented men's wartime roles as soldiers, an argument also analyzed in Susan Zeiger's article, "She Didn't Raise Her Boy to be a Slacker: Motherhood, Conscription, and the Culture of the First World War." In the article, Zeiger argues the importance placed on women's duties as loyal mothers, best represented by sending their

⁴⁷ Maurine Weiner Greenwald, *Women, War and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980); Carrie Brown, *Rosie's Mom: Forgotten Women Workers in the First World War* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002).

sons to war. To refuse the draft meant that both son and mother were acting disloyal to their country in its time of need. These two studies on the government's wartime construction of women's gender roles leave room for further studies on patriotism and women's roles during the First World War.⁴⁸

What is lacking in the historiography of American women, southern women, and women and war is any in-depth study of southern women during World War I. While southern women's wartime efforts in organizations like the UDC or suffrage groups are mentioned briefly in the monographs listed, the First World War's impact on southern women is never fully examined. Instead, it is overshadowed by the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, which itself is often considered a reward for women's wartime service.

This thesis seeks to understand the impact of the First World War on the elite white women of Richmond. Using Richmond as a case study, this thesis examines the impact of elite southern women's voluntary war work on their understanding of what it meant to be a southern woman and an American woman during the country's engagement in a major world war. This thesis challenges ideas about white southern women's attitudes towards their public roles and social conventions before and during wartime. It questions if the elite women of Richmond more closely resembled the antebellum Southern Lady, the American New Woman, or created a hybrid version of the two. This thesis will also place southern women within a national context during wartime.

In this thesis, the phrase "southern women" will be used to describe white Richmond women of the upper and middle classes, women who had the financial means and social status to

⁴⁸ Kathleen Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers and Scurrilous Citizens: Women and Subversion during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999). Susan Zeiger, "She Didn't Raise Her Boy to be a Slacker: Motherhood, Conscription, and the Culture of the First World War" (*Feminist Studies* 22:1, Spring 1996).

participate in the Women's Club, UDC, or other women's organizations. While there are social differences between members of the First Families of Virginia and women who belong to the new urban middle class, the organizations surveyed in this thesis accepted both types of women as members. These women were also considered "southern ladies," representing the pinnacle of southern society in their actions and words.⁴⁹

Several distinct time periods will be the focus of this thesis. While the war and the years leading up to it, from about 1890 to 1919, are the central focus, comparisons will be made to both the antebellum and Civil War eras (1840-1865). The actions of white southern women during the Civil War will be used to compare southern women's evolving wartime roles and to demonstrate how southern women changed over time.

This thesis will consist of three chapters examining Richmond women's war relief activities during the First World War. Chapter One will use three elite Richmond women -- Mary Cooke Branch Munford, Lila Meade Valentine, and Janet Randolph -- to explore the growth of women's organizations in the years prior to World War I. Women who participated in organizations such as women's clubs and suffrage leagues were exposed to new ideas about womanhood yet retained traditional southern characteristics. Chapter Two examines why America's entrance into war, and women's voluntary war work, challenged the tenets of southern womanhood. The arrival of national organizations in the city and increase in patriotic activities marked a departure from southern women's traditional wartime activities. Chapter Three examines how southern women laid the foundation for a new southern woman after the war through patriotism, Liberty Loan drives, food conservation, and Red Cross work. Through all their war work, Richmond women reinforced their heritage as southern women, engaging in

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Varon uses this classification scheme in her book on antebellum Virginia women, and it will be used here because it is also applicable.

socially acceptable feminine behavior, while at the same time adapting national ideas about patriotism and wartime responsibility to help redefine their identities.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PUBLIC LIFE OF RICHMOND CLUBWOMEN

In the last decade of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, upper and middle class white Richmond women joined numerous associations that reflected the changing lives of women across the United States. Local variations of national trends, from women's clubs to suffrage and anti-suffrage leagues, allowed many women to participate in new activities. Their involvement with women's voluntary associations helped create new identities influenced by regional and national interests. They were able to experience new opportunities available to women while maintaining behavior appropriate of southern ladies.

In order to experience these new public activities, Richmond women relied on the leadership of prominent female leaders Mary-Cooke Branch Munford, Lila Meade Valentine, and Janet Randolph. This chapter uses Munford, Valentine, and Randolph to survey the variety of women's organizations in Richmond prior to the First World War. The women selected stand out as leaders and innovators. They sometimes worked together and at other times stood on opposing sides of an issue, yet their actions exhibit the changing dynamics of southern womanhood in the early twentieth century.

Each woman's actions and involvement demonstrate key activities of Richmond women's organizations. Munford's involvement in both club work and municipal housekeeping testify to how clubwomen engaged in female enrichment and benevolent activities. Valentine's Progressive reform work and involvement in the Virginia suffrage movement demonstrated Richmond women's tenuous relationship with politics. Randolph's role as founder of the first United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) chapter in the city reinforced the importance given to memory and tradition by white women of the New South. Each woman, her organizations,

and her activities will be used to understand how Richmond women embraced new opportunities and how they retained their identity as southern women.

MARY-COOKE BRANCH MUNFORD AND FEMALE ENRICHMENT

The 1890s in Richmond were marked by the establishment of the Museum of the Confederacy, the erection of General Lee's statue on Monument Avenue, and the founding by women of numerous organizations.⁵⁰ These clubs ranged from the United Daughters of the Confederacy to women's clubs and literary societies. The rapid growth of women's associations in the city reflected a national trend finally arriving in the South, as more women began to participate in activities outside their homes for personal fulfillment and friendship. One of these trends arrived in the spring of 1894 when fourteen Richmond women founded a woman's club.⁵¹ The first of many women's clubs in the city, including smaller neighborhood groups such as the Barton Heights Woman's Club, its prominent members and innovative programs helped it remain the most influential. Credit for the club is often given to Mary-Cooke Branch Munford, a Richmond woman known for her forward-thinking ideas about women. Because of Munford, the Woman's Club became one of many organizations that would profoundly change Richmond women at the turn of the century.

The privileged life of Mary-Cooke Branch Munford, born into a prestigious Richmond family in 1865, offered her many opportunities to pursue new enterprises. Her widowed mother refused her request to attend college; however, she educated herself, and in the course of her studies became disappointed by male authors who expressed a narrow view of women's

⁵⁰ Confederate Memorial Literary Society Papers, MOC.

⁵¹ Treadway, *Women of Mark*, 3.

spheres.⁵² Well-established families like the Branches had both monetary wealth and social status, which allowed young Mary-Cooke the opportunity to forge social connections early on and gave her the leisure time to pursue her own interests. In 1893, she married Beverly Bland Munford, a Richmond lawyer whose personal philosophies on women's roles closely mirrored her own.⁵³ By then, Munford had acquired a social circle of intelligent, similar-minded women who appreciated her endeavors. With her husband's encouragement, she organized the Saturday Afternoon Club in March 1894. The club was a literary society composed of twenty-five female friends who met weekly to present papers on topics they found interesting and relevant. Despite the success of the club, Munford found room for improvement. She suggested the organization provide enrichment opportunities to a broader circle of Richmond women. This inspired Jane Lewis, a member of the club, to invite Munford and several others to tea in order to discuss founding a woman's club in the city. By late May, Lewis, Munford, and twelve other women founded the Woman's Club of Richmond.⁵⁴

Clubs dedicated solely to women's self-improvement and enrichment came into vogue after the Civil War, and spread quickly throughout the United States, changing women's organizations as a whole. Sorosis, the first woman's club, was founded in New York in 1868 and helped propel the movement that would change women's public activities. Its members were professional women, such as journalists and educators, who shared similar interests and met for social, educational, and charitable activities. The organization itself, however, was not committed to a single charity, which marked a move away from benevolent women's organizations and towards social groups for entertainment. One aspect Sorosis

⁵² Walter Russell Bowie, *Sunrise in the South: The Life of Mary-Cooke Branch Munford* (Richmond: The William Byrd Press, 1942) 38.

⁵³ Bowie, *Sunrise in the South*, 46.

⁵⁴ Treadway, *Women of Mark*, 5-6.

empathized was female enrichment, providing members with the opportunity to development themselves through academic lectures, social gatherings, and other activities. These activities were designed to create well-rounded women, and marked a change in women's organizations as they moved away from charity work with a social element. The creation of women's organizations for friendship and female enrichment grew, and the idea for women's clubs became popular and spread across the country.⁵⁵

As more clubs formed, they looked to each other not only for support, but also for ideas and information. In 1883, Sorosis's founder, Jane Cunningham Croly, formed the General Federation of Women's Clubs, a national association composed of state federations of clubs. The General Federation helped spread information through club publications and biennial meetings, notifying clubs of the national chapter's stance on issues from healthy babies to decency and morality. The hierarchical structure of the General Federation, with local clubs reporting to state federations, which in turn reported to a national governing body, allowed for efficiency in organizing and legitimacy in their actions. This structure became the popular way for women's organizations to govern branches across the country and by the twentieth century, was instrumental in making the woman's club movement cohesive and influential.⁵⁶

Women across the United States justified their involvement in many ways, from claiming it as municipal housekeeping to memorial work, in an attempt to not appear negligent of their roles as wives and mothers. Many women throughout the country struggled as they tried to adapt new social ideas to the reality of their lives, which often included children who needed minding. The General Federation of Women's Clubs assumed its members had families, and many of its programs, like Healthy Baby months and Mother's Clubs, encouraged women to

⁵⁵ Scott, *Natural Allies*, 117. The name Sorosis derives from the Greek word for "aggregation".

⁵⁶ Scott, *Natural Allies*; Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist*; Johnston, *Southern Ladies, New Women*.

participate in club work in addition to being mothers.⁵⁷ Richmond women's obligations to home and family remained an important consideration as the women's club movement spread. Having families often prevented women from participating in club activities, and many like Richmond UDC founder Janet Randolph waited until their children were older to become fully involved in club work.⁵⁸ Motherhood remained an important part of club programs both locally and nationally, reinforcing the idea that the club movement did not threaten domesticity as much as it helped women adapt to social changes. Family life was just one of the factors that dictated how Richmond women participated in clubs, with finances being another.

It was not until the late nineteenth century that the economic prosperity of the New South allowed southern women to embrace the club movement. Belonging to a woman's club had previously implied a privileged lifestyle with both leisure time and money to participate in the club's activities. The club movement in the South was spurred on by postwar industrialization, which created an urban middle class that had not existed prior to the war. This middle class was composed of men involved in business, sales, and other professional careers, very different from the manufacturing elites and remnants of the planter class which made up the elite strata of southern society.⁵⁹ While the middle class in Richmond did not have the distinguished surnames or inherited wealth of notable Virginia families, its women did have social status that allowed them to participate in organizations alongside elite women. Middle class wives could also afford domestic help to decrease the amount of time spent on housework. Better domestic technology like vacuums, washers, and other kitchen appliances, also decreased time spent on housework.

⁵⁷ *The General Federation Magazine* February 1917- November 1918; every magazine had a column dedicated to mothers, though many issues used babies and motherhood as themes.

⁵⁸ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 62; Janet Randolph Turpin Ayers, "Mrs. Norman V. Randolph: A Granddaughter's Reminiscences" *The United Daughters of the Confederacy Magazine* 40: 3 (March 1992), 14-16.

⁵⁹ Green, *Southern Strategies*, xiv.

Economic freedom allowed women to participate more in a society with numerous restrictions on their behavior.⁶⁰

The women who joined the Woman's Club approached the organization with both open-mindedness and trepidation. The first prospective club members were friends and family of the founding members who often needing convincing of the club's merits. At the club's first literary program, several founding members presented short papers on clubs and club work, facilitating discussion on the topic afterwards so that women understood that the Woman's Club did not threaten domesticity or society, but instead promised new opportunities for women.⁶¹ Later club members came from Richmond's middle and upper-classes, those with the money and time to commit to club activities that ranged from hosting parties to holding officer positions. The club itself geared its activities to what its members wanted. It held meetings every week, with literary afternoons the first and third Monday of the month and social evenings the second and fourth. Such well-known speakers as Virginia-born Princeton University president Woodrow Wilson, social worker Jane Addams, and southern suffragist Kate Gordon visited the club on special occasions.⁶² Through the hard work of club officers, the organization attracted many new members who seemed eager to fulfill the club's purpose and promise.

Munford's idea for female enrichment soon became the center of women's society in the city. Club members belonged to many other groups such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the Daughters of the American Revolution,

⁶⁰ In *Bittersweet Legacy: The Black and White 'Better' Classes in Charlotte, 1850-1901*, Janette Greenwood defines Charlotte's middle classes as having power in the society that, while not making them equals of the elite, still gave them agency. In her work on Richmond, Elna C. Green has applied this definition to the city's middle-class and it is also applicable here.

⁶¹ Treadway, *Women of Mark*, 16.

⁶² Treadway, *Women of Mark*, 18.

making the woman's club an ideal location for social networking.⁶³ In addition to social networking, members clamored for more activities. In 1904 the club added educational classes on history, physical culture, and whist to its schedule. By 1906, club members formed both a drama company and a bimonthly Literary Round Table. In 1907, the club began to publish the *Hardy Annual*, a yearly newsletter composed of members' papers and poems.⁶⁴ Increased activity led to increased visibility, and the club grew in popularity though it remained small enough that members remained the central focus. Throughout the club's first two decades, the organization did not stray from its original objective, "to form an organized centre for the intellectual and literary culture of its members, and for the improvement and elevation of domestic life" – it only improved upon it.⁶⁵

The founding members of the club strongly believed that Richmond needed an organization like the Woman's Club, where women could find enjoyment and personal fulfillment. In clubs and similar organizations, members participated in a variety of activities from social engagements to discussing literature and current events. This casual interaction sought to enrich women's understanding of various subjects, making them well-rounded and knowledgeable individuals. In the case of Richmond clubwomen, opportunities for enrichment grew in the early twentieth century as women took an active part in both the clubs and their own personal enrichment. Yet, their activities did not overtly challenge social conceptions of womanhood since female enrichment activities still adhered to southern standards: papers written for history classes often focused on the Civil War and the South.⁶⁶

⁶³ Treadway, *Women of Mark*, 23; Annual Reports of the Woman's Club of Richmond, 1910-1918, Woman's Club of Richmond Collection, Box 5, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia (hereafter VHS).

⁶⁴ Treadway, *Women of Mark*, 41, 48.

⁶⁵ Treadway, *Women of Mark*, 15.

⁶⁶ Treadway, *Women of Mark*, 40, 42.

The female enrichment activities of the Women's Club inspired women to improve not only their lives but their communities as well. With her election as president of the Woman's Club in 1910, Mary-Cooke Branch Munford wanted to add more programs and invite more speakers who would encourage women to put into practical use what they learned through club programs on community concerns and current events. Her agenda was considered controversial because many members did not want to participate in more than just card games and social gatherings. Yet Munford persisted. She believed that, as white Richmond women of the middle and elite classes, they had a responsibility to involve themselves in municipal housekeeping and reform efforts.⁶⁷

Munford's vision of clubwomen's involvement in civic action and reform blended characteristics of southern womanhood with those of the New Woman. Internalizing society's expectations of them, many southern clubwomen felt a deep responsibility for the future of the South as well as an obligation to assist those less fortunate than themselves. This *noblesse oblige* attracted many women to municipal housekeeping, confident that their actions would fix social problems.⁶⁸ What Munford suggested embraced this characteristic of southern womanhood, but also branched out into new territory. By incorporating new ideas about women's active social roles in society into club programs, Munford hoped to involve more clubwomen into social reforms. She also encouraged interracial cooperation, including a successful collaboration of black and white clubwomen to establish a home for delinquent African-American girls in the state.⁶⁹ With this, she alienated some older club members who supported neither interracial cooperation nor municipal housekeeping and who clung to a more traditional view of women's role in society. Ultimately, her gambit would prove successful as

⁶⁷ Treadway, *Women of Mark*, 42.

⁶⁸ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 39.

⁶⁹ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 25.

Richmond clubwomen became involved in other outreach activities like women's welfare work and the creation of a traveling branch of the Virginia State Library.⁷⁰

The Woman's Club of Richmond embodied the changing spirit of southern womanhood in the early twentieth century. As more and more women joined and participated in club events, they found enjoyment and friendship in the company of other women. Enrichment activities broadened their horizons, teaching them about the world and themselves. While the club shunned political affiliation and was hesitant about new directions taken by officers such as Munford, some women began to reach out to their communities, and through their involvement developed new ideas about southern women's social roles while at the same time retaining an exclusively southern mindset.

CLEANING UP RICHMOND: LILA MEADE VALENTINE

Richmond clubwomen's charity work formed the foundation for so many of their activities, as many generations of elite women found personal fulfillment through visiting the needy and other hands-on work. They held parties, tableaux, and other fundraisers to collect money that funded private welfare institutions like Sheltering Arms Hospital. Some charity work concentrated on the Lost Cause and Confederate veterans as many state and private organizations provided aging veterans and women with care, such as the Home for Needy Confederate Women. Much of this work resulted from feelings of *noblesse oblige*, as well as antebellum Virginia women's tradition of engaging in benevolent activities as part of their obligation as southern ladies to nurture and care for the needy.⁷¹ Despite seeming innocuous, engaging in charitable activities was often viewed as one way for women to engage in both the

⁷⁰ Treadway, *Women of Mark*, 47.

⁷¹ Green, *This Business of Relief*, 108-112.

public sphere and politics.⁷² They may have demurred from outright political participation, but antebellum Virginia women had understood that, by using appropriate avenues such as charities, missionary societies, and other voluntary associations, they would be able to enact change while still behaving appropriately. The delicate relationship between southern women and public politics -- always endeavoring to act ladylike while hoping to change society -- would continue well into the twentieth century.

In the late nineteenth century, chapters of national organizations formed in the city, bringing fresh perspectives to local work. While Virginia women had participated in the temperance movement through organizations like the Virginia Temperance Society since the early nineteenth century, national organizations brought a different perspective and professionalism to the city's crusade.⁷³ Women joined the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), an anti-vice organization whose goals went beyond alcohol reform to include community problems such as homelessness and reforms such as minimum wage laws.⁷⁴ The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) was another similar organization with a chapter in Richmond to provide assistance for the city's working class women.⁷⁵ Organizations such as the YWCA and WCTU gave women the satisfaction of assisting the less fortunate while allowing them to actively participate in public work. The WCTU especially gave women the opportunity to work with other women from different classes who shared their concerns and values. Women's experience in voluntary associations like the WCTU and YWCA encouraged their participation in the political process through appropriate means which emphasized elite

⁷² Varon, *We Mean to be Counted*, 11.

⁷³ Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted*, 30.

⁷⁴ Scott, *Natural Allies*, 96.

⁷⁵ Parrott, "Love Makes Memory Eternal," 34.

women's nurturing behaviors and benevolent attitudes. At the same time, it introduced them to progressivism, which raised their consciousness about social change.⁷⁶

The Progressive movement, which lasted from the 1890s until the First World War, was a social and political movement that formed in response to modernization and other changes in American society. Progressive reformers fought for anti-vice legislation, greater government welfare, labor reform, and the implementations of policies they believed would create a better society. Across the nation, women were a fixture of the movement because progressivism, like municipal housekeeping, allowed women to help their communities under the guise of their nurturing nature. It also gave women access to the political process, as they petitioned politicians to adopt their reform measures. The Progressive movement made an indelible mark on American women, giving them access to politics and community affairs along with a goal – to change American society for the better.⁷⁷

Though they shared similar goals, the Progressive movement in Virginia was distinctly different than other parts of the nation due to the region's racial tensions. In Virginia, the movement led to increased educational opportunities, better roads, and a successful Prohibition campaign.⁷⁸ The rampant racism of the era, however, meant these improvements centered on the white population of the state, as segregation and disenfranchisement became social and political norms. While most reforms in Virginia were done by state power, other reform activities inspired women to become involved in local efforts. In the early decades of the twentieth century, many clubwomen like Munford and her friend Lila Meade Valentine found themselves drawn to municipal housekeeping and progressive reforms.

⁷⁶ Bordin, *Woman and Temperance*, 157.

⁷⁷ Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye, ed. *Gender, Class, Race, and Reform in the Progressive Era* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1991); Michael E. McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Free Press, 2003).

⁷⁸ Wallenstein, *Cradle of America*, 254-269.

Much like Munford, Lila Meade Valentine believed that Richmond women had a duty to improve themselves and their communities. Born at the end of the Civil War, Lila Meade received an education befitting a member of Richmond's social elite with private tutors and private women's schools. She never attended college because her family, like Munford's, considered it unnecessary and unbecoming.⁷⁹ In 1886 she married Benjamin Batcheler Valentine, who admired his wife's dedication to learning and hired private tutors from the University of Richmond and the University of Virginia to aid her studies. Their first and only child was stillborn in 1888. In an effort to improve his wife's health, Benjamin Valentine took her abroad in 1892 with him on an extended business trip. Lila Valentine arrived in London during a critical time in its political history, when Gladstonian liberalism, Fabianism, and other political ideas were in vogue. Fabianism, a socialist movement favored by intellectuals such as George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells, advocated gradual social change without revolution. Gladstonian Liberalism promoted equal opportunities for men and women.⁸⁰ Valentine also witnessed firsthand the work of British suffragists and this, coupled with the reform ideas of the British political movements, greatly impacted her social and political thinking. On her return to Richmond, she drew heavily on her experience abroad when embarking on reform work.⁸¹

Valentine consistently and tirelessly worked for educational reforms in the city of Richmond. After Valentine and other women, including Munford, learned of the substandard conditions of Richmond's public schools, they formed the Richmond Education Association (REA) in 1901 to address the issue and provide equal education for all students.⁸² Men belonged

⁷⁹ *Warrenton Democrat*, April 8, 1916.

⁸⁰ A.M. McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics, 1884-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962).

⁸¹ Lloyd C. Taylor, Jr. "Lila Meade Valentine: The FFV as Reformer." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 70:4 (October 1962) 472-3.

⁸² Leslie Ogg Williams, "Access and Inclusion: Women Students at VPI 1914-1964," M.A. Thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2006, 41.

to the organization yet their roles were minor in comparison to the active roles of female members. From arranging field trips and writing contests to promoting adult education, many elite women became directly involved in the effort to reform Richmond's education system. To gain political power, the REA allied itself with the Southern Education Board (SEB), a group of northern and southern men who wanted to improve education in the Commonwealth. In 1903, the city adopted two important reform measures, kindergarten classes and manual training in public schools.⁸³

The actions of the REA inspired interest in rural education, and in 1904 the Cooperative Education Association (CEA) formed with the goal to enact statewide education reforms.⁸⁴ Mary-Cooke Branch Munford became the first president while Lila Meade Valentine served as the sole woman on the board. Soon the CEA became the primary education reform organization in the commonwealth, growing into a large political power from a small organization founded by clubwomen. In 1905 Munford and Valentine embarked on a May Campaign where they canvassed the state to stir up support for nine-month school terms, school libraries, and other school improvements. Their hard work paid off when the legislature increased state appropriations for public schools. Another victory of their May Campaign was the Mann High School Act, which allowed the REA to open John Marshall High School in Richmond, replacing an older, inadequate school.⁸⁵ Through their work campaigning for education reform in Virginia, Munford and Valentine gained valuable political experience.

Both Munford and Valentine used the REA as the beginning of their public careers as reformers. While working with the REA, Valentine became concerned with illness in the city,

⁸³ Diane C. Stubbins, "Feminism in Progressivism: Lila Meade Valentine and Educational Reform in Richmond, 1900-1921," M.A. Thesis, University of Florida, 1992, 29.

⁸⁴ Stubbins, "Feminism in Progressivism," 51.

⁸⁵ Wallenstein, *Cradle of America*, 258.

specifically how disease affected students in Richmond city schools. This concern inspired her to hold a meeting of nurses, forming the Instructional Visiting Nurses Association (IVNA). The IVNA established free clinics to vaccinate students and their families, held anti-tuberculosis programs in schools, and worked to curb the spread of disease in the city. These actions decreased the number of unhealthy students in schools and helped the REA push for educational advancement such as kindergartens.⁸⁶ Valentine's crusade inspired cities throughout the state to adopt similar programs.⁸⁷

Munford's involvement in the REA and CEA led to her involvement in the Co-ordinate College League (CCL) in 1910. The CCL's goal was to establish a separate woman's college at the University of Virginia, with separate dormitories and classrooms but shared library and laboratory resources.⁸⁸ Her idea was popular with many Richmond women, including United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) president Janet Randolph, who once told the General Assembly, "I see no reason why Janet Randolph III should not go to the University of Virginia as well as Eppa Hunton IV."⁸⁹ The CCL was controversial; while Munford and other women believed in the importance of their education, some male alumni felt threatened by female encroachment on the university. Many diverse organizations across the state, however, including the UDC, WCTU, and State Teachers Association, endorsed the CCL. Even national organizations, like the Federation of Women's Clubs and Federation of Mother's Clubs, voiced their support.⁹⁰ The widespread support by diverse women's organizations, especially within the state of Virginia, demonstrated changes in women's perceptions of themselves and their

⁸⁶ Stubbins, "Feminism in Progressivism," 40.

⁸⁷ Wallenstein, *Cradle of America*, 296.

⁸⁸ Anne Hobson Freeman, "Mary Munford's Fight for a College for Women Co-ordinate with the University of Virginia." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 78:4 (October 1970) 481.

⁸⁹ Ayers, "Mrs. Norman V. Randolph: A Granddaughter Reminiscences," 15. Eppa Hunton was well-known politician and an alumnus of the University of Virginia who vehemently opposed the coordinate college.

⁹⁰ Freeman, "Mary Munford's Fight for a College for Women Co-ordinate with the University of Virginia," 487.

access to educational opportunities. It reflected women's opinion of their education, previously considered of lesser importance than domestic duties, had changed, and demonstrated how new ideas about American women were becoming important to Richmond women.

Valentine's travels and her participation in the Woman's Club introduced her to the woman suffrage issue. In 1909, Kentucky suffragist Laura Clay visited the Woman's Club. Her speech inspired Valentine and other prominent members, including novelist Ellen Glasgow and artist Adele Clark, to take action in their own state. That same year, they formed the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia, and elected Valentine as president.⁹¹ Valentine's prior involvement with the REA, CEA, and IVNA supplemented her strong support for suffrage and gave her the political and leadership experience necessary to be president of a statewide organization. By 1916, Virginia had 115 local leagues with active members in each.⁹²

Valentine considered the suffrage movement important since she and other women had little power to enact social change when only men voted. For her, voting would allow women to proceed with municipal housekeeping without relying solely on the help of men.⁹³ In her work with the REA, Valentine relied on Richmond politicians and businessmen to put her reforms into action. She would not be so dependent on this arrangement if women had the right to vote. She also believed woman suffrage would make women the legal equals of men, adding planks to the ESL platform that encouraged equal educational opportunities and labor reforms such as the

⁹¹ The formation of the ESL marks the "second wave" of the woman suffrage movement in both Virginia and the South. The "first wave" occurred around 1890, when the National American Woman Suffrage Association began to form chapters in the South. At the same time, however southern men sought to preserve white supremacy, relying on white women to adopt the mantle of "Southern Lady" for the sake of society, though conservative politicians viewed woman suffrage as an "inadequate" way of enforcing this supremacy. In addition, racial tensions in the South led many southern suffragists to push for a whites-only suffrage amendment, which the NAWSA did not support. As a result of all these factors, the movement declined in the southern states by 1900. In 1910, however, the suffrage movement across the nation was revitalized. In the South, this revitalization was aided by women's involvement in Progressive reforms. See Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, pp. 3-22 and Green, *Southern Strategies*, pp. 10-15.

⁹² Green, *Southern Strategies*, 157-160.

⁹³ Stubbins, "Feminism in Progressivism," 65.

eight-hour work day and child labor laws.⁹⁴ Despite these reforms, racial equality would remain absent from the suffrage movement in Virginia and the South.⁹⁵

As the woman suffrage question became a prominent debate during the 1910s, it attracted opposition from both men and women. Valentine knew that many men would not support woman suffrage as they had education reform, and many conservative women's groups believed suffrage threatened both the domestic sphere and southern society.⁹⁶ The Virginia Association Opposed to Woman's Suffrage formed in 1912, quickly gathering 2,000 members in Richmond alone, with branches throughout the state. They used their notable names – Anderson, Pinckney, Cabell, and Valentine, names of the First Families of Virginia and Confederate heroes – to lend credibility to their actions. The suffragists also relied on their names – Valentine, Munford, Glasgow, Mason – to identify them as southern ladies.⁹⁷

The two groups used different examples of southern womanhood to advocate their cause. Anti-suffragists argued that not only would suffrage threaten the domestic roles of women, but that it would allow black men and black women to vote, which threatened southern society and white racial supremacy.⁹⁸ They believed politics should be left to white men, and proper southern women would want no part in the process. Meanwhile, suffragists argued in support of their ideas of *noblesse oblige* and the extension of women's domesticity into the world outside their homes. Suffragists believed changes in modern society allowed women to enter public

⁹⁴ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 161.

⁹⁵ Lila Meade Valentine, like many other southern suffragists, did not believe African Americans capable of uplifting themselves without white involvement. She was nowhere as extreme as some southern suffragists like Rebecca Latimer Felton, who feared racial equality. Valentine's educational reform and public health work did benefit Richmond's black population, though she never included black women's rights in her suffrage campaigns. See Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 102-105.

⁹⁶ Parrot, "Love Makes Memory Eternal," 85.

⁹⁷ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 166.

⁹⁸ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 166; untitled Virginia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage pamphlet, undated, Equal Suffrage League of Virginia, Records, 1909-1938, Box 9 Folder 591, Accession 22002, Organizational Records Collection, LVA.

spaces in order to help their communities. Voting would allow them to help directly.⁹⁹ These contrasting images focused on key elements – domesticity, gender and racial norms, and an adherence to the dominant white supremacy– which defined southern womanhood.

Virginia’s suffragists and anti-suffragists used creative, non-militant means to publicize their ideas. Both organizations rented booths at fairs to spread their message, and distributed pamphlets, with anti-suffragists making their literature available in five Richmond area bookstores. The ESL tried a variety of other ways to reach the public with their message. ESL members traveled throughout the state, focusing especially on women’s colleges since they assumed, often incorrectly, college-educated women would be more likely to form their own leagues than rural, uneducated women. In 1916, the ESL took to the streets of Richmond, giving speeches on street corners and in front of businesses to spread their message.¹⁰⁰ They held fundraising bake sales, sent press releases to newspapers throughout the state, published a newsletter entitled *Virginia Suffrage News*, and attended national conventions.

Both groups drew on the skills members learned in other organizations, and transferred skills learned through the suffrage battle to new associations. Their public participation displayed acceptance of women’s new public agency. The refusal of Richmond organizations to engage in militant behavior like that of the National Woman’s Party, who picketed the White House and engaged in controversial and unladylike activities, demonstrated that both suffragists and anti-suffragists relied on their identities as southern women to advance their cause. Valentine especially relied on her image as a member of Richmond’s elite to agitate for suffrage.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 51; Williams, “Access and Inclusion,” 40.

¹⁰⁰ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 166-170.

¹⁰¹ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 76.

From education to suffrage, Munford and Valentine's work changed Richmond as well as themselves. Their efforts to improve the quality of life for Richmond citizens led to change as they embraced progressivism and civic responsibility. Bolstered by their involvement in women's clubs and other women's organizations, they took an active role in their communities, yet still sought to be seen as appropriate southern ladies. Munford's involvement with the CCL and Valentine's with woman suffrage would continue to challenge traditional ideas about the limits of women's public roles throughout the early decades of the twentieth century. They would not be alone, as other women across the state joined in their crusades and began to rethink the nature of Virginia womanhood.

JANET RANDOLPH AND SOUTHERN WOMANHOOD

Richmond women participated in activities other than female enrichment and municipal housekeeping including organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution, Daughters of 1812, and Confederate memorial societies, which glorified the past. While their actions are often measured in monuments erected instead of reforms enacted, the women who participated in these organizations were not simply relics of the past. Janet Weaver Randolph, founder of the Richmond chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and member of numerous women's associations, gained a reputation as "Mother Richmond" because of her devotion to the city, from memorializing the Confederacy to taking care of veterans, widows, and others who were less fortunate than she.¹⁰² Randolph's participation in both memorial societies and philanthropic activities followed a similar path as many other Richmond women who accepted new responsibilities in a changing society.

¹⁰² Douglas S. Freeman, "Mrs. Norman V. Randolph Remembered," Janet H. Weaver Randolph Papers, MOC.

Randolph's firsthand experience of the Civil War directly influenced her life and her work preserving the memory of the Confederacy. Born in April 1848 in Warrenton, Virginia, Randolph was thirteen when her father enlisted in the Warrenton Rifles. He died in 1862, leaving behind his wife and two daughters. The town and surrounding areas were occupied by both Federal and Confederate troops during the war, including the guerrilla fighters of Confederate Colonel John S. Mosby.¹⁰³ While no harm came to Randolph, her mother, or her sister, firsthand experience with the war arguably changed her life. She nursed soldiers and placed flowers on the graves of the dead in remembrance, an activity that profoundly affected her.¹⁰⁴ In 1880, she married Norman V. Randolph, a widower, Confederate veteran, and president of Randolph Paper Company, and the couple soon moved to Richmond. Mr. Randolph's status as a veteran and prosperous business owner gave Janet Randolph access to Richmond society, where Confederate veterans were treated with honor and distinction.

Because of her experience during the Civil War, Randolph became involved with Confederate memorial societies, including the Confederate Memorial Literary Society (CMLS) in Richmond. The CMLS's sole purpose was to transform the White House of the Confederacy into a Confederate museum. In order to do so, the CMLS relied heavily on women involved in memorial societies to contribute money as well as "relics" from famous generals and soldiers.¹⁰⁵ Randolph joined the CMLS in 1893, working at a memorial bazaar to raise money for the Tennessee room at the Confederate White House. The women raised \$15,000 over the course of a month – a testimony to their skills as fundraisers, which had been honed through years of

¹⁰³ Colonel John S. Mosby ran a series of hit-and-run guerilla raids. The area west of Alexandria, Virginia (on the Potomac) and east of Winchester, Virginia was often considered "Mosby's Confederacy." See James I. Robertson, Jr., *Civil War Virginia: Battleground for a Nation* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991)116-117.

¹⁰⁴ Freeman, "Mrs. Norman V. Randolph Remembered."

¹⁰⁵ Confederate Memorial Literary Society Papers, MOC.

charity work.¹⁰⁶ In 1896, Randolph became the vice regent of the Tennessee room and a member of the CMLS Board of Directors. That same year, she founded the first chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in Richmond.¹⁰⁷

The United Daughters of the Confederacy best embodies the conflicting, often contradictory nature of southern womanhood during the early twentieth century. The formation of the national UDC gathered memorial groups across the country into one cohesive organization with several objectives: memorial, historical, benevolent, educational, and social work for Confederate remembrance.¹⁰⁸ Memorial work, such as erecting statues of Confederate officers and building cemeteries, marked the UDC's most notable contributions. Their memorial work also transitioned into the classroom as they became concerned with the teaching of proper southern history, even to the point of publishing their own texts. Members also worked in their communities, building homes for veterans and widows and contributing to Confederate charities. The activities of the UDC varied from state to state, but all chapters carried on memorial work. By 1900, membership in the UDC reached 17,000, with 412 chapters, one of them in Richmond, Virginia. Membership was exclusive, restricted to widows, wives, mothers, sisters, nieces, and female lineal descendants of Confederate veterans, but in Richmond, the former capital of the Confederacy, many women were eligible to join.¹⁰⁹

The Richmond chapters of the UDC tapped into Richmond women's commitment to the memory of Confederacy. Janet Randolph founded the Richmond chapter of the UDC on January 28, 1896, as an auxiliary of the Lee Camp, United Confederate Veterans (UCV). Membership grew in its first four years from 37 to 440, making it one of the primary women's organizations

¹⁰⁶ Ladies' Hollywood Memorial Association, *Our Confederate Dead*, 10.

¹⁰⁷ Parrott, "Love Makes Memory Eternal," 25.

¹⁰⁸ Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*, 19.

¹⁰⁹ Parrott, "Love Makes Memory Eternal," 18-29.

in the city. More chapters followed, as nearby Chesterfield County formed a chapter in 1904, and another Richmond chapter, the Lee Chapter, followed in 1911. Confederate remembrance remained the major focus of the UDC members. Under the guidance of Janet Randolph, the Richmond chapter assumed responsibility from the UCV for erecting the Jefferson Davis memorial on Monument Avenue. The change marked an important shift in memorial building in the city as UDC members, with skills gained through club work and municipal housekeeping, demonstrated their administrative and fundraising skills. In addition to fundraising, UDC members also decorated monuments on Memorial Day and Confederate holidays as well as petitioned the General Assembly to provide for the upkeep of monuments, arguing it was the duty of the state as well as women to honor the past. Through their memorial work, the UDC in Richmond embodied the spirit of Confederate memory, using it as an indirect way to participate in public action.¹¹⁰

In addition to memorial work, the national UDC encouraged local chapters to become involved in educational initiatives as a way to ensure schoolchildren learned the “correct” history of the Confederacy. The UDC’s actions were appropriate for the organization because, as southern women, members felt it was their responsibility to ensure that future generations of white southerners understood the values of the Confederacy. In 1908 the national UDC created a Committee on Education which oversaw the actions of state and local chapters’ educational work, focusing on “proper” southern history.¹¹¹ The Richmond chapter held essay contests where students wrote about Jefferson Davis or General Lee, and donated money to buy subscriptions to pro-Confederacy magazines and books with UDC-approved interpretations of

¹¹⁰ Parrott, “Love Makes Memory Eternal,” 29-37.

¹¹¹ Parrott, “Love Makes Memory Eternal,” 48.

the war. In addition, they also gave memorabilia, such as battle flags and photographs, to classrooms to inspire the students.¹¹²

The educational initiatives of Richmond's UDC chapters went beyond merely promoting proper southern history as, in a seemingly uncharacteristic move, they became involved with the battle for co-education at the University of Virginia. The UDC endorsed the CCL in 1913, and, under guidance of Janet Randolph, began to aid Mary-Cooke Branch Munford in her struggle. Yet, the CCL was the sole educational reform where members acted outside of their conservative comfort zone. "I am an uneducated woman – growing up during the war," Randolph wrote the Warrenton *Democrat* in 1916, "but I am educated enough to know that the State of Virginia requires College Degrees for her high school teachers." Randolph and other UDC members saw co-education as ensuring female teachers would be adequately trained and employed, and believed it was the responsibility of the state to take care of its daughters as well as its sons. Their stance used southern ideas about male chivalry and female honor to promote educational egalitarianism in an effort to exert political change. Randolph realized the importance of increasing women's opportunities, signing her letter with the statement "I am not a suffragist, but it is such injustice [to not have a right to education] that will cause the women of Virginia to become suffragists."¹¹³

While Randolph and other UDC members did not support suffrage or women's outright participation in politics, they still used indirect methods to accomplish their goals. By portraying themselves as proper southern women not interested in politics, and by using their image to beseech men for change, Virginia women were able to participate in public politics in socially acceptable ways. Incorporating ideas about gentility and honor, Randolph combined the

¹¹² Parrott, "Love Makes Memory Eternal," 49.

¹¹³ Untitled Letter to the Editor of the Warrenton *Democrat* from Janet Randolph, April 8, 1916, Janet H. Weaver Randolph Collection, MOC.

educational proclivity of the New Woman with southern social norms to justify her own involvement in the battle for co-education in Virginia.

The UDC also participated in benevolent activities, including taking care of veterans and their families. Women of the Richmond chapter adopted the Confederate Soldier's Home in Richmond as their charity. They held entertainment activities, and during the Christmas holiday decorated and gave small gifts to the veterans.¹¹⁴ In addition, they arranged for commemorative activities at veterans' funerals. The Richmond Chapter of the UDC supported the bulk of this work on their own, but appealed to other chapters throughout the state for donations. For the most part, their work with the Soldier's Home remained the only charity activity of the Richmond chapter, who emphasized attending the funeral of Jefferson Davis's widow, Varina, instead of assisting the poor and needy of the city.¹¹⁵

Richmond's Home for Needy Confederate Women marked a change in the UDC's involvement with charities. Originally the idea of the women's auxiliary of the Pickett Camp Confederate Veterans in Richmond, it became an important philanthropic activity of Gayle Montague, wife of Governor Andrew Jackson Montague and founder in 1911 of the Lee Chapter, UDC. She urged UDC members to focus on the present as well as the past. "We would not under-estimate the noble work of the Daughters of the Confederacy in preserving our history in tablets of marble," she wrote in 1904, "but we would direct their attention to the perfecting of this Home for the wives, sisters, and daughters of our valiant dead. We must help them now or not at all."¹¹⁶ Montague's concern with remembering the female kin of Confederate veterans was similar to Randolph's own concern with Richmond's needy men, though Montague's plea

¹¹⁴ Report of the Richmond Chapter, Minutes of the Annual Convention, 1916-1919, Virginia Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection, MOC.

¹¹⁵ Report of the Richmond Chapter, Minutes of the Annual Convention, 1907, Virginia Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection, MOC.

¹¹⁶ *History of the Home for Needy Confederate Women 1900-1904* (Richmond: J.L. Hill Printing Company) 1904.

for incorporating social work into the UDC's agenda of Confederate memory challenged the focus of the organization. She saw assisting poor widows and families as the ultimate way to keep the legacy of the Confederacy alive, instead of the organization's "tablets of marble" concept of remembrance. Montague's pleas did not go unheeded, however, as in 1911, Randolph and the Richmond Chapter began to work with the home.¹¹⁷ They held an annual ball and donated the proceeds to the home, marking the first of many new benevolent activities that the Richmond Chapter would undertake that was more than just honoring soldiers.

Outside of her work with the UDC, Randolph reached out to help the black population of Richmond. In Randolph's eulogy, Douglas S. Freeman mentions a flood in Shockoe Creek which made many black families homeless. According to Freeman, Randolph immediately provided material aid to the families, as well as petitioned the city to take care of the damage.¹¹⁸ Eventually, after Randolph spent many hours petitioning the General Assembly, the city placed a storm drain in the Shockoe Bottom neighborhood to prevent more flooding.¹¹⁹ She also donated funds to the Colored Children's Industrial Home, which had gone delinquent with its property taxes.¹²⁰ Randolph's concern for Richmond's black population demonstrated her belief that, as a southern lady, they should help the city's poor population, even if it meant repeatedly addressing the General Assembly on an unpopular subject. Much like Virginia women who had gone before, Randolph's use of benevolent activities to secure political success carried on the tradition.

UDC members like Randolph took advantage of the new opportunities granted to women by the social changes of the late nineteenth century. Randolph actively participated in

¹¹⁷ Correspondence, January 26, 1911, Richmond Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection, MOC.

¹¹⁸ Freeman, "Mrs. Norman V. Randolph Remembered."

¹¹⁹ Ayers, "Mrs. Norman V. Randolph: A Granddaughter's Reminiscences," 15.

¹²⁰ Correspondence from Janet Randolph to General Assembly, April 20, 1915, Richmond Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection, MOC.

fundraising campaigns for various Richmond charities, allowing them to use her image as “Mother Richmond” to solicit donations for social causes.

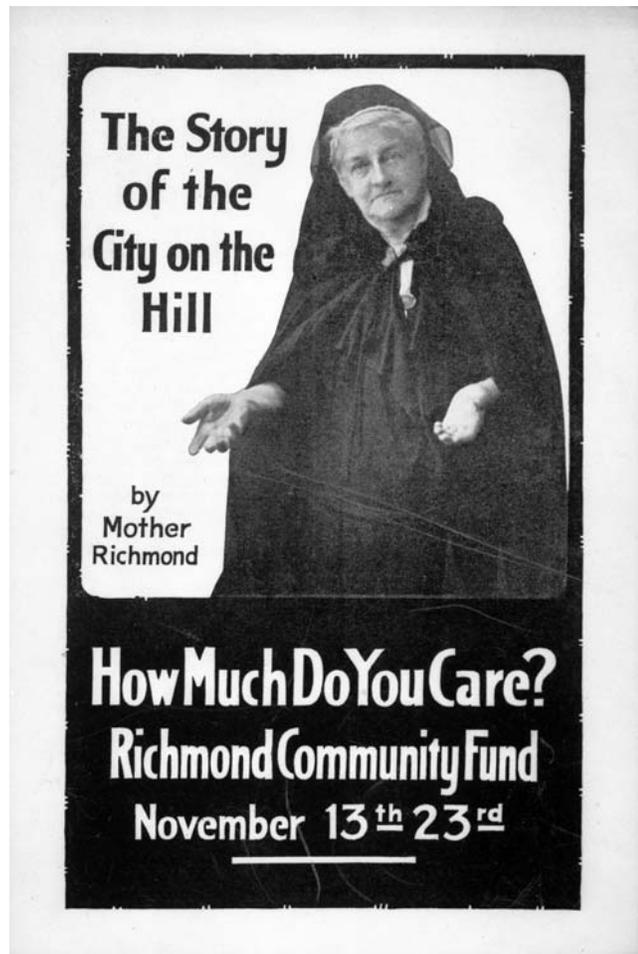


Figure 1. Janet Randolph as Mother Richmond, undated (Courtesy of the Museum of the Confederacy)

The image of Randolph in her widow's veil, which she wore from her husband's death in 1903 until her own in 1927, conjured up visions of idealized southern womanhood.¹²¹ Yet, despite this image, Randolph herself was not the perfect ideal of southern womanhood. She supported co-education. She was outspoken about civic reforms, sending many letters to newspapers across the state and speaking before the General Assembly on the subject of

¹²¹ Freeman, “Mrs. Norman V. Randolph Remembered.”

improvements to existing roads or houses.¹²² Randolph's active role in Richmond society went beyond monument building and memorial ceremonies. Along with many of her UDC colleagues, her public actions and words became far more aggressive than that of the antebellum southern ladies to whom they compared themselves.

Through their actions, Janet Randolph and other UDC members embodied the changes occurring in southern society. They adhered to traditional, socially acceptable roles – in their case, remembering the Lost Cause and the Confederacy while also testing the boundaries of southern women's social roles.

CONCLUSION

Munford, Valentine, and Randolph typified the southern woman of the early twentieth century. Born before or during the Civil War, their fathers or other male family members served in the Confederate army. From a young age, they were taught the importance of remembering the war and the values of the Confederacy. They were educated in their home by tutors, though some women did attend seminaries and private female schools. They married established men and accepted their roles as members of the Richmond elite. They took part in charity events and social gatherings. They also felt a deep responsibility to the poor and needy of the city and focused much of their public work on their city and state, not their country. Through all their work, these women adapted ideas about New Women to their roles as southern ladies, retaining their white southern identity in the process. Janet Randolph remained distinctly southern by adapting new public behaviors for her new memorial work. Lila Meade Valentine, too, cherished her identity as a southern woman, and despite her belief in women's equality and her

¹²² Untitled *Evening News Journal* article, November 1916, Richmond Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection, MOC.

work in progressive reforms, she helped maintain the racial status quo by her actions. Mary-Cooke Branch Munford's push for interracial club work and education reform relied on the *noblesse oblige* of southern women to inspire community outreach while still retaining their southern heritage. These Richmond clubwomen pushed the boundaries of society, and would continue to do so through the First World War.

With their social networks in place and their club experiences with them, the elite women of Richmond answered the call to support not only their state, but also their country, during World War I. Margaret Ethel Kelly Kern was one such clubwoman who devoted her time and effort to charity events whose proceeds would aid European orphans. Kern, the wife of a Richmond druggist, served as historian of the Richmond Chapter, UDC and a member of the Daughters of 1812. She wrote several pamphlets about the Civil War and the War of 1812, showing that she understood the role of women in history, and their importance during the war. As 1917 dawned, it was Kern, although a woman with no previous major leadership experience, who would become a leader in Richmond's war relief effort.

CHAPTER TWO: WARTIME CHALLENGES TO SOUTHERN WOMANHOOD

On September 11, 1917, seven Richmond women gathered at the home of Margaret Ethel Kelly Kern, the wife of a Richmond druggist. Called by Kern and her sister, the meeting was to fill a crucial gap in women's war relief work, which at the time focused almost exclusively on Red Cross bandage-rolling and Liberty Loan drives. What Kern wanted, instead, was to organize a group of women to provide moral support for Richmond men serving abroad. This became the Godmothers League, an exclusive social organization that "adopted" Richmond servicemen, nurses, and doctors, and sent them care packages and letters to remind them of home.¹²³ Over the next two years, Kern would become the president of several independent relief organizations as well as chair of both the America First Committee of the National League for Woman's Service and the Richmond City Committee of the Woman's Section, Second Council of Defense. These were new roles for Kern, as they were also very different roles in different organizations whose focus ranged from traditional relief work to new activities.

New wartime experiences offered Richmond women many challenges. Wartime activities like those of the Godmothers League reflected normative ideas about southern women, such as their domestic roles as wives and mothers, and local concerns like Confederate remembrance. Kern's work beyond the Godmothers League, with the National League for Woman's Service and the Woman's Section, demonstrated the professional attitude displayed by many Richmond women during the war, an attitude brought to the city by national organizations. As women like Kern volunteered for the war effort, they accepted new responsibilities, traveled long distances, drove cars, or worked long hours in Red Cross workrooms – duties that challenged traditional ideas of a southern woman's roles.

¹²³ Report of the Godmothers League, undated, Virginia War History Collection 1917-1931, Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) War Work and Relief Organizations, Box 76 Folder 15, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA

This chapter will examine how changes brought about by World War I, including new ideas of national patriotism and Richmond women's participation in new wartime organizations, challenged the very tenets of southern womanhood. Some women's wartime organizations were similar to pre-existing organizations like the UDC or the Woman's Club, concentrating their wartime activities around southern women's traditional caring and benevolent roles. Other organizations incorporated national ideas about American women's patriotic duties into their wartime activities. National ideas like autonomous women's wartime organizations, intense patriotism, and women's increasing public engagement because of the war created new roles for Richmond women.

This chapter concentrates on several Richmond organizations that contributed to women's wartime activities. The Virginia War Relief Association, founding in 1915, was a mixed-gender organization that continued the pre-war tradition of relief and enabled Richmond women to participate in socially appropriate war relief endeavors, such as holding charity social events and performing nurturing duties like rolling bandages. The spread of national organizations into cities like Richmond when the U.S. entered the war concerned some elite women because of their new ideas about relief work. These women formed their own organization -- the Godmothers League -- which drew from elite southern women's traditional wartime support roles, like holding charity events and performing gender-specific duties. At the same time, patriotic behavior and exposure to the ideas of national organizations challenged these conceptions of women's wartime duties. For Richmond suffragists and anti-suffragists, war brought new ideas of what it meant to be patriotic American women, not just as patriotic southern ladies. New ideas about southern women's roles were also espoused by national organizations like the Woman's Committee, Council for National Defense, and National League

for Woman's Service. These two organizations challenged southern womanhood the most, encouraging Richmond women to participate in activities that stressed professionalism while uniting them with other women across the United States.

THE GREAT WAR AND AMERICAN WOMANHOOD

In 1914, while Europeans found themselves embarked in the midst of a long and costly war, the United States watched and waited from across the ocean. Many Americans disapproved of military involvement, believing that entering the war went against America's history of isolation from European conflicts as well as upset any hope for diplomacy and peace.¹²⁴ President Woodrow Wilson maintained a neutral stance while supporting Britain and her allies with money and other supplies that included arms. He followed these policies despite Germany's threats of unrestricted submarine warfare targeting any ships suspected of carrying supplies to belligerents. Americans, already tense after the sinking of the R.M.S. *Lusitania* in 1915 and the continuation of the war in Europe, believed Wilson would make good on his 1916 campaign slogan "He Kept Us Out of War."¹²⁵ Wilson's Democrats won the close election, but world circumstances soon threatened Wilson's campaign promise. In March 1917, the Zimmermann telegram was intercepted by the British and brought to the attention of the US government. The telegram proposed that Mexico ally itself with Germany and attack the United States. Wilson abandoned his neutral stance on April 6, 1917, when America declared war on Germany and entered conflict on the side of Britain and her allies France and Russia.

The U.S. Government's declaration of war went beyond outfitting an army to send abroad; war also required generating significant support on the home front while minimizing

¹²⁴ David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) 21; Steinson, *American Women's Activism in World War I*, 3.

¹²⁵ Kennedy, *Over Here*, 10 - 12.

opposition. Government departments and programs targeted American men, women, and children, relying on patriotism and civic pride to gain their full support. Journalist George Creel's Committee on Public Information (CPI) and his Four Minute Men kept the country aware of Allied victories and defeats, mixing propaganda and patriotism to stir up pro-America and pro-Ally sentiment through posters, speeches, pamphlets, and other media. Newspapers also played a crucial role in promoting patriotism on the home front. Dailies publicized the war abroad as well as the actions of the government at home, often applying strict censorship to anti-war and un-American news. Pro-America propaganda, through the CPI and the press, did more than stir-up patriotism. With propaganda came fears of potential sabotage from foreigners and political radicals in the United States. German-Americans and other immigrants were treated with suspicion, physically and verbally threatened, and often sent to "Americanization" classes which promised instruction on the English language and citizenship. In June 1917, Congress passed the Espionage Act, which allowed the government to arrest those who opposed war, including many socialists who voiced their disagreement with American policy. Schools removed "seditious" materials that held pro-Germany viewpoints, replacing them with patriotic lessons that taught students to support the Allied cause.¹²⁶

War also changed the lives of American women, who were divided on the subject of war. Some women argued that war threatened women despite their status as noncombatants, and so peace should be the focus of women's political efforts. Others supported their government, believing that their assistance was not only necessary and patriotic, but would give women recognition and respect.¹²⁷ For all American women, war meant more than displays of patriotism and loyalty – it meant sacrificing domesticity tranquility. It also gave women the

¹²⁶ Kennedy, *Over Here*, 26, 55, 62-66.

¹²⁷ Steinson, *American Women's Activism in World War I*, 163.

opportunity to pursue these challenges through autonomous women's organizations. Because of the shortage of men, war gave women duties on the home front that challenged established gender norms.

Prior to US entry into the war, the peace and preparedness movements gained popularity as ways for women to assist the war effort. These women's organizations gave members autonomy to accomplish their own goals. The peace movement especially attracted many women members because it synthesized women's rights with the belief that, as mothers, women had a vested interest in the prevention of war, for war threatened women's roles as wives and mothers within the home. The social importance of women's maternal roles allowed the peace movement to advocate for women's equality in order to ensure peace through their participation in the political process.¹²⁸

Women's maternal role played a significant part in both the peace and preparedness movement, and would help form national ideas about womanhood during war. Women in the peace movement used motherhood to legitimize their anti-war stance, claiming that as mothers, they did not raise their sons to be soldiers.¹²⁹ While this opinion had been popular prior to war, it was condemned after April 6, 1917. Instead, cultural representations of "appropriate" mothering vilified mothers who would not let their sons be drafted. Sons who refused to serve their country were labeled as cowards and sissies and considered un-masculine. It was the duty of a mother to send her son to war, a view expressed by women in the preparedness movement who qualified their support of war with the belief that they were doing what was necessary.¹³⁰ Even the government and the Army helped promote the idea of the good mother as one who

¹²⁸ Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Woman's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993) 11.

¹²⁹ Zeiger, "She Didn't Raise Her Boy to Be a Slacker," 10.

¹³⁰ Zeiger, "She Didn't Raise Her Boy to be a Slacker," 28.

would send her son to war, an action that could result in the ultimate sacrifice of her child's death during battle. The idea that patriotic and loyal mothers supported soldiers, be they their own sons or the sons of others, formed one key component of wartime nationalism as it applied to women.

War redefined what it meant to be a patriotic American woman. Americans were expected to be loyal in all their actions, from reporting seditious behavior to registering for the draft. American women were also expected to willingly send their sons off to war and support soldiers by participating in war relief activities. Loyalty became important, for when America went to war, its women immediately went into action, taking on a variety of new roles and responsibilities to prove their patriotism. Female volunteers drew from prior experience in women's organizations to assume positions as officers and committee chairs in new relief organizations. Notably, much of women's war work was done in independently organized female associations. The actions of both peace and preparedness organizations stressed the power of autonomous women's organizations in forming a wartime ideal for American womanhood. As shown by both the women's peace and preparedness movements, autonomy and the ability to control their work – characteristics of the New Woman ideal – would provide the basis for how women chose to conduct their war work.

THE SOUTHERN TRADITION OF RELIEF: THE VIRGINIA WAR RELIEF ASSOCIATION

For some Richmond women, female war work demonstrated an acceptance of national patriotism as well as a lingering adherence to traditional southern roles. Some Richmond women's war work concentrated on traditional female tasks, such as caring for injured soldiers and holding social gatherings to raise funds. Richmond women's wartime participation in the

mixed-gender Virginia War Relief Association, the first war relief association in the state, upheld traditional beliefs about women's nurturing nature as well as their commitment to soldiers and their state. Women occupied positions in the Virginia War Relief Association that reflected their traditional social roles. At the same time, however, these women expressed their understanding of patriotism as it applied to both American women in general and southern women in particular prior to World War I.

Charities were the sole war relief organizations in Richmond prior to the war, and none were more prominent than the Virginia War Relief Association (VWRA), formed in December 1915.¹³¹ The VWRA was a statewide organization, but concentrated most of its efforts in the capital city. It encouraged participation through monetary donations or volunteering. Officers established headquarters in the heart of the city at 803 East Main Street where, from 10:30 am to 1 pm each day, a female committee chair would instruct women volunteers on how to make surgical dressings and bandages from old linens.¹³² The VWRA workroom, one of the first in the city, produced approximately \$225,000 worth of surgical dressings, bed sheets, pillowcases, clothing, and other material goods for the Red Cross and other foreign relief agencies.¹³³ In addition, the Association encouraged many Richmond families to "adopt" French orphans by donating money and corresponding with them during the war.¹³⁴ In all its capacities, the VWRA acted as the clearinghouse for voluntary war work in the city during the early months of the war.

¹³¹ Arthur Kyle Davis, *Virginia Communities in Wartime*, 360.

¹³² "War Relief in Need of More Volunteers," *The News Leader*, January 26, 1917.

¹³³ Davis, *Virginia Communities in Wartime*, 358.

¹³⁴ Virginia War Relief Association Report, undated, Virginia War History Commission Series 1917-1931 VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) War Work and Relief Organizations, Box 77 Folder 2, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

Participation in the VWRA continued women's tradition of charitable work according to their proper gender roles. Unlike women's wartime groups, which were autonomous, the VWRA was a mixed-gender organization. Women held many officer positions, but their committees collected clothing and raised funds by holding social events – traditional women's work.¹³⁵ In their roles as gracious hostesses and generous neighbors, the women of the VWRA held numerous social gatherings to raise awareness and funds for their cause. Traditionally, charities used parties, balls, and tableaux as their primary fundraisers. Southern women's charity work often concentrated on regional concerns, like providing care for aging Confederate veterans and their families. The UDC and other traditional organizations commonly used balls because they were proper, ladylike activities. VWRA members also participated in activities which reflected their social roles as caring mothers, such as collecting money and clothing for orphans, and rolling bandages for soldiers. By accepting duties that were socially appropriate, female VWRA members were able to contribute to the war effort.¹³⁶

As was befitting southern ladies, the VWRA held many social galas to raise money for the war in Europe. In late January 1917, Richmond newspapers proclaimed that the War Relief Association would present a “concert and tableaux representing the allied nations of the European war,” to be given on February 5, 1917. They considered the event to be “one of the most largest and most fashionable charities ever held in Richmond” and even proclaimed it “the largest charity affair of the season.”¹³⁷ Prominent Richmond society women were chosen to

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Green, *This Business of Relief*, 122.

¹³⁷ “War Relief Concert,” *The News Leader*, January 24, 1917; “War Relief Association to Present Fashionable Charity Entertainment,” January 27, 1917

represent the Allied countries in the tableaux, which was a series of scenes with patriotic messages.¹³⁸ A description of the tableaux printed in the *News Leader* the next day stated that

the pictures and songs made sufferings across the sea very real. The atmosphere of foreign countries was created by the decorations, the national airs, and the young society girls dressed as workers in the munitions factories who peddled their wares through the theatre in shells. Others assisting were in Red Cross costumes or European peasant garb, all of which made a splendid setting for the tableaux, music, and dancing which followed.

The tableaux included martial music and women dressed as France, Britain, and America, the last with a light to “guide all the people of the earth.” The tableaux presented snapshots of the harshness of war while stressing the need for money and supplies to aid the Allied cause. By invoking patriotism, the women of the VWRA used a time-honored method to raise funds.¹³⁹

The tableaux also symbolized the VWRA women’s understanding of the devastation of war, particularly as it affected women. Because all the participants and planners of the tableaux were women, the themes dealt almost exclusively with the plight of European women whose lives were in ruins, and whose only aid were the female Red Cross workers. As shown in the tableaux, war threatened homes and left women vulnerable and alone, while men turned their land and homes into battlefields. War threatened the very nature of womanhood as it destroyed not only homes but families, as evidenced by the numerous orphaned children who were being “adopted” by Americans. Finally, the representation of France, Britain, and America by three women, including “Britannia” portrayed by a member of the British aristocracy, Lady Colebroke, signified that war threatened women. As southern women who had either seen the devastation of the Civil War firsthand or learned about it from their parents, the VWRA’s

¹³⁸ “Concert for War Relief,” *The Times-Dispatch*, January 20, 1917.

¹³⁹ “Great Success Marks War Charity,” *The News Leader*, February 6, 1917

portrayal of female helplessness made the tableaux particularly poignant for the Richmond audience.¹⁴⁰

Tableaux – staged representations of a theme featuring women as characters in still-life scenes – came into vogue during the Civil War as a way for southern women to raise funds for the troops through social events. While their actions seem innocuous, tableaux appeared threatening to southern society, where women’s roles were strictly regulated by gender norms that dictated propriety, even to the point of not speaking or preventing their names from appearing in print. To some southern men and women, not even supporting Confederate troops justified women’s participation in these public events. Many women continued the tradition, however, because it allowed them to act out their own ideas about war.¹⁴¹ Women who participated in these events drew on ideas of female vulnerability as a direct result of war, reinforcing southern social norms that placed the protection of women solely on the shoulders of men. In the 1917 Richmond tableaux, women were both victims of war and angels in Red Cross uniforms, while men were noticeably absent. The lack of men in the tableaux reflects how men went to war and left women at home. At the same time, the women of the VRWA knew that, as women, they could help each other through the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and other war relief associations. Men, too, could help by donating money to assist European women and children lest the same thing happen to their own families. This tableaux reminded Richmond men and women of the devastating consequences of war.

The Virginia War Relief Association exemplified the traditional wartime roles of southern women. Women involved in the VWRA embraced the traditional roles of southern women, holding social events to raise support and acting in women’s traditional nurturing roles

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 26-28.

to provide for orphans overseas. In all their duties, women members of the VWRA worked hard to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate of a southern woman, yet while they often demurred to men in terms of work responsibilities and leadership positions, they were unafraid to express their opinions on women and war. Southern women in the VWRA understood that women, too, were called upon to help, accepting new and different duties that challenged their ideas of women's wartime work.

MOTHERLY CARE: THE GODMOTHERS LEAGUE

America's impending entrance into war created new voluntary opportunities for the city's women, though many struggled to retain their traditional roles in light of new challenges. As the National League for Woman's Service, Woman's Committee Council of National Defense, and the American Red Cross formed local chapters, they overshadowed the activities of local organizations such as the VWRA.¹⁴² Because national organizations were larger, better funded, and often connected to the federal government, they also had larger goals which overlooked local concerns. Some organizations, like the National League for Woman's Service and the Woman's Committee, attracted many Richmond women because of their women-centered activities and goals. Yet, many women in Richmond mourned the loss of local focus that charities and other organizations had prior to the war.

The formation of the Godmothers League allowed elite women to concentrate their relief work on local soldiers as well as direct their own activities independently. The Godmothers League approached war relief work with the belief that individual soldiers needed nurturing care in addition to physical aid. Founded in September 1917 by Margaret Ethel Kelley Kern, the organization began as seven friends who decided to adopt eight men from the Local Board

¹⁴² Davis, *Virginia Communities in Wartime*, 358.

Division Number One, the first Richmond men drafted for combat. They established strict membership requirements, namely that “only women of mature years and sound judgment were permitted membership,” though individual membership decisions were left to the discretion of club officers. These membership requirements gave women the ability to control who joined their club, a component which was essential for women’s clubs and other organizations like the UDC but impossible in national relief organizations. By being discriminating, members of the Godmothers League were able to retain their elite status. The organization grew in size as notable Richmond women such as Janet Randolph joined, soon reaching 700 members concerned with reminding local soldiers that their city supported them.¹⁴³

Inspired by women’s innate nurturing nature, members of the Godmothers League took a hands-on approach to caring for soldiers in the city. Their name, “Godmothers League,” implied a maternal, nurturing relationship between the women and the soldiers they did not personally know, yet nevertheless viewed as their responsibility. The Godmothers League “adopted” soldiers in order to provide them with affection from back home, much like war relief organizations adopted French and Belgian orphans. They attempted to correspond with them, though U.S. Army policy prohibited soldiers from receiving mail sent by those they did not know. Members also put together comfort kits containing a razor, candy, postcards and pencils, a trench mirror and other items for local soldiers. In time, members wanted to do more than send letters and comfort kits. Virginia Adjutant General W.W. Sale, whose wife participated in the organization, wrote a letter of introduction for Kern and other women to visit Camp Lee, an army cantonment located twenty miles south in Petersburg. After a tour of the hospital facilities, the organization took on the duty of caring for those soldiers at Camp Lee. They encouraged

¹⁴³The Godmothers League of Richmond report, undated, Virginia War History Commission, 1917-1931 Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) War Work and Relief Organizations, Box 76 Folder 15, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

other women's organizations throughout the city to adopt wards in the hope that their mission to provide comfort and care for soldiers and sailors would continue. Many women's organizations responded to the call, finding it a worthy and appropriate activity for southern women.¹⁴⁴

In their work at Camp Lee, the Godmothers League drew upon the tradition of southern women caring for southern soldiers after the Civil War. Women's groups were instructed to visit once a week, always remain cheerful, and lend "a sympathetic ear for each complaint, never failing to impress upon (the soldier) the honor he is sharing, even sick, in making the world a clean, happy place." By providing invalid soldiers and sailors with care, entertainment and company, members of the Godmothers League continued the southern tradition of memorial societies, which honored the beloved Confederate dead and cared for wounded and needy veterans after the war. As many members of the Godmothers League, including founder Kern, belonged to Richmond's UDC chapters and other patriotic organizations like the Colonial Dames, the emphasis placed on caring for soldiers arguably made the transition to war work easier. The activities of the Godmothers League, especially at Camp Lee, stressed the responsibility elite Richmond women felt towards helping soldiers. It also demonstrated the belief southern women had in soldiers' duty to protect them from war, which for southern women had added significance having already suffered through the Civil War.¹⁴⁵

The Godmothers League soon took their war work further, as they became involved in providing appropriate and wholesome leisure activities for soldiers visiting the city. In June 1918, the Godmothers League became the Women's Auxiliary of the War Camp Community Service organization (WAWCCS) and relocated to the Army-Navy Club, gaining a permanent

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵The Godmothers League of Richmond report, undated, Virginia War History Commission, 1917-1931, Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) War Work and Relief Organizations, Box 76 Folder 15, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

location which allowed it to concentrate its activities on entertaining troops on leave in Richmond. The activities of the WAWCCS reflected the dedication of its members to be moral, motherly caretakers of young soldiers. One of the more important social activities held by the WAWCCS were balls where young officers visited with young society girls under the watchful eye of WAWCCS chaperones. The women also held card parties and teas for officers and their wives, an appropriate way of welcoming the women into Richmond society. In addition to entertainment, the women continued to visit Camp Lee and work with their adopted wards. When war ended several months later, the women's auxiliary continued to provide entertainment for returning soldiers and sailors, letting other organizations in the city continue relief work.¹⁴⁶

The Godmothers League and WAWCCS were two of the most successful organizations in the city because their local focus on soldiers in the city meant that elite Richmond women could perform war work reflecting their traditional charitable activities and their regional concerns. Members gave personalized service instead of remaining anonymous benefactors like women in larger organizations. The local focus of the Godmothers League and WAWCCS also reflected the values of the organizations members, many of whom were elite women with traditional ideas about women's roles within their communities. The members of the Godmothers League and WAWCCS incorporated ideas of community involvement through charity work into their wartime activities.¹⁴⁷

By embracing traditional forms of charity and relying on southern gender norms to achieve their goals, the work of Godmothers League and WAWCCS did not challenge their members' ideas of womanhood. Like proper southern ladies, they brought comfort to sick

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ The Godmothers League of Richmond report, undated, Virginia War History Commission Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) War Work and Relief Organizations, Box 76 Folder 15, 1917-1931, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

soldiers and provided hospitality to those visiting the city. They continued the southern tradition of honoring soldiers with their work at Camp Lee and at the Army-Navy Club. They retained many of the characteristics of southern ladies through their genteel behavior and traditional goals closely based on prior Confederate work. As more women entered into wartime work, however, they lost their local focus as they adopted national ideas and goals.

A SECOND LINE OF DEFENSE: WAR WORK & THE WOMAN SUFFRAGE QUESTION

Many Richmond organizations, including suffrage and anti-suffrage associations, integrated relief work into their activities, often working with local and national groups to successfully contribute to the war effort. Over time, they realized the importance of displaying their hard work and patriotism, as accolades in newspapers praising women's hard work helped their public profile and their goals. With encouragement from the papers, it became obvious that whichever group that appeared most patriotic and useful during the war would gain political credibility afterwards. In their wartime activities, suffragists and anti-suffragists battled over whose actions represented true southern womanhood. Suffragists wanted to win equality and political participation, including the right to vote, while anti-suffragists desired to maintain the status quo. Yet, with increased responsibilities at home, and new wartime activities such as preserving food or Red Cross work added to daily chores, Richmond suffragist and anti-suffragists struggled with how to remain southern women while adapting to new wartime challenges.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 164-171.

For Richmond suffragists, World War I was an important opportunity to build their positive image as elite southern women committed to helping their nation at war. The ESL, led by Lila Meade Valentine, did all they could to help the war effort. In its monthly News Bulletin, the ESL proclaimed that “all patriotic service rendered at this time by suffragists is of direct assistance to their cause. Your work may be an inspiration to other suffragists in the State.”¹⁴⁹ The ESL immediately became involved in wartime endeavors, volunteering during Liberty Loan drives and at Red Cross headquarters. It held luncheons to raise money for food conservation, promoted thrift, and offered their support to public officials. Valentine, by then a well-known figure in the city, gave patriotic speeches on registration days.¹⁵⁰ Members put a great deal of effort into their war work, demonstrating both their patriotism and their productivity. They accepted the challenges of war work willingly and incorporated their beliefs about women’s roles into wartime activities.

While they enthusiastically engaged in these activities, the ESL consistently tried to be portrayed as elite southern women whose wartime behaviors were proper and traditional. On March 31, 1917, a full-page announcement appeared in the *Evening Journal* that proclaimed the ESL’s service whether for peace or war.¹⁵¹ Other such articles appeared in Richmond newspapers over the course of the war, demonstrating the ESL’s involvement in everything from food conservation and thrift to Red Cross work as proof of their dedication to the war effort and their patriotism. The women of the ESL also drew on their positions as elite Richmond women to bolster their activities, often earning them positive portrayals in Richmond newspapers. In October 1917, the *News Leader* contrasted the ESL with the National Woman’s Party, which

¹⁴⁹ News Bulletin, ESL VA, April 15 – June 15, 1917, Equal Suffrage League of Virginia, Records, 1909-1938, Accession 22002, Box 4, LVA.

¹⁵⁰ “Patriotic Luncheon” announcement, *The News Leader*, April 12, 1917; “Women Entering on Street Corner Recruiting,” *The News Leader*, April 14, 1917.

¹⁵¹ “Ballots for Both,” *The Evening Journal*, March 31, 1917.

picketed the White House. They praised the dedication of Richmond suffragists to the war effort, and quoted Munford as saying that the ESL did not want the vote “not as a reward for any service, but because we feel that in order to stand still more solidly with the government we must be a part of it.”¹⁵² This positive portrayal of suffragists greatly aided their cause and marked a contrast of their accepting challenges but retaining southern womanhood roles. Furthermore, at their annual convention in November 1917, they embraced the idea of solidarity and working together to win the war. “We have sent our men to form our best line of defense on the battlefields of France,” one suffragist proclaimed, “and we women of Virginia should form a second line at home...we welcome you all into a partnership in this second line, realizing that we are never so strong as when we stand together.”¹⁵³ The message of service that the suffragists pledged during their convention reinforced their participation in various wartime organizations.

Like the ESL, the Virginia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (VAOWS) saw the war as an opportunity to further its cause. Unlike the suffragists, the VAOWS actively promoted an image of themselves as the “guardians of liberty and democracy.”¹⁵⁴ The anti-suffragists’ wartime actions demonstrated the contradictory, conflicting nature of southern womanhood during the war. To support the war effort, the anti-suffragists in Richmond adopted tactics they once condemned as unfeminine. Where once they criticized suffrage parades, they now participated in preparedness parades, though they carefully remained in the grandstands instead of walking in the street like the suffragists did in their parades.¹⁵⁵ Suffragists often pointed out this hypocritical behavior, and challenged the adoption of new aggressive tactics usually seen

¹⁵² “Suffrage League Has No Patience With Picket Methods,” *The News Leader*, October 5, 1917.

¹⁵³ “Mayor Favors Referendum on Votes for Women, He Tells State Convention,” *The News Leader* November 13, 1917.

¹⁵⁴ “Antis Spring Surprise at the ‘Polls’,” *The News Leader*, June 5, 1917.

¹⁵⁵ Steinson, *American Women’s Activism in World War I*, 180.

with suffrage groups. For anti-suffragists who wanted to preserve the status quo, it was often necessary to adapt to new roles in order to succeed.¹⁵⁶

While the VAOWS, like other anti-suffrage association, left no records, their battle against the suffragists played out in the Richmond dailies.¹⁵⁷ On June 5, 1917, members of the ESL assisted with registering draftees, handing out pamphlets, printed with the President's war message. These pamphlets did not contain any sort of pro-suffrage rhetoric.¹⁵⁸ According to the *News Leader*, the anti-suffragists surprised their opponents by distributing leaflets and other literature. The literature was "complimentary to the military eligible...calling them to duty as citizens of these United States," but also conveying an anti-suffrage message:

Men! You are making "The World Safe for Democracy" also for women that your mothers, sisters, and wives may never have to suffer what the women of Belgium and France have suffered. All women thank you. Men manage most of our business. Our government is a very big business. Most women want men to manage our government. Only a few women want suffrage. Shall these few women force all women into politics? Women can do their bit best outside of politics. Our hands are full already with work which only women can do. Women are free from the duty of fighting. Protect us in our right to be free from political duties.¹⁵⁹

The rhetoric used by anti-suffragists in their pamphlets reinforced their conservative beliefs. It also demonstrates how elite Richmond women used public rhetoric to reinforce their carefully constructed image of southern women as civic-minded citizens uninterested in political

¹⁵⁶ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 166.

¹⁵⁷There are a variety of historical interpretations for the absence of anti-suffragists letters. Historian Brian Harrison surmised that, in the case of British anti-suffragists, that the losing side would not keep records of its activities because of the depressing outcome. Elna C. Green, in her writings on Virginia suffragists and anti-suffragists, accepts this idea. Barbara Steinson states that NAOWS officials did not keep a record because they did not want their work to seem political, though there is no evidence whether or not the VAOWS agreed with the national statement. I agree with Steinson's argument that officials would not want to appear like they were using their wartime service for political gain.

¹⁵⁸ "Antis Spring Surprise at the 'Polls'," *The News Leader*, June 5, 1917.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

concern, despite that image being far from the truth. The pamphlet states that the soldiers protected American women from harshness of war, acknowledging the destruction to homes, families, and especially women that resulted from battle. The VAOWS emphasized the traditional belief that women did not care for political duties, yet their public use of aggressive tactics, including the act of writing and distributing pamphlets to a male voting audience, indicated that they embraced the new public roles southern women had developed over the last several decades, exemplified in the activities of suffragists. Virginia's anti-suffragists demonstrated that their conception of womanhood was changing as they incorporated new tactics into their activities and often came very close to defying socially acceptable behavior in their efforts.

The anti-suffragists' plan to use their war work for political credibility faltered as wartime circumstances gave woman suffrage increased support. Several Richmond newspapers challenged the anti-suffragists tactics. "Before war was declared it was a pet pastime of the opponents of woman suffrage to decry the patriotism and loyalty of suffragists," wrote one journalist, "but...a watching world did not fail to take notice that suffragists were first among all women to [put] their organization and its resources at their country's command."¹⁶⁰ Newspaper columns, especially those dedicated to women's interests, discussed woman suffrage as the inevitable outcome of the war effort, helping suffragists succeed in portraying themselves as true patriots.

The conflicting, contradictory actions and words of Richmond's suffragist and anti-suffragists demonstrate how wartime involvement often challenged the very tenets of southern women's identities. For suffragists, who routinely embraced women's new roles, it was crucial to be seen as examples of white southern womanhood in all their wartime actions. As a result,

¹⁶⁰ "Suffrage Service in Wartime," *The Evening Journal*, July 31, 1917.

they were forced to be careful of how their activities were portrayed in newspapers, though that care did not stop them from participating in food conservation, Liberty Loan drives, and other hands-on activities that often challenged southern women's social roles. Wartime work was also difficult for Richmond's anti-suffragists, who sought to be portrayed as bastions of traditional values while adapting new public roles for the sake of their argument. Unlike suffragists, who constantly validated their work by their roles as elite southern women, anti-suffragists validated their roles as southern women by their wartime work assisting soldiers and the government. Unfortunately for anti-suffragists, the tide had already begun to turn towards suffrage, but the debate over who represented a true southern woman, continued as women joined national organizations which challenged them further.

FOR GOD, COUNTRY & HOME: BRINGING NATIONAL WOMANHOOD TO RICHMOND

The National League for Woman's Service (NLWS) and the Woman's Committee of the Virginia State Council of Defense brought national ideas about women's home front roles to their Richmond chapters, encouraging Richmond women to embrace new challenges to their traditional roles. These ideas included national perspectives absent from the philosophy of the Godmothers League in that the organizations considered Richmond women part of a larger war effort, and transposed national ideas about patriotism and responsibility into their work. Both the Woman's Committee and the National League for Woman's Service worked with the federal government for the sake of their country, a new experience for southern women whose previous war work had been against the federal government during the Civil War. By affiliating with national organizations, Richmond women directly challenged many key tenets of southern womanhood with their actions.

The Virginia Branch of the Woman's Committee, Council of National Defense, exemplified the ideal of national womanhood by encouraging women's war work across the nation. The function of the all-male Council of National Defense was to advise the government, establish subordinate agencies, and ensure that the United States would be prepared if forced to enter the European war. The Council of National Defense formed state defense councils that handled the defense preparations in each state.¹⁶¹ Shortly after the declaration of war on April 6, 1917, the Council of National Defense created the Woman's Committee to oversee all aspects of preparing American women to provide assistance on the home front.¹⁶²

The purpose of the Woman's Committee was to utilize women's organizations like the Women's Department of the National Civic Foundation, which, fueled by the fires of patriotism, offered their services to the government for the duration of the war.¹⁶³ Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, former president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, was appointed chair of the committee. Other prominent women, such as Carrie Chapman Catt and journalist Ida M. Tarbell, accepted committee positions. Over the course of the next few months, the Woman's Committee established a nationwide network of state and local divisions, organizing in the "traditional fashion of women's societies and federated clubs" by dividing their work into departments on all levels.¹⁶⁴ It used women's experiences as officers and members in organizations like the Women's Club of Richmond to help the government war effort by establishing well-organized state committees. Through departments on state and local levels, the Woman's Committee channeled womanpower for the federal government's wartime initiatives.

¹⁶¹ Kennedy, *Over Here*, 114-115.

¹⁶² Emily Newell Blair, *The Woman's Committee United State Council of Defense: An Interpretative Report April 21, 1917 to February 27, 1919* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920) 7.

¹⁶³ Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home*, 15.

¹⁶⁴ Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home*, 119.

The Woman's Committee in Virginia encouraged women's participation in government activities. When the all-male Virginia State Council of Defense organized their Woman's Committee in June 1917, they selected Mary-Cooke Branch Munford to serve as chairman, hoping her reputation as a leader in the city's organizations would translate into productive wartime work. The committee served as an auxiliary to the State Council, lacking any vote on Council matters and with no authority unless endorsed by the Council.¹⁶⁵ It enlisted chapters of national women's organizations like the National League for Woman's Service, and local organizations such as the Godmothers League, to assist in bond drives and food conservation activities across the state.¹⁶⁶ Its work, like the work of Woman's Committees throughout the country, concentrated on government programs and limited its own agendas.

The Woman's Committee brought new, national ideas about women's war work to Richmond. Its officers were a mixture of conservative and progressive women who all understood that women's war work required new public duties. They placed southern women's roles in social groups and in the household within a national context that endorsed women's new duties as a result of true patriotism. This broad national perspective differed from the Godmothers League and other Richmond organizations who were primarily concerned with regional matters. While the Woman's Committee did not directly change women's social roles, it emphasized the national significance of women's wartime activities, placing them within the national war effort.

Though it was not nearly as successful as in other states, the work of the Woman's Committee was considered important in Richmond and throughout Virginia. The State Council

¹⁶⁵ Woman's Division, Virginia War History Commission, Series XII First Council of Defense 1917-1918 Box 246 Folder 9 Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

¹⁶⁶ Woman's Division, Virginia War History Commission, Series XII First Council of Defense 1917-1918 Box 246 Folder 9, Box 247 Folder 1, Box 247a Folder 3, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

itself had complete faith in the women of Virginia, as letter to the Secretary of the Council for Defense displays:

My observation is that in Virginia the women are much more completely aroused than are the men, and have already done more to build up patriotic sentiment and bring about the realization of the importance of increased production and conservation of food supplies, greater economy, and preparation to respond to all of the numberless demands that will be incident to a long and tremendously serious struggle.¹⁶⁷

The letter signifies the importance placed in the actions of women not only in Virginia, but throughout the entire country. It also incorporated Virginia women's work into national war work, giving a new perspective to women who deeply valued their regional heritage. The belief that women's war work was important to the nation as a whole propelled the Woman's Committee and other national organizations forward, and inspired many women to seek more recognition through their valuable wartime service.

As an auxiliary of the State Council of Defense, the Virginia Woman's Committee's limited autonomy threatened its long-term success. Munford was considered an auxiliary, non-voting member of the Council with no power, so when the State Council of Defense resigned prior to the official start of governor-elect Westmoreland Davis' term, the Woman's Committee's status was in limbo. The new governor did not believe that the Woman's Committee needed its own offices, staff, or budget, and so Munford and her committee resigned in March 1918. There was no Woman's Committee in the state for several months, and the new Women's Division formed in the fall struggled with the influenza epidemic and the Armistice in

¹⁶⁷ Correspondence from Mr. R. Walton Moore, Special Council for Interstate Commerce Cases, to Col. W.M. Hunley, Secretary of the Council of Defense, 1917, Woman's Division, Virginia War History Commission, Series XII First Council of Defense 1917-1918 Box 246 Folder 9, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

November. The earlier work of the Woman's Committee, however, established norms and goals for women's wartime efforts that continued in Richmond even during its absence.¹⁶⁸

Munford's decision to resign because of lack of support demonstrates the tenuous relationship of the Woman's Committee with the state government. This fickle relationship occurred in many states, and even the National Woman's Committee was uncertain of its authority. There was no clear definition of the Committee's duties or the chairman's powers, just directives that women participate in activities like Liberty Loans and food conservation, which were designed by government departments to help the war effort.¹⁶⁹ Richmond women who participated in the Woman's Committee had previous experience in progressive reforms, municipal housekeeping, memorial societies, and women's clubs, but working in autonomous organizations did not prepare them for government work. The Woman's Committee also relied on the State Council of Defense to fund their efforts and supply them with office spaces to conduct their work. Munford also had no voice of authority where men were concerned: for example, in December 1917 Munford requested the State Council's help in enforcing Meatless Mondays, since many husbands prevented their wives from following Hoover's provisions.¹⁷⁰ By lacking power and autonomy, and being considered disposable, the Woman's Committee of the Virginia Council of Defense achieved limited success.

What the Woman's Committee lacked in autonomy it made up for in its ability to bring national perspectives of womanhood to Virginia women. The Woman's Committee encouraged

¹⁶⁸ Woman's Division, Virginia War History Commission, Series XII First Council of Defense 1917-1918 Box 246 Folder 9, Box 247 Folder 1, Box 247a Folder 3 Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.; Correspondence from Mary-Cooke Branch Munford to Hannah Patterson, Woman's Committee National Council of Defense, March 5, 1918, Mary-Cooke Branch Munford Papers, 1881-1935. Accession 28142, Personal Papers Collection, Box 16 Folder 11, LVA; Meeting minutes, Woman's Section, Second Council of Defense, Virginia War History Commission Series XIV Second Council of Defense 1917-1921, 1923-1924, Box 258 Folder 6, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

¹⁶⁹ Breen, *Uncles Sam at Home*, 121.

¹⁷⁰ Minutes of December 1, 1917 meeting, First Council of Defense, Virginia War History Commission Series XII First Council of Defense 1917-1918 Box 247 Folder 1 LVA.

patriotism in Richmond women, taking the lead in government projects like Liberty Loan drives and food conservation, making Virginia – and Richmond women in particular – into examples for the rest of the nation.¹⁷¹ By challenging them to look outside their local and regional concerns, Richmond women made considerable contributions as part of the national war effort. With the Woman's Committee, they realized their work was important for their country, and went beyond their homes.

Another major national organization in Richmond, the National League for Woman's Service (NLWS) was an autonomous women's organization which, like the Woman's Committee, also concentrated on war relief work. The NLWS grew out of the national preparedness movement and the Women's Department, National Civic Foundation (WDNCF). It was created at the NCF's Congress for Constructive Patriotism in January 1917, and quickly gained the support of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (NAOWS) as well as patriotic organizations like the UDC. The goals of the NLWS were to coordinate the relief work of women throughout the country, establishing local divisions in cities and states. It attracted many women by not charging membership dues. By appealing to women's traditional traits, the organization gave women the opportunity to preserve the nation's future through wartime service while glorifying the region's past.¹⁷²

The Capital City Division of the NLWS was the first national women's wartime organization to form a chapter in Richmond, using the conservative nature of well-established women's organizations to encourage participation in its activities. On February 6, 1917, Mrs. F.D. Williams, president of the Virginia Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (VAOWS),

¹⁷¹ Woman's Division, Virginia War History Commission, Series XII First Council of Defense 1917-1918 Box 246 Folder 9, Box 247 Folder 1, Box 247a Folder 3 LVA

¹⁷² Steinson, *American Women's Activism in World War I*, 178.

called a meeting to address what Richmond women could do for the war effort.¹⁷³ Aided by NLWS State Chairman Mrs. W.W. Sale, wife of Virginia's adjutant general, they formed the Capital City Division after the women present decided the NLWS best represented their war work goals. The Division sought to co-ordinate and standardize the work of women "along the lines of constructive patriotism."¹⁷⁴ The NLWS both incorporated traditional ideas about women's roles in wartime into the national war effort. In a resolution pledged at that first meeting,

the women of the Capital City Division, formerly the Capital of the Confederacy, in behalf of the women of their State of Virginia, freely offer to the Nation the same services they gave to the Confederacy from 1861-1865. This means that whatever they can give in money, service, or substance, according to their respective capacity and ability, will be at the command of their country.¹⁷⁵

The women who founded the Capital City Division believed that their war work followed in the tradition of their mothers and grandmothers' support for the Confederacy. Supporting American troops through their war work also allowed them to claim a stake in public memory of the war. This was important to southern women, in general, and Richmond women, specifically, since their involvement in Confederate memorials societies traditionally served as their way to claim public identity in relation to wars which they could not fight in.¹⁷⁶ By portraying themselves as dedicated to the war effort like Confederate women before them, the Capital City Division appealed to Richmond women.

¹⁷³ National League for Woman's Service, Virginia Division report, undated, Virginia War History Commission Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) War Work and Relief Organizations, Box 76 Folder 23, 1917-1931, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ National League for Woman's Service, Virginia Division report, undated, Virginia War History Commission Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) War Work and Relief Organizations, Box 76 Folder 23, 1917-1931, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

¹⁷⁶ Green, *This Business of Relief*, 120.

Despite this wartime adherence to traditional ideas about southern women's roles, the actual work of NLWS members reflected the acceptance of women's new public roles and agency. In addition to supporting the war, the women of the Capital City Division sought to fulfill wartime duties including supplying the army and caring for the wounded. At the first organizational meeting, held February 23, 1917, members established many committees, ranging from the America First Committee – chaired by Margaret Ethel Kelly Kern – to Publicity, Clerical, and Hospital Supply Committees. The different committees of the organization appealed to a broad spectrum of the city's female population, and allowed for a variety of activities to be undertaken. From there, they set out into the community to drum up support for the war effort. They registered members, helped collect supplies, and made surgical dressings prior to the opening of Red Cross headquarters. Groups such as the UDC and DAR participated in the organization's war work, finding the goals of the organization similar to their own personal beliefs.¹⁷⁷

The NLWS strove to unite the women of Richmond under the banner of national loyalty and national duty for their country. Despite their different ideas about woman suffrage, suffragists and anti-suffragists worked side by side in the NLWS to serve their country. At their first meeting, the *News Leader* reported that differences were not discernable, as women joined the committees of their choice and conducted the meeting in a business-like manner.¹⁷⁸ The NLWS also stressed that it had no political affiliations, and desired no political entanglements, choosing instead to be “a national league in the name of patriotism and in the spirit of

¹⁷⁷ National League for Woman's Service, Virginia Division report, undated, Virginia War History Commission Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) War Work and Relief Organizations, Box 76 Folder 23, 1917-1931, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

¹⁷⁸ “Richmond Women Band Together for Work When United States Goes to War,” *The News Leader*, February 23, 1917.

service...for God, country, and for home.”¹⁷⁹ In this regard, they varied from the Woman’s Committee who, while not endorsing politicians, were directly connected to the federal government. By promoting their lack of political connections as well as their endorsement by the NAOWS, the NLWS gained support from conservative southern women who valued the tradition of indirect political involvement by participation in clubs and societies. Overt political action remained outside of the NLWS work, allowing women with different beliefs to work together in the organization. ¹⁸⁰

The NLWS developed a reputation in Richmond for their hard work, becoming a “small army” working in a “business-like way” with the Red Cross, Liberty Loan Drives, and other wartime organizations.¹⁸¹ The NLWS stated that “there is unlimited work ahead for all women, there is unlimited compensation for all women who do their work unselfishly and impersonally.”¹⁸² Relief work, as done by the Capital City Division, was treated professionally for the purpose of recognition. The NLWS wanted to prove how successful women could be on their own. This attitude stressed its members’ service and reflected similar beliefs of organizations such as the Richmond Education Association, which focused on results. Unlike the REA, however, the NLWS did not work with other organizations, male or female, to achieve their results, preferring to work autonomously and independently, though they did assist both the Woman’s Committee and the Red Cross with their work. Their businesslike approach and serious rhetoric reinforced their beliefs that they could conduct war relief work just as well as

¹⁷⁹ “Continue War Relief,” *The Times-Dispatch*, April 19, 1917.

¹⁸⁰ National League for Woman’s Service, Virginia Division report, undated, Virginia War History Commission Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) War Work and Relief Organizations, Box 76 Folder 23, 1917-1931, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

¹⁸¹ Undated newspaper, Second Council of Defense report, Virginia War History Commission Series XIV Second Council of Defense 1917-1921, 1923-1924 Box 5, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA ;”Women’s Work in Virginia Under Way,” *The News Leader* June 25, 1917.

¹⁸² National League for Woman’s Service , Virginia Division report, undated, Virginia War History Commission Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) War Work and Relief Organizations, Box 76 Folder 23, 1917-1931, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA .

men, and they embraced the changes in womanhood which allowed them more public and – in the case of war – equal roles.

The Woman's Committee and the NLWS both gave Richmond women the opportunity to help their nation on a local level. The wartime work of both organization garnered them praise and recognition, an important observation in a crucial time. While the Woman's Committee, as a government liaison to women's organizations, lacked up of the autonomy of groups like the NLWS, it still inspired women to participate in war work for their county. Throughout the war, the NLWS served its duty for God, country, and home, which went from being their region to being their nation. Participation in the NLWS and other organizations exposed Richmond women to ideas about national womanhood, including professional behavior and national patriotism. While they embraced the heritage of southern women by comparing their wartime service to that of their Confederate ancestors, they incorporated new national ideas into their work. While the national focus on all of America was new, the idea of working for their nation – be it the Confederate States or the United States – seemed to be universal.

CONCLUSION

During World War I, Richmond women were faced with a challenge: they could retain their traditional methods of providing relief and support for the government and soldiers during war, or they could participate in new activities for the sake of the war effort, activities which often challenged their traditional female roles. Many elite women chose to retain their traditional duties, participating in organizations like the VWRA and Godmothers League, whose activities relied on women's traditional roles to be successful, providing nurturing care to soldiers both in Richmond and in Europe. Some elite women chose to participate in national

organizations, which brought ideas about patriotism and women's changing public roles to the South. These organizations stressed professionalism, patriotism, and loyalty. Women who joined these organizations faced challenges to their identities as southern women, since the organizations themselves sought to erase regional distinctions and concentrate on the war effort. Through these challenges, Richmond women modified their ideas to their new roles, a change especially important as they entered into different types of war relief work.

CHAPTER THREE: THE WARTIME TRANSFORMATION OF SOUTHERN WOMEN

During the third Liberty Loan drive in April 1918, *The Richmond News Leader* printed a supplement aimed at encouraging Liberty Loan sales. Cally Ryland, a noted Virginia journalist who wrote a women's column for the paper, took the opportunity to draw attention to the wartime work undertaken by Richmond women over the course of the last year. "To the question, 'What are women doing to win this war?'" Ryland wrote, "the answer might well be, 'Everything,' with the further admission that 'everything they are doing they are doing well.'" She went on to extol women's participation in Red Cross work, Liberty Loan drives, and food conservation activities, further demonstrating that the women of Richmond were doing "everything" they could to help win the war.¹⁸³

The records of Richmond women's organizations testify to their significant activity during World War I. This wartime work, undertaken by organizations and by individuals, tested women's patriotism, loyalty, and dependability. Some activities, like participation in food conservation efforts, relied on women's socially accepted domestic roles to be successful. Other endeavors, such as participation with the Red Cross Canteen Services committee, demonstrated the changing public face of southern womanhood. Elite white Richmond women accepted the tremendous responsibility of war work in its various forms. In accepting this responsibility, they carried on the traditions of their mothers and grandmothers who aided the Confederate Army during the Civil War. At the same time, however, they showed how southern womanhood had changed in such a way throughout the early decades of the twentieth century that they could accept new wartime responsibilities, including those not traditionally considered feminine.

¹⁸³ Cally Ryland, "Women Co-Operating Splendidly in Fifth District's Campaign," *The News Leader*, April 27, 1918.

This chapter evaluates the wartime activities of Richmond women, specifically the activities they participated in which incorporated traditional southern and new national roles. Women involved in voluntary organizations in the early twentieth century participated in wartime work to support the government and troops abroad. This marked a change for women whose public activities had, until then, concentrated almost entirely on local concerns. This chapter will examine the types of work undertaken by Richmond women, from conventional activities like fundraising to wartime Red Cross work, which often pushed the boundaries of women's social roles. Through these activities, women viewed themselves as contributing to the national war effort. In addition to their new national role, their new experiences during wartime helped them redefine ideas about women's changing roles in the twentieth century.

A key component of this analysis is the observation that war work was undertaken with the understanding that, with their time and energy, women could help win the war. Inspired by patriotic propaganda, Richmond women believed that their contributions directly affected the war's outcome. For these women, participation in war relief work meant reevaluating traditional southern ideas about their roles and incorporating new national ideas about what it meant to be women in America. Prior to the war, Richmond women's public endeavors concentrated on specific, regional interests, like Confederate memory and local municipal housekeeping. During World War I, women joined national organizations and took part in new activities. With wartime work, women could make a difference through their autonomous organizations. For Richmond women undergoing a metamorphosis from Southern Ladies into American Women, this work was about more than winning the war. It gave them legitimacy when interacting with the government as well as with men and their communities. Wartime activities also furthered their developing national identity. Women's columns in Richmond

newspapers reminded them that the Great War was the “greatest chance for service” offered to American women, an opportunity to prove themselves to the nation. Wartime work, and the belief that they were actively aiding the war, gave southern women a sense of pride and encouragement different from earlier activities as well as a new context within which to place themselves.¹⁸⁴

WARTIME WORK: LIBERTY LOANS, FOOD CONSERVATION, & THE RED CROSS

Richmond journalist Cally Ryland was the loudest champion of women’s involvement in the war effort. This was not a new role for Ryland, whose newspaper columns usually focused on women’s issues from domestic duties to their public responsibilities. In her articles for *The News-Leader*, Ryland constantly praised women for their hard work during Liberty Loan drives and Red Cross campaigns – and encouraged other women to do their part. “The war is going to be brought home to everyone of us in one way or another,” she wrote, “and the best way for it is to join the organization[s] mentioned by the government and doing the government’s work in the government’s way.”¹⁸⁵ Ryland knew that women’s assistance was vital if the United States was to win the war. Assisting with the war effort would not be difficult, since most wartime activities were an extension of work previously undertaken by women’s organizations, such as fundraising and philanthropy. What was different was that taking part in Liberty Loan drives, food conservation, and even the Red Cross forced Richmond women to consider their nation as well as their region.

The federal government, tapping into women’s expressed desire to help during wartime, encouraged women and their organizations to participate in Liberty Loan drives, food

¹⁸⁴ Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 29; “Her Chance for Service,” *The Evening Journal*, May 30, 1917.

¹⁸⁵ Cally Ryland, “Red Cross Members,” *The News Leader*, May 17, 1917.

conservation activities, and Red Cross work. Activities like fundraising, canning, and sewing took advantage of women's traditional roles. All of these activities, government propaganda proclaimed, were essential to the war effort and the voluntary responsibility of every American woman.

Liberty Loan drives were one way women assisted the war effort, drawing on previous fundraising experience to help sell government bonds. Nicknamed "Liberty Loans," the bonds were popular ways for Americans to invest and earn interest while supporting their country. Each bond contained an engraved sheet of interest coupons, with instructions to cash one coupon every six months to collect its interest. The wealth of the United States, "the richest government in the world," served as collateral to encourage those who could not fight – including women – to support the war through monetary loans.¹⁸⁶ Nearly every city, including Richmond, had bond drives where women sold bonds. Women were not the only ones participating in bond drives, since male bankers in Richmond were also involved, but women were the ones standing at booths from dawn until dusk, selling bonds to passersby to help their country.

Food conservation activities were another way for women to help the nation's war effort. With a standing army as well as promised aid to Europe, food production and conservation on the home front became a concern. In order to manage America's food supply, President Wilson appointed Herbert Hoover, former head of the Commission for the Relief of Belgium, as Federal Food Administrator. In addition to working with farmers and large businesses to maximize the wartime economy, Hoover set in place a system that did not demand outright rationing. Instead, it called for "Meatless Mondays" and "Wheatless Wednesdays," allowing Americans to

¹⁸⁶ Robert H. Zieger, *America's Great War: World War I and the American Experience* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 75; Kennedy, *Over Here*, 100; Cally Ryland, "What the Liberty Bond Is: An Appeal to Virginia Women," *The News Leader* October 13, 1917; United Bank of Richmond advertisement, "The Question Answered," *The News Leader*, October 17, 1917.

voluntarily give up food in order to supply the troops. American women like those in Richmond assisted the Food Administration in registering to conserve food in many different ways, including holding canning classes and planting war gardens. These activities drew on Richmond women's domestic roles more so than other activities.¹⁸⁷

While not a government agency like the Food Administration, the American Red Cross nevertheless played an important role providing war relief. The organization's work had been focused on collecting money and donations for foreign soldiers, doctors and nurses, yet by 1917 it began to increase productivity in existing chapters and establish new chapters in cities like Richmond, Virginia. Men and women both joined the Red Cross by pledging money. Women also contributed by knitting and sewing in Red Cross work rooms, or by wearing Red Cross uniforms and soliciting money. Red Cross work stemmed from women's traditional domestic and nurturing responsibilities, but incorporated new ideas, such as long hours spent in workrooms and driving cars.¹⁸⁸

Liberty Loan drives, food conservation, and Red Cross activities allowed women to help their country through wartime work. In their endeavors, women embraced traditional roles as well as tailored new, national ideas to their regional concerns. By their participation in the war effort, Richmond women experienced numerous opportunities to assist their region and their country during World War I.

¹⁸⁷ Kennedy, *Over Here*, 118-120.

¹⁸⁸ "History of the Richmond Chapter Red Cross," undated, Virginia War History Commission Series VII City Source Material –Richmond (cont.) Economic Conditions and the Red Cross, Box 75 Folder 43, 1917-1931, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

BECOMING AMERICAN WOMEN

Southern women had long considered their state and their region to be their primary concerns, but they expanded their focus to the nation as they began war relief work. Richmond chapters of national organizations, such as the Capital City Division of the National League for Woman's Service, reinforced this national perspective in their patriotic propaganda, which they published in local newspapers. In one *News Leader* article, they wrote: "Virginia, mother of noble sons, calls you to defend her...state pride, which is our boast, men, will cause your hearts to swell with patriotism which is God-given love of country...Stand like a stone wall behind your president!" State loyalty became congruent with national patriotism – a sharp contrast to the prevailing culture of Confederate memory, which had pitted regional identity against the power of the federal government. The rhetoric used by the NLWS included the phrase "like a stone wall," referencing Virginia-born Confederate General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, while the president in question was Virginia-born Woodrow Wilson, suggesting how the lines between regional loyalty and national patriotism became blurred during the Great War.¹⁸⁹ These calls for dual loyalty were not restricted to soldiers, as women also felt a new patriotism and responsibility to their country that they articulated through their work with Liberty Loan drives, food conservation, and the Red Cross. In all three activities, Richmond women drew on concepts of patriotism to help them accept war work, embracing a new, reconciled identity as both southern and American women.

Liberty Loans

To help their country, Richmond women and their organizations participated in Liberty Loan drives. Across the United States, buying Liberty bonds became a way to display

¹⁸⁹ "Sons of Virginia, Awake!" *The News Leader*, April 14, 1917.

patriotism: foreign-born citizens pledged their allegiance to the United States by purchasing bonds, and women demonstrated their commitment to the war effort with their own money. For Richmond women, buying bonds meant more than just funding the federal government. As newspaper articles often reminded, buying bonds meant aiding soldiers, the responsibility of Americans during the war. Buying Liberty Loans also instilled in women the belief that it was their duty as American citizens to be involved in the war effort. In many ways, buying bonds and volunteering during drives gave them the satisfaction of helping their government and assisting American soldiers.

Because Liberty Loan drives were simple and patriotic ways to support their country, many women participated in them. Upon first implementing Liberty Loans, the government neglected to use women and their organizations to promote the drives. The first drive in May 1917 was not well publicized, leaving women unprepared to help. Women contributed so much independently, however, that the next three drives harnessed their patriotic fervor.¹⁹⁰ Both the National League for Woman's Service and the Woman's Committee, Council for National Defense, worked to ensure participation and cooperation between all women and their organizations during drives.¹⁹¹ Organizations like the NLWS saw Liberty Loan drives as an essential way American women could help their country, since they assumed many members already had experience selling chances at festivals and church bazaars.¹⁹² This assumption implied the majority of their members actively participated in fundraising events through church auxiliaries and women's organizations, and they could use this experience to help during the war.

¹⁹⁰ Etta Belle Walker Northington, *A History of the Virginia Federation of Women's Clubs, 1907-1957* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1958). 52.

¹⁹¹ Blair, *The Woman's Committee, United States Council of Defense*, 30.

¹⁹² Bessie R. James, *For God, For Country, For Home: The National League for Woman's Service – A Story of the First National Organization of American Women Mobilized for War Service* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1920) 200-201.

Liberty Loan drives seemed to fit the conception of what national organizations like the NLWS considered appropriate female behavior and, as it turned out, many members of female organizations were more than willing to volunteer their time.

As they accepted their important roles in the next three drives, Richmond women began to view their participation in Liberty Loans drives as important to the government's war effort. During the second drive, Mrs. William Ruffin Cox, Woman's Committee chairman of Liberty Loans, compared the buying of loans to sounding the "trumpet of democracy":

Every liberty bond sold is a voice against cruelty and oppression; every Liberty bond sold is a cheer from the trenches; every Liberty bond sold is a blow to Germany. The citizens of this country who neglect to buy one [offer] sympathy to a cause which mocks liberty and embraces oppression. The success of the Liberty Loan...declares unity and satisfaction; it shows that the rank and file are hand in hand with the president – the might[y] with those of poor estate.¹⁹³

According to Cox, buying Liberty Loans gave all citizens the opportunity to support their country, regardless of their lack of wealth or, in the case of women, their inability to vote.

Those who supported their government through Liberty Loans, then, assisted in the fighting the war.

Another important aspect of Cox's speech was that, as the wife of a Confederate veteran and prominent member of memorial organizations like the UDC, her statement of unity expressed the new national perspective created by war. It was the responsibility of southern men and women to assist their country as Americans, not just southerners or Virginians.¹⁹⁴ This rhetoric of unity was especially poignant for women in organizations associated with Confederate memory. Rhetoric and imagery connected southern patriotism with national

¹⁹³ "Women Giving Thousands to War Loan," *The News Leader*, October 16, 1917.

¹⁹⁴ Brent Witt, "Toilers in the Sun: Richmond's Wonderful World of Women." *Everywoman's Magazine*, 1:12 (1917) 59.

patriotism. During the Third Liberty Loan Drive, women staged a photo in front of the former White House of the Confederacy. In the photo, Eppa Hunton IV, grandson of two Confederate veterans, bought a loan from the women in front of two Confederate veterans.¹⁹⁵ With the American and Confederate flags prominently displayed side by side, and two elderly disabled veterans flanking the table, this picture was the embodiment of patriotism to Richmond citizens.¹⁹⁶ With this picture in front of the former White House of the Confederacy, the women of Richmond combined loyalty to the South with dedication to their nation.

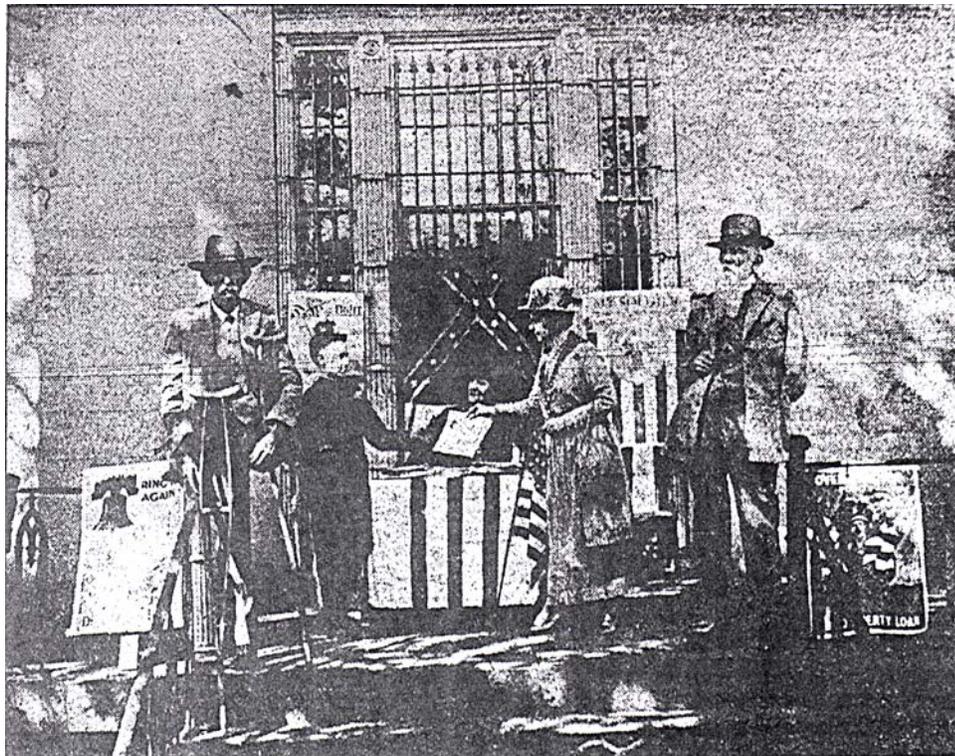


Figure 2. Selling Liberty Loans at the White House of the Confederacy, 1918.
Courtesy of the *Richmond News Leader*, April 13, 1918.

Participation in national bond drives gave women a sense of national identity in addition to their distinct regional identity. While their activities focused on Richmond, their impact was

¹⁹⁵ Eppa Hunton IV was the boy Janet Randolph alluded to in her speech to the General Assembly supporting the Co-Ordinate College League, stating, “I see no reason why Janet Randolph III should not go to the University of Virginia as well as Eppa Hunton IV.”

¹⁹⁶ “Liberty Bond Sale at Old White House of the Confederacy,” *The News Leader*, April 13, 1918.

important for America as a whole. Joining national women's organizations like the Women's Christian Temperance Union and wartime organizations like the NLWS allowed Richmond women to place the fruits of their labor alongside the efforts of other women from across the nation, giving their work importance outside their state.

Richmond women who participated in Liberty Loan drives also saw their work as an opportunity to help win the war by participating in socially acceptable activities like fundraising. They reinforced their southern identity, blending ideas about Confederate memory while they also acknowledged their importance as American women through their war work. Their work was not just for their community but also for the national war effort, a trend which would continue in other activities which drew on domestic traditions to fight the war.

Food Conservation

Food conservation was one of the most important activities Richmond women participated in during the First World War. Federal Food Administrator Herbert Hoover relied on women's traditional domestic roles to ensure their participation in his food initiatives. "The women of American have never failed to answer such as call as comes to them now," Hoover wrote to a Richmond bishop. "The saving of food is within their sphere...In very truth, the outcome of the world war is in the hands of women no less than in the hands of men."¹⁹⁷ American women's domestic duties, like cooking and purchasing food, made their wartime efforts seem like natural extensions of their traditional gender roles. Patriotic propaganda, including newspaper articles, reinforced the belief that "women have a better opportunity than shouldering a gun and marching to the front," by taking an active role in food conservation,

¹⁹⁷ Letter from Herbert Hoover to an unidentified Bishop of Richmond, June 1917, Woman's Division, Virginia War History Commission, Series XII First Council of Defense 1917-1918, Box 247a Folder 3, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA; Kennedy, *Over There*, 118-120.

which allowed them to view their actions as a way to participate in the war without being on the battlefield.¹⁹⁸

National women's organizations viewed women's roles in food conservation as an expression of their dedication to the national war effort. The Woman's Committee, Council for National Defense, and the National League for Woman's Service cooperated in several food conservation activities, including a food registration card campaign. The cards, distributed in July 1917, were to be signed by every woman as they joined in the "service of food conservation for our nation," and accepted "official" membership with the Federal Food Administration.¹⁹⁹ In Richmond, women like Margaret Kern and Janet Randolph went door-to-door collecting signed pledge cards.²⁰⁰ The process, first of signing cards then of ensuring others also pledged to follow the guidelines of the Food Administration, offered a particular challenge for American women, including those in Richmond. Domestic affairs, including food consumption, were under the jurisdiction of women in their separate spheres. Yet, the war allowed the federal government to enter kitchens and make what was considered private into a public interest. By asking women to follow the government's orders in their kitchens and households, the government brought women and their concerns further into the public sphere. Food conservation and preservation, once a private matter, became part of the national discourse on the war.²⁰¹ In making the private practice of women's food management into a public concern, the government increased the importance of women's homefront roles.

¹⁹⁸ Zieger, *America's Great War*, 74; "How Women Can Serve," *The Evening Journal*, April 30, 1917.

¹⁹⁹ James, *For God, For Country, For Home*, 95.

²⁰⁰ Untitled *Times-Dispatch* article, dated July 6, 1917, Margaret Ethel Kelley Kern Papers, Virginia War History Commission 1917-1925, 1928, Box 279 Folder 5, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

²⁰¹ Blair, *The Woman's Committee United State Council of Defense*, 58-60.

Despite the fact that participation in food conservation activities was a voluntary activity, most women considered it a duty to their country and took their pledge seriously.²⁰² As Bessie R. James wrote in the NLWS's war work summary, "nearly every woman enlisted in the army which was fighting the war by saving food."²⁰³ The executive committee of the United Daughters of the Confederacy also sent letters to its chapters instructing women to help in food conservation. "Southern women face an opportunity for extreme usefulness," wrote Registrar General Mrs. J. Norman Powell, "[for] with the South rests the duty of feeding the nation during this war, and the eyes of the world are upon us...in no other way can our women be of better service than by increasing the conserving [of] the food supply."²⁰⁴ While both the Woman's Committee and the NLWS considered food conservation the duty of women, the UDC made sure to reinforce their distinction that this was an opportunity for southern women to show their worth to the nation.

For southern women especially, the movement of domestic duties into a public sphere reinforced existing ideas about gender roles and women's duties. Food conservation activities used women's traditional roles to help the country. Southern women had long identified themselves as housekeepers, and food conservation measures proposed by the federal government made it acceptable for women to retain their traditional roles while helping their country. Hoover suggested many different ways for American women to help, specifically by preserving food, producing food and conserving food. In order to conserve food, women pledged to refrain from using too much flour, sugar, fat, and meat. Cooking and canning classes held by Virginia Polytechnic Institute's extension agent and independent speakers touring the

²⁰² Steinson, *American Women's Activism in World War I*, 312.

²⁰³ James, *For God, For Country, For Home* 221.

²⁰⁴ Undated letter from Mrs. Norman Powell, Registrar General of the UDC to local chapters, Red Cross Files, Richmond Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection, MOC.

country were popular in Richmond. In addition to canning classes, Richmond newspapers dedicated many column inches to printing detailed canning instructions in its pages. Women were also encouraged to shop wisely and practice thrift. While many activities drew on women's traditional roles, others invited Richmond women to join other American women and try new things to help their nation.²⁰⁵



Figure 3. The Uniform of the Food Army 1917.
(Courtesy of the *Richmond News Leader*, September 7, 1917)

At the same time, participating in new activities gave women a new identity as part of the national food army – complete with uniforms. The Food Administration produced an official

²⁰⁵ Cally Ryland, "Housekeeper and Cooks," *The News Leader*, July 6, 1918; "More Canning in Glass," *The News Leader*, August 4, 1917; "Women of Virginia Join in Food Conservation," *The Times-Dispatch*, June 30, 1917; "Attend War Bread Classes," *The Evening Journal*, January 29, 1918; Kennedy, *Over Here*, 118-120.

uniform pattern that could be bought for ten cents through the administration's Washington, D.C. office. Newspapers like *The News-Leader* and *The Richmond Times-Dispatch* ran articles with pictures of the uniforms in an effort to encourage Richmond women's participation in food conservation endeavors.²⁰⁶ The uniform reinforced the idea of recruiting American women into the food army. Wearing the Food Administration uniform, much like wearing a military uniform, united women across the country who were all assisting the war effort.

Food conservation activities in Richmond demonstrated the importance placed on American women's aid in helping win the war through food, an important domestic concern made into a public matter during the war. For southern women drafted into "food army," the action helped them form a national identity alongside other female "recruits." They wore uniforms, attended canning classes, and worked together, believing that their contributions would help the war. Like with Liberty Loan work, Richmond women embraced patriotic rhetoric that recognized their contributions and encouraged their efforts, helping them understand their roles as members of the American "food army."

Red Cross Work

In addition to buying bonds and conserving food, American women also helped wounded soldiers receive the medical attention they needed by working with the Red Cross, the nation's premier relief association. Prior to America's entrance into war, the Red Cross focused its efforts on providing medical supplies for doctors and nurses on European battlefields.

American citizens donated money and hospital supplies to the Red Cross through local relief associations like the Virginia War Relief Association. In 1917, the Red Cross established new

²⁰⁶ "Wear this Uniform: It is Becoming Inexpensive and a Sign of Patriotism," *The News Leader*, September 7, 1917; "Incidentally the Women of the Nation are the Be Reckoned With" picture essay, *The Times-Dispatch*, May 23 1917.

headquarters across the nation, including a new chapter in Richmond. These chapters offered numerous opportunities for American women, regardless of region, to help their nation.

Richmond women's organizations who participated in Red Cross saw their involvement as crucial to the war effort. Like their mothers and grandmothers, they appreciated being able to work in groups, making supplies for soldiers. Unlike other types of war work, such as Liberty Loans or food conservation, Red Cross work offered opportunities to directly assist soldiers and civilians abroad. Donating money to buy ambulances and hospital beds, as well as build and repair hospitals in war zones, allowed women to involve themselves directly in the care of the wounded. Making hospital supplies, sewing pajamas and pillowcases, and knitting socks all helped the Red Cross provide for the comfort and well being of soldiers.

In addition to this task-oriented work, women also participated in public displays of patriotism to support the Red Cross. Richmond women dressed in Red Cross uniforms to solicit pledges and other contributions from the general population. In May 1918, 300 women dressed in Red Cross uniforms and wearing ribbons with one word – “Give” – stood in total silence five feet apart in the business district for thirty minutes. At the same time, more women volunteers manned 100 booths around Richmond collecting donations for the organization. The Silent Appeal, and the powerful image of women wearing Red Cross uniforms in a dramatic show of patriotism, the Red Cross hoped, would inspire increased donations.²⁰⁷ Other appeals by women, including parades, were meant to inspire patriotism in Richmond citizens and encourage donations to the Red Cross. At the same time, they reinforced the idea that women participating in Red Cross work were part of a bigger group, complete with uniforms that gave their work a

²⁰⁷ “Do You Remember? A Living Scrapbook of the Richmond Chapter, American Red Cross Through the Past Forty Years.” Records of the Greater Richmond Chapter of the American Red Cross, Valentine Museum Archives, Richmond, Virginia (henceforth VAL); “Red Cross Booths Spring Up At 100 Points; Silent Workers at Their Places,” *The News Leader*, May 22, 1918.

martial flair. Like the food army of the Food Administration, uniformed Red Cross workers expressed an identity as a collective group, aiding the nation through patriotic Red Cross work.²⁰⁸

In all their work, Richmond women who assisted the Red Cross became a part of the American whole. By participating in large-scale activities with the national organization, including dressing in Red Cross uniforms, Richmond women viewed their war work as having a national and global impact. Red Cross work helped increase their already changing perspective on community and regional work. The Red Cross offered opportunities for Richmond women to aid the war effort by making useful supplies. Like much of their earlier working helping their communities, women found Red Cross work appealing because it allowed them to directly aid the war effort with their work and drew on women's natural roles as nurturing, caring individuals.

The participation of the Lee Chapter, UDC, in the Red Cross illustrates how some southern women saw their work as important for United States as a whole. Members of the Lee Chapter worked in Red Cross workrooms, producing over one thousand garments and bandages in 1918 alone. The Lee Chapter recognized their work as ensuring a new legacy: "we have made [these contributions] towards the comfort and pleasure of our sailors, soldiers, and marine boys who have won the United States a glory that will never fade, and whose names will be handed down to all generations as the preservers of Paris when the days were darkest."²⁰⁹ The Lee Chapter continued their work with the Home for Needy Confederate Women, but at the same time, members were aware that their duties were not only to preserve the legacy of the Confederacy, but to also to remember the soldiers and sailors serving abroad during World War

²⁰⁸ "Usher in Red Cross Week with Big Street Parade," *The Times-Dispatch*, June 4, 1917.

²⁰⁹ Minutes of the Twenty-Second Annual Convention, 1917 Virginia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection, MOC.

I. By moving from a distinct regional identity to a national, collective memory, the Lee Chapter demonstrated the changing focus and, indeed, identity, of southern women.

In all of their wartime activities, Richmond women dealt with their own regional identity as well as feelings of American patriotism. The rhetoric and imagery used by the government emphasized American women's responsibilities as citizens, mothers, and women. Richmond women accepted this patriotism and drew on it to fuel their war work. Liberty Loan drives, food conservation work, and Red Cross activities all supported the war effort. They retained attributes of southern women, such as regional identity and loyalty to Confederate memory, as seen in the work of Liberty Loan committees, but instead of only viewing themselves as Virginians, elite white Richmond women began to identify themselves as Americans as well.

QUITE A DIFFERENT THING: THE NEW SOUTHERN WOMAN

In 1918, a federal Food Administrator wrote a letter to a member of the Virginia Council of Defense, emphasizing the commitment Richmond women displayed towards the war in Europe. The bureaucrat proclaimed Richmond women did more than they were asked to do, working not only with "ardor and efficiency, but they have shown a power to organize for doing things on their own initiative, which is quite a different thing and a very much more difficult thing."²¹⁰ Richmond women's initiative to participate in the war effort demonstrated more than just patriotic sentiments. It was not new for Richmond women to engage in public activities like fundraising or charity work, but the scope of their work during World War I and what they accomplished demonstrated how southern women's lives and identities had undergone

²¹⁰ Letter from Federal Food Administrator for Virginia to "Local Home Economics Directors" October 16, 1918, Virginia War History Commission Series VII City Source Material Richmond (cont.) Economic Conditions and Social Conditions, Box 75 Folder 8, LVA.

significant change since the Civil War, as they willingly accepted new wartime responsibilities and, with that, redefined southern womanhood.

While participating in Liberty Loan drives, food conservation, and Red Cross work, Richmond women confronted new ideas about women's social roles, including women's education, public engagement, and domestic duties. Many of these ideas were characteristic of the "New Woman" archetype, which appeared in the last decades of the nineteenth century and was more commonly found in northern cities. The "New Woman" of the twentieth century was educated, professional, financially independent, and eager to engage in public activities from clubs to social work. Many women found this archetype inspiring, including white southern women. With the First World War, southern women were able to adapt some of these new ideas to their daily lives through wartime activities. Some of these activities continued to reinforce traditional southern gender norms, like domesticity and Confederate memory, while others encouraged southern women to take on new challenges, like forming consumer protection leagues. As Richmond women experienced new opportunities, they laid the foundation for a New Woman who was both southern and American.²¹¹

Liberty Loans

In addition to being an expression of patriotism, Liberty Loan drives were an opportunity for Richmond women to participate in both traditional and innovative activities for the war effort. Many Richmond women's organizations viewed volunteering during Liberty Loan drives as a patriotic duty that they gladly accepted, resulting in a large number of eager volunteers. In terms of their commitment, bond drives required minimum effort, since they took place for approximately one week every six months. Planning for the drives required finding volunteers

²¹¹ Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman*, 4; Collins, *America's Women*, 181-195.

who would agree to solicit pledges from passersby in department stores and other public locations. Compared to Red Cross work, the drives seemed to be a familiar fundraising exercise for Richmond women, albeit with a more urgent cause than Confederate memory. At the same time, however, the drives offered opportunities to engage in new forms of fundraising very different from southern women's previous experiences.

During the Second Liberty Loan Drive in October 1917, the Woman's Committee, Virginia Council of Defense, enlisted Cally Ryland, a suffragist and journalist, to publicize women's involvement in the drives. Ryland compared women's work to men's, both at home and abroad: "the women of Virginia cannot afford to do less than the men of Virginia are doing to win this war...every woman that buys a Liberty Bond has done her share towards winning this war."²¹² By comparing women and men's responsibilities, Ryland emphasized the importance of women's roles in the war effort, stressing gender equality through contributions of both money and time to bond drives. This gender equality was new to southern women who tended to defer to men in nearly all aspects of their lives, especially financial. By comparing their wartime efforts, Ryland offered women positive reinforcement to encourage their participation – and, because Ryland was a suffragist, she incorporated her own beliefs on women's changing roles in her commentary.

Embracing their essential part in the war effort, Richmond women participated with their organizations in the last three bond drives. During the second drive, which took place in October 1917, organizations including the UDC and Equal Suffrage League volunteered to sell bonds at booths set up in two Richmond department stores, Miller & Rhoads and Cohen's. Their success – a conservative estimate of over \$30,000 worth of bonds sold in the first few days alone

²¹² Cally Ryland, "What the Liberty Bond Is: An Appeal to Virginia Women," *The News Leader* October 13, 1917, reprinted April 6, 1918.

-- led to two more booths opening in additional stores by the end of the drive.²¹³ The third Liberty Loan campaign was even larger than the first two. Forty-one women's clubs and organizations volunteered - twice as many as the October drive. Booths were set up in five department stores as well as hotels, post offices, and banks throughout the city. In the spirit of solidarity, and not seen in previous drives, the Liberty Loan committee coordinated with Maggie Lena Walker and the city's African American population to have a separate booth set up at Walker's bank, the St. Luke's Penny Savings Bank. Many women's organizations, including local Girl Scout troops and a group calling themselves "Locomotive Engine Wives," volunteered their help for the third drive.²¹⁴ Although participation in the fourth drive lagged well behind that of the earlier ones due to influenza driving many people out of the city, and news of Allied victories in Europe, a pattern of female leadership in these fundraising campaigns had been well established.²¹⁵

Many organizations saw bond drives as extensions of other female fundraising work, albeit for the federal government, but the reality was more complex. The work of selling Liberty Loans was very different from how southern women usually fundraised. Women's organizations in Richmond, like the UDC or Women's Club, traditionally relied on charity concerts, tableaux, and balls to raise money. An example of this type of fundraising would be the Virginia War Relief Association tableaux discussed in Chapter Two, where women volunteers dressed in patriotic costumes to raise money for European relief agencies. These events were social gatherings that allowed guests – people known in their social circles - to enjoy themselves while donating money. By contrast, Liberty Loans were not social events.

²¹³ "Women Giving Thousands to War Loan," *The News Leader*, October 16, 1917.

²¹⁴ "Women Representing Forty-One Organizations Are Planning to Launch Big Liberty Bond Drive," *The News Leader*, April 5, 1918; "Women Active at 12 Bond Drives," *The News Leader*, April 6, 1918.

²¹⁵ "Discordant Note Sounded in Drive for Loan When Only 20 Attend Meeting," *The News Leader*, October 8, 1918.

During drives, women stationed themselves in public locations and had to approach potential donors, most of them strangers. Asking for money in this way made selling bonds far more hands-on and direct than other pre-war fundraising methods.²¹⁶ These were financial rather than social transactions. Bond drives, while appearing to embrace women's fundraising expertise, pushed them into the male-dominated areas of banking and commerce. In their efforts, women became more assertive, cooperated with other organizations, and talked to strangers. These methods were used throughout the United States as American women, including those in Richmond, adopted new behaviors to help sell bonds.

The methods used to sell Liberty Loans in Richmond embraced the new social roles of American women, though the average participant would hardly consider themselves "New Women" in any way. While almost all of the women's organizations in Richmond participated in Liberty Loan drives, more neighborhood women's clubs and memorial societies like the Colonial Dames and UDC participated in drives than social welfare groups or other women's organizations. These organizations were more socially conservative than other organizations, like the ESL, and the attraction of groups like the UDC to Liberty Loans drives signified that members considered selling Liberty Loans acceptable behavior for southern women like themselves, in spite of the fact that the activity differed greatly from their preferred methods of fundraising. These same women – who eagerly participated in bond drives – rejected the movement of their organizations towards acknowledging women's new roles, like the decision of the Women's Club to participate in social reform in addition to social events.²¹⁷ The complicated nature of their participation, then, both demonstrates how some Richmond women

²¹⁶ James, *For God, For Country, For Home*, 200-201.

²¹⁷ Treadway, *Women of Mark*, 42.

adopted new roles and behaviors when necessary, such as in the case of bond drives, but clung to their conservative, traditional roles in most other circumstances.

Elite Richmond women who participated in Liberty Loan campaigns demonstrated that wartime work both reinforced and redefined southern womanhood. Their public work and long hours did not threaten southern social norms, yet the new form of fundraising they engaged in reflected southern women's changing public behaviors.

Food Conservation

Much like Liberty Loan drives, Richmond women's participation in food conservation endeavors blended traditional ideas about women's roles with new activities for the benefit of the war effort. These activities depended on southern women's household responsibilities, emphasizing domesticity while at the same time encouraging southern women to take new roles in their communities. By accepting new responsibilities, Richmond women incorporated traits of the New Woman into food conservation activities, which reinforced women's traditional domestic roles. They engaged in new public endeavors like consumer leagues and other new activities concentrated on food conservation and production. In the process, they internalized these new behaviors, transforming their notion of domesticity in the process.

One activity that reflected changes in women's domestic roles were the food preservation activities sponsored by the Woman's Committee, particularly agricultural and food science education. The committee employed extension agent Ella Agnew from Virginia Polytechnic Institute to help educate women in food conservation, production, and preservation

techniques.²¹⁸ With the help of Mrs. William Ruffin Cox, who served as Liberty Loan and Food Chairman, the Woman's Committee ran statewide registration drives, taught cooking and canning classes, and endorsed the prohibition of alcohol as a way to conserve wheat and sugar.²¹⁹ Domesticity, which had ceased to be a private affair with the wartime Food Administration, became something else entirely when taken out of the home and placed in demonstration classrooms.

Agricultural and food science education for women was also encouraged during the war, the result of Woman's Committee chairman Mary-Cooke Branch Munford's own commitment to the advancement of women's education. The Woman's Committee compiled a list of essential agricultural subjects that could be taught at colleges and normal schools across the state during the war. These subjects ranged from planting and maintaining vegetable gardens and fruit orchards to animal husbandry, bee culture, the study of food values, and menu selection.²²⁰ Traveling education classes and other similar initiatives are reflective of Munford's tenure as Woman's Committee chairman, because no other women's organizations in the state promoted food science education. These measures also demonstrated changes in perceptions of southern women's responsibilities. The increased emphasis on home economics and food science education marked a significant change in how others, especially educators, saw women's domestic duties as more than just essential female activities; now, these traditional women's roles were worthy further inquiry.

²¹⁸ Report, Chairman of the Food Conservation Committee for October, 1917, Woman's Division, Virginia War History Commission, Series XII First Council of Defense 1917-1918 Box 247a Folder 3, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

²¹⁹ Correspondence from Mary-Cooke Branch Munford to Claude Swanson, U.S. Senator from Virginia, undated, Box 16 Folder 14, Mary-Cooke Branch Munford Papers, 1881-1935, Accession 28142, Personal Papers Collection, LVA.

²²⁰ Report of the Woman's Division, Virginia War History Commission, Series XII First Council of Defense 1917-1918, Box 246 Folder 9, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA

During the war, there was also increased concern about whether Richmond women would spend their money wisely in the midst of a perceived food crisis, demonstrating women's roles as household managers. The majority of Richmond women considered themselves responsible for their kitchens and their homes, whether they prepared food or not. Food shortages and other consumer problems became a concern, as women bought flour and sugar in large quantities to help their families, leaving shortages and fears of inflation in their wake.²²¹ In her article, "Economy and the Housewife," *News Leader* columnist Cally Ryland described that, before the war, elite women had served extravagant meals with many different courses, but now in wartime, "the new housekeeper of the new South [must] not only shake hands with Economy but to take her into her house as a lifelong guest and friend." As Ryland observed, the wartime economy created potential for shortages, forcing Richmond women to curb their spending. War encouraged not only thrift but consumer responsibility as well.²²²

Newspaper columnists were not the only ones to stress these issues, as women's organizations such as the Housewives League also encouraged women to be careful consumers. Formed in the spring of 1915 and counting several hundred Richmond women as members, the Housewives League worked with merchants to ensure the availability of inexpensive fresh food.²²³ During the war, the Housewives League found and exposed those profiteering from wartime shortages. The activities of the Housewives League, often reported in Richmond newspapers, demonstrated how women's roles as consumers went beyond aiding the war effort by being thrifty. As consumers, women could demand fair prices and safe food, since food was their domestic responsibility. With war, and the public emphasis placed on food, women's roles

²²¹ Cally Ryland, "Mr. Hoover's Task," *The News Leader*, July 21, 1917.

²²² Cally Ryland, "Economy and the Housewife," *The News Leader*, October 15, 1917.

²²³ Witt, "Toilers in the Sun," 68; Cally Ryland, "The Housewives League of Richmond," *The News Leader*, June 1, 1918.

as consumers gained added importance. The actions of the Housewives League mirrored that of the National Consumer's League, founded by Florence Kelley in 1898, which encouraged women to be careful consumers and only buy products from manufacturers who maintained good working conditions. The push towards active consumer responsibility was a trait of the New Woman that Richmond women eagerly adapted to their own wartime concerns.²²⁴

Richmond women also encouraged food production in the midst of war through wartime gardening. In January 1917, the James River Garden Club began to take steps to start a backyard garden movement in order to preserve the food supply if America entered the war. Using their own money, the women in the club-sponsored lectures, distributed 'old time' recipes for food conservation and preservation, and offered prizes for the best gardens in the city. The Backyard Garden movement was led by Mrs. M.C. Patterson, president of the James River Garden Club and Chairman of Agriculture, National League for Woman's Service. Under her leadership, food production became a major movement in the city. Many women's organizations donated their time and, more importantly, money, to the Backyard Garden movement, including the Richmond Red Cross and the Equal Suffrage League.²²⁵ The organizations involved acquired land, tools, and seeds for those interested. Prior to war, gardening was a leisurely activity; now, war made it into work which many women eagerly embraced.

Richmond women were willing to assist Hoover's Food Administration, though as with Liberty Loan drives, women's participation was tempered by the objectives of their organizations. Not many memorial organizations or local woman's clubs participated in food

²²⁴ "Housewives League to Buy Canned Goods," *The Times-Dispatch*, May 6, 1917; "Housewives Protest Against Tardy Action," *The Times-Dispatch*, May 17, 1917; Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman*, 57.

²²⁵ Woman's Division, Council of Defense, Chairman of Food Production Report, undated, Virginia War History Commission Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) Economic Conditions and Red Cross, Box 75 Folder 16, LVA.

conservation beyond signing pledge cards and sending their cooks to patriotic cooking classes. At first, several women's organizations, including the Colonial Dames and the Woman's Club of Richmond, limited the refreshments they served during meetings or stopped them altogether in an effort to prevent waste.²²⁶ These women saw no need to participate more than necessary, since the tasks, from cooking to canning to gardening their own vegetables were often considered activities fit for a servant, not a Southern Lady. This decision required minimal effort and commitment to food conservation, compared to the dedication of other organizations, such as groups connected to Lila Meade Valentine or Mary-Cooke Branch Munford, including the ESL, the Instructional Visiting Nurses Association, and the Co-ordinate College League which established their own food conservation goals, including thrift, war gardening, and canning.²²⁷

Though they assisted at both Liberty Loans drives and Red Cross workrooms, the members of the ESL spent the majority of their time encouraging war gardening and thrift, activities that reflected their progressive beliefs. Unlike the members of the Colonial Dames and Woman's Club, who were unwilling to engage in new activities, members of the ESL embraced changes in women's social roles, which included engaging in more public activities and not restricting themselves to domestic roles. The ESL held patriotic rallies and mass meetings with Home Demonstration extension agents. It also bought seed catalogues and encouraged food conservation activities in its monthly bulletins.²²⁸ The dedication of the ESL to helping the war effort demonstrates the importance southern suffragists placed on winning the war. Like their participation on registration days, when they handed out the president's speech at local draft

²²⁶ Report, Colonial Dames of America, Virginia chapter, undated, Virginia War History Commission Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) War Work and Relief Organizations, Box 76, Folder 10, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

²²⁷ Response of Woman's Committee Food Conservation Questionnaire sent to Lila Meade Valentine, Equal Suffrage League president, undated, Box 17 Folder 16, Mary-Cooke Branch Munford Papers 1881-1935, Accession 28412, Personal Papers Collection, LVA.

²²⁸ Ibid.

boards, the ESL's participation in food conservation reflected the belief that, by allying itself with the government, they assisted their cause and demonstrated Richmond women's changing roles.

Richmond women's participation in food conservation activities with the Food Administration demonstrated the ongoing changes southern women experienced during the war. Traditional women's groups restricted their food conservation involvement to signing pledge cards and cutting back on refreshments at meetings, acting in ways that did not challenge women's domestic behaviors or their status as Southern Ladies. Some women's organizations, like the Equal Suffrage League, advocated new public roles for women, demonstrating their beliefs through their wartime actions. Members involved themselves in many activities, from fundraising to acquiring land for war gardens, activities that other women's organizations shied away from because of the challenges they gave to traditional southern women's roles. Increased food science education, and increased consumer responsibility also reflected the changing identity of Richmond women who were the most active in food conservation endeavors. By demonstrating tenets of the New Woman, in their words and actions, some Richmond women demonstrated the changing nature of southern womanhood away from domesticity and toward new public roles.

The Red Cross

For many Richmond women, volunteering for the Red Cross seemed perfectly consistent with established ideas about southern women's proper roles, even as it pushed them to engage in unconventional female activities. With its focus on professionalism and public engagement, the Red Cross encouraged Richmond women to acquire some of the characteristics of New Women.

At the same time, however, Red Cross work reinforced traditional ideas about southern women's roles, especially their nurturing behaviors. Through their Red Cross war work, Richmond women reinforced the ideals of the Southern Lady while helping to create a new southern woman.

The professionalism of the Richmond Red Cross encouraged women to join committees and work in a formal setting for the war effort. Three of the most important Red Cross committees, the Hospital Supplies Committee, the Knitting Committee, and Canteen Services, were extensions of southern women's traditional roles, and as such, attracted many women volunteers while encouraging women to try new work. Women treated their Red Cross work like a job: they documented their hours working and all their activities, even though like most war work, it was unpaid. Women who accumulated 400 and 800 hours in Red Cross work received pins to honor their service. Instead of working independently, they worked together in workrooms or at their clubs. They were on-call all hours of the night to greet troop trains. They drove cars around the city and as far as Camp Lee, twenty miles south. Their Red Cross work allowed women to experience professional behaviors in a voluntary context.

The Hospital Supplies Committee was the main department for making surgical dressings, hospital garments, linens, bandages, and other essential supplies. In total, the Hospital Supply committee and its auxiliaries made 106,502 supplies and 315,338 surgical dressings for hospitals and medics abroad, and an unspecified number for hospitals at Westhampton and Camp Lee.²²⁹ The enthusiasm of the women volunteers was important because many were unprepared for the difficult work and long hours spent in workrooms. For example, one assignment was to make pajamas for soldiers staying in Red Cross hospitals, but supervisors found the quest

²²⁹ "History of the Richmond Chapter Red Cross" undated, Virginia War History Commission Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) War Work and Relief Organizations, Box 75 Folder 43, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

difficult: many women volunteers were “enthusiastic, eager, but decidedly amateur needlewomen.” This example suggests that women who volunteered with the Red Cross did so out of dedication and patriotic fervor, rather than their own domestic prowess. With war, however, amateur needlewomen received the training necessary to become confidant, experienced professionals working for American soldiers.²³⁰

Canteen Services, which provided hospitality to troop trains passing through the city, was yet another extension into the public of women’s domestic roles. Women who volunteered for the Canteen Services committee had greater responsibilities than those who knit or made hospital supplies. Between 400 and 600 men arrived each day, with only 30 minutes to spend in Richmond. Canteen Service volunteers provided the soldiers with food as well as magazines and candy for their journey. During demobilization, the work of the Canteen Committee increased as more troop trains came through Richmond. The committee’s work drew on women’s traditional nurturing roles – already emphasized in other food conservation and Red Cross activities – to get their war work done. However, the work was not easy, for it required women to be on-call at all hours of the night lest a train arrive, taking women from their home and domestic duties, and placed them in the company of strangers, yet they did so for the war effort.²³¹

While nearly all the women’s organizations of the city participated in Red Cross work, the work of the Richmond chapter of the UDC stands out as evidence of the changing nature of southern womanhood. Inspired by patriotism, the UDC members volunteered their time and energy to help the Red Cross, eager to take on work for the living as well as the dead.

²³⁰“History of the Hospital Supplies Committee,” undated, Virginia War History Commission Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) War Work and Relief Organizations, Box 75 Folder 38, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

²³¹ “History of the Canteen Committee,” undated, Virginia War History Commission Series VII City Source Material – Richmond (cont.) War Work and Relief Organizations, Box 75 Folder 35, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

While they participated in Red Cross committees and helped plan social events, UDC members accepted more Red Cross work, including activities that ventured beyond their sphere of comfortable, socially acceptable activities as war progressed. One such activity was working at the information desk at the Main Street train station, an extension of Red Cross canteen services.²³² This activity demonstrated all the changes UDC members underwent as they accepted different, often difficult work for the war effort. The chapter started this work in the fall of 1918 and continued through demobilization in the spring of 1919. Their job was to greet soldiers traveling through the city on their way to hospitals and home, and provide them with the information they needed while in Richmond. Women who volunteered at the information station kept the chapter informed of the hours they worked, which varied from one hour to ten-hour shifts spent helping soldiers traveling through the city. The volunteers did not seem to mind the work, as they met men from all across the nation and were genuinely grateful to help returning soldiers.²³³ Assisting the Red Cross by manning an information booth differed greatly from knitting or making hospital supplies, which were activities chosen by other conservative groups. The efforts of the Richmond chapter to aid the Red Cross during demobilization, after most other work ceased, demonstrated an understanding of the importance of continuing war work after the Armistice, unsurprising from a group of women who continued to aid veterans of a conflict that occurred more than fifty years before the war. During World War I, instead of restricting their activities to memorializing past battles, the Richmond chapter played a crucial role in supporting the war effort.²³⁴

²³² Minutes of the Twenty-Fourth Annual Convention, 1919, Virginia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection, MOC.

²³³ Log of hours worked by UDC members, 1919, Richmond Chapter Red Cross Files, United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection, MOC.

²³⁴ Richmond Chapter Red Cross Files, United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection, MOC.

In their Red Cross work, women like the members of the Richmond Chapter, UDC, demonstrated the changing nature of southern womanhood. With wartime activities like Canteen Services and professional behaviors exhibited through committee work, these war relief activities allowed Richmond women to experience new opportunities that encouraged them to continue accepting new roles in the future. The serious, professional behavior demonstrated by Richmond women for the sake of the war effort demonstrated yet another way Richmond women embraced tenets of the New Woman in a distinctly southern way.

At the same time, many of these activities incorporated traditional ideas about southern women's roles. Women who participated in the planning and organization of the Richmond Red Cross chapter faced the reality of their social roles when they were forced to defer to male leaders, despite the importance of their work. In early February 1917, prominent male leaders representing the Red Cross, the Army medical corps, and the Virginia War Relief Association held a meeting to urge women to form a Red Cross chapter.²³⁵ In March, several women of the city sent a formal letter to the National Red Cross. Yet, when the Red Cross chapter first opened in Richmond, women found themselves relegated to auxiliary positions while prominent men, including *Times-Dispatch* owner John Stewart Bryan and mayor of Richmond George Ainslie, occupied officer positions. Nevertheless, the women of Richmond held informal meetings held during the spring, forming several Woman's Committees including Knitting, Hospital Supplies, Education and Training, and Canteen services.²³⁶ These committees, led by women, encouraged other women to participate through activities that focused on nurturing and aiding soldiers, an extension of women's traditional roles. As a result, many Richmond women eager participated.

²³⁵ "Women Prepare for Service When War Comes," *The News Leader*, February 12, 1917.

²³⁶ "Do You Remember? A Living Scrapbook of the Richmond Chapter, American Red Cross Through the Past Forty Years" Records of the Greater Richmond Chapter of the American Red Cross, VAL.

Like the Hospital Supplies Committee, the organized leadership of the Knitting Department helped supply soldiers with socks, hats, gloves, sweaters, and other essential clothing items. Records of the Richmond Red Cross claim that their knitting department was first organized in the South, giving it distinction among its peers in terms of Richmond women's earnestness to help their country. Organized in June, the first twelve knitters only had nine pounds of wool to work with. The number grew to eighty-seven knitters within the first month, reaching over 500 knitters by August. The total output of the Knitting Department was 43,729 articles of clothing produced by 2000 dedicated knitters. Knitting was a traditional activity used by women volunteers to care for soldiers and contribute to the war effort, yet the professional behavior of the committee made knitting into wartime work.²³⁷ Many women were eager to join because it allowed them to help outside of workrooms. Knitting also allowed women to use skills they already had instead of learning new ones to help the war effort.

Many ladies memorial societies in the city volunteered their time and energy to help the war effort, believing that their assistance was a continuation of their other work. The Richmond chapter of the UDC, with Janet Randolph as its president, focused its Red Cross war work on a combination of social events for local soldiers and actual work for the Red Cross. They opened a workroom at their headquarters, where five hundred women made seventy-six comfort bags for soldiers and sailors over the summer of 1917. They also established a workroom near the Red Cross headquarters where they could distribute materials and collect finished products. In addition to this, they hosted social events and dances for soldiers traveling through the city.²³⁸

²³⁷ Report of the Knitting Department, undated, Virginia War History Commission Series VII City Source Material – Richmond cont. Box 75 Folder 39, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

²³⁸ Report of the Richmond Chapter, UDC, Minutes of the Twenty-Second Annual Convention of the Virginia Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy, 1917, United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection, MOC.

While the Richmond Chapter made hospital supplies and held social events for soldiers of the Great War, officers still encouraged members not to neglect the old men and women who had long been assisted by Confederate charities: “There are many to work for the boys of to-day, but only the Daughters of the Confederacy to remember those who sorely need our help.”²³⁹ Their work was also perceived by others to be a continuation of Confederate memory, as *The Evening Journal* columnist Vera Palmer wrote in July of 1917:

With the memory of Bull Run, Chancellorsville, and Cold Harbor still vivid in each mind, together with the darker vision of Gettysburg, there is no doubt that those who worked so bravely for the men of the Confederacy will be equally untiring and courageous should the reunited country make the same demands. Much is expected of these women, and is being given in full measure.²⁴⁰

Palmer’s quote reinforced the primary objective of the UDC – remembering the Confederacy – while stressing idea of aiding a reunited country. Red Cross work was similar to activities undertaken by women during the Civil War, from the work of soldier’s aid societies to individual women rolling bandages and sending them to the Confederate Army. Yet, the home front work of southern women during the Civil War never reached the magnitude of war work during World War I. There were no autonomous women’s organizations directing work, no propaganda asking women to help their nation or their government by selling bonds or conserving food. Because the South was itself a battlefield – no where more so than the greater Richmond area -- women’s work took on different forms, yet most of their work done for that war was afterwards, be it burying soldiers or erected monuments to Confederate generals. These differences in terms of women’s work during both wars demonstrate how a reunited country, and women’s new public roles, emphasized the important of women’s work during World War I.

²³⁹ Minutes of the Twenty-Second Annual Convention, Virginia Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy Collection, Roanoke, Virginia, 1917, MOC.

²⁴⁰ Vera Palmer, “Old South Works for America,” *The Evening Journal*, July 30, 1917.

By participating in Red Cross war relief work, Richmond women were able to experience new opportunities as southern women. They engaged in professional behaviors, working with committees and logging the hours they voluntarily spent in workrooms. Some women, like UDC members, used this opportunity to modify professional behavior to their own experiences. Working in Red Cross workrooms, with the Canteen Services committee, and fulfilling other required duties for the war effort exposed Richmond women to different experiences. At the same time, they also acted in traditional ways, demurring to men in the forming of the organization and, at first, refraining from doing more than was considered appropriate. The definition of “appropriate” activities also changed during the war, as Red Cross workers went beyond fundraising to manual labor in workrooms for the war effort.

Red Cross war work, like Liberty Loan drives and food conservation activities, provided opportunities for southern women to follow traditional ideas about women’s wartime duties as well as adapt new ones, helping to redefine their ideas about womanhood in the process. All of the activities of Richmond women during the war allowed them to accept new responsibilities and duties with the justification that their actions benefited their country. Some Richmond women, like those involved with the ESL, accepted work that challenge conceptions of appropriate behavior more readily than women involved in conservative organizations like women’s clubs.

CONCLUSION

The roles of elite Richmond women changed during the early decades of the twentieth century, especially during the First World War. Offered opportunities to work in their

independent organizations for the war effort, Richmond women eagerly accepted a wide variety of wartime activities. They sold Liberty Loans, participated in food conservation activities including canning and wartime gardening, rolled bandages, and worked at Red Cross canteens. The variety of work undertaken by Richmond women demonstrates their commitment to the war effort, their country, and their own belief that, through their war work, they could help the outcome of the war.

In the course of their war work, Richmond women both reinforced and redefined what it meant to be a southern woman, laying the foundation for creation of a distinctly southern New Woman after the war. Activities like food conservation and Red Cross work relied on women's traditional traits and gender roles, encouraging women to participate in the war effort because their traditional jobs as nurturers and domestic creatures could help their country during wartime. Yet, these same activities also challenged women's perceptions of southern womanhood. They called for women to work for the United States, not the South or Virginia. Wartime activities erased regional distinctions, and as such, women found themselves committing to the nation. National womanhood, brought through national organizations as well as war work, also challenged women's perceptions of responsibility. Some women's organizations, including memorial societies such as the UDC, restricted most of their work to socially acceptable activities like Liberty Loan drives. Yet, over the course of the war, they also took on newer activities that moved away from traditional notions of genteel womanhood into broader definitions of women's roles. The Great War challenged existing ideas about womanhood while exposing women to more responsibility and opportunities.

CONCLUSION

“I especially emphasized the necessity of endowing the Museum...as the younger women will be more interested in building memorials to the soldiers of the World War.”²⁴¹
- Mrs. J. Allison Hodges, 1919

Richmond women’s participation in war relief activities may have ended soon after the Armistice, but their dedication and loyalty to their country inspired them to continue in the way they knew best – commemoration. On April 22, 1919, the Woman’s Committee of the Homecoming Jubilee Week, led by Margaret Ethel Kelley Kern, met to organize a large parade followed by a dance celebrating Richmond troops return from Europe.²⁴² Afterwards, Richmond women continued to commemorate World War I, holding reunion, parades, and other events. In May 1921, a group calling themselves the Service Legion organized once again under the direction of Kern. The purpose of the Service Legion was to “commemorate civil[ian] war service,” although it also worked with the Virginia War History Commission to collect information on the wartime service of men and women across the commonwealth.²⁴³ In addition to this mission, which Arthur Kyle Davis, Chairman of the Commission, thought to be of utmost importance, Kern sincerely desired to form the first organization in the country that commemorated civilian war work, including the war work of women. As a result, she often tried to act autonomously and came into conflict with Davis. Despite its best efforts, the Service Legion idea never caught on, and by 1925 the Legion had dissolved. The Virginia War History Commission received its documentation on men and women’s wartime activities, and Richmond

²⁴¹ Report of Mrs. J. Allison Hodges, Vice Regent of the North Carolina room, 1919, Confederate Museum, Confederate Memorial Literary Society Collection, ESB. Mrs. J. Allison Hodges was also the president of the Woman’s Club from 1915-1917, during the first few months of World War I.

²⁴² Minutes of the Woman’s Committee, Homecoming Jubilee Week, April 21, 1919 Virginia War History Commission Series XV, Margaret Ethel Kelley Kern Papers, Box 280 Folder 9, 1917-1925, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

²⁴³ Correspondence from Arthur Kyle Davis to Margaret Ethel Kelly Kern, May 4, 1921, Virginia War History Commission Series XI Office Files 1917-1927 Service Legion Box 160 Folder 9, Accession 37219, State Records Collection, LVA.

women returned to their daily lives, participating in women's clubs, with the League of Women Voters, the UDC, and the American Legion.

The actions of Kerns and other Richmond women with the Service Legion encapsulates the changes begun in women's organizations and accelerated during World War I, as they accepted the duties of war relief work and, in the process, laid the foundations for a distinctly different southern woman in years to come. This new southern woman was both American and southern, and embraced many of the characteristics of the New Woman, such as independence, autonomy, and professionalism. In many ways, Richmond women like Kern epitomized this new southern woman: while they held fast to some traditional activities, like memorializing soldiers, they also embraced the challenges of their war work, attempting to work as equals in public activities with men.

Elite Richmond women maintained many of the key characteristics of white southern womanhood throughout the war. Their commitment to Confederate memory became a useful tool to organizations like the National League for Woman's Service, which drew on that legacy when pitching its activities to Richmond women. By their legacy of remembering the South, elite Richmond women could justify their war work easier, since it was similar to their caring for Confederate veterans. Domesticity also played a key role in Richmond women maintaining their southern traditions, as southern gender norms gave elite white women power over the home. As they entered into wartime work like food conservation, domesticity gave them legitimacy and access. Elite white Richmond women retained these aspects even as they formed new identities as American women and new women.

This thesis has demonstrated how elite white Richmond women, who identified themselves as southern ladies, came to view themselves as American women through their

wartime contributions. Elite southern women had managed to adapt national trends like women's clubs to fit their regional concerns like Confederate remembrance. It was not until the First World War that they fully accepted a national identity in addition to their regional identity. This thesis has shown how the government's wartime propaganda, in addition to national women's organizations geared towards war relief work, helped Richmond women understand their role as American women doing their part during the Great War. By becoming members of the National League for Woman's Service or by joining the "food army," Richmond women took part in activities which occurred throughout the United States. Immediately after the war, Richmond women honored American soldiers, assisting newly-formed American Legion chapters, erecting monuments, and organizing parades. While Confederate memorial societies still existed, this change in emphasis reinforces the idea that Richmond women's perspectives broadened during the war.

This thesis has also argued that with war relief activities, elite Richmond women embraced more characteristics of the New Woman than they had beforehand. Richmond women's participation in clubs and other women's organizations prior to World War I adhered to the socially acceptable roles southern society had created for them. During World War I, government war relief work encouraged Richmond women to tackle new and often difficult activities. Liberty Loan drives, food conservation activities, and Red Cross work all asked Richmond women to perform tasks that challenged their notions of their proper duties, but more often than not, the women exceeded expectations. National organizations like the NLWS and Woman's Committee, Council for National Defense, also encouraged Richmond women to pursue these activities, promoting professional behavior and making the activities more like a job and less like voluntary work. By the end of the war, even the strictest southern ladies, the United

Daughters of the Confederacy, had willingly accepted difficult wartime work which threatened their roles in southern society. As a result, after the war many Richmond women eagerly wanted their work to be commemorated, demonstrating a new and somewhat foreign desire for recognition. Wartime activities, as this thesis argues, encouraged Richmond women to adapt the characteristics of the New Woman, such as professionalism and public engagement.

While the historical literature as isolated southern women from the nation, this thesis has demonstrated that southern women were both southern and American, acting as dual citizens in the early decades of the twentieth century as war, and the changing roles of women, redefined their identities. It demonstrates white southern women's identities were not static, as seen by members of the UDC accepting work beyond memorializing the South for their country, not just their state or region. These challenges open up much room for future interpretations of white southern women's lives in the early twentieth century.

The creation of a new southern woman demonstrated how changes in American society affected elite white Richmond women. Exposed to ideas about women's new social roles through club work, southern social norms prevented elite white women from fully embracing changes like waged work, equal rights, and access to higher education. Despite this, Richmond women tailored some ideas, like public engagement, municipal housekeeping, and other reforms to fit their goals. The First World War brought new ideas about national identity and the role of American women to Richmond, and through wartime work Richmond women experienced new ideas, like professional behavior, independence, and autonomy. With war, Richmond women redefined southern womanhood as well as reinforced certain aspects. They remained southern women as, when the situation called for it, they adhered to southern gender roles. They remembered the Confederacy while, at the same time, they became American women as they

incorporated new, broader focuses into their lives, commemorating the veterans of the Great War. This changing southern woman would continue as southern women defined themselves in years to come.

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