



*Dear Nannie...*

*yours devotedly, Charlie*

*Dear Nannie... yours devotedly, Charlie*

Nannie Figgat Chronicles Mid-19th Century Southwest Virginia

through her

Diary, Recipes, and Correspondence

April 25, 2013

**Transcriptions and Commentary by Gail McMillan and Jean Robbins**

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This research could not have been as thorough without the wealth of information resources available from libraries, whether on the shelves or online, primarily the University Libraries at Virginia Tech, the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library, and the Library of Congress. Thank you to the library staff at the Virginia Military Institute (especially Mary Laura Kludy), Washington and Lee University (especially Lisa McCown and Vaughan Stanley), the Library of Virginia, the Virginia Historical Society, the City of Roanoke Library, and the Botetourt County Library (Rena Worthen). Thanks also to the Rockbridge County Historical Society and the Clerk of Court Office in Roanoke.

We acknowledge former Hotel Roanoke Executive Chef Billie Raper who selected and prepared recipes from Nannie Figgat and Martha Mary Godwin’s manuscript recipe books, and for his participation in a photo session with free-lance photographer Ernie Rakes. We applaud these two for the pictures of dishes in the illustrated section of the Culinary History.

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## Foreward

This book weaves together a wealth of historical resources that document the Godwins and Figgats of Fincastle, Lexington, and Roanoke, Virginia. We began with two small handwritten recipe books that belonged to Nannie G. Figgat and her mother, Martha Mary Godwin. Gail, as head of Special Collections at Virginia Tech's library, purchased the Southwest Virginia Counties Collection from a manuscripts dealer in 2000. He sent Nannie's diary and ledger, Godwin family correspondence, and records from her father's store in Fincastle (1835-1885). As we originally set out to research their recipe books from the 1860s, our focus remained on these two women rather than the historic events of the American Civil War. Little did we know when we began that these recipe books would inadvertently lead us on a three-year journey of discovery.

The first online search in November 2009 led to a College of William and Mary honors thesis which referred to Nannie Figgat's diary at Virginia Tech. Returning to the SW VA Collection, we rediscovered the correspondence between Nannie's parents and the ledger, which at first glance obscured the diary. Another online search revealed her husband's name, Charles Miles Figgat, on a collection of letters in the Library of Virginia. During a field trip to the Library in Richmond we began the transcribing, being somewhat slowed by the surprisingly romantic nature of many of the letters.

Near closing time in Richmond, we decided to do another online search since we were in a history-rich city and it would have been a shame to drive home without this small additional effort. Lo and behold, the online catalog of the Virginia Historical Society revealed more Figgat letters. How could we leave without seeing them, so we extended our visit and went out to dinner to celebrate our good luck. Well into our meal we were evicted by the arrival of fire trucks. We took the hint and left to get a good night's rest and started our transcription at VHS first thing the next morning.

The winter of 2009/10 was a very cold one. Gail holed up in her home office on weekends with a magnifying glass, good light, and her computer, unraveling the story of the recipe book authors while transcribing the correspondence and Nannie's diary. At the same time Jean learned more about the Godwin and Figgat families through her docent work at the Botetourt County Historical Society Museum. She also discovered information at the Virginia Military Institute and Washington and Lee University, including family photos and the shocking news of Nannie's husband's downfall.

We believe that Nannie Figgat was the unwitting historian of the Figgat and Godwin families. The surviving evidence suggests that she was the one who kept safe for decades the family correspondence, along with her diary and the recipe books that she and her mother copied, clipped, and pasted in the 1800s. She preserved her family's history during moves from Fincastle to Lexington (1859), back to Fincastle (1862), and back to Lexington (1865), before finally moving to Roanoke in the 1890s. Her husband, Charlie, somehow maintained possession of 13 of the letters Nannie wrote to him during his service in the Confederate Army. Nannie also preserved 18 of Charlie's letters written to her during the war, as well as 10 letters from her mother, father, and her brother, Rob, written between 1835 and 1885. She even kept Charlie's letters after he abandoned his family in 1895.

One thing that we have learned during the three years we researched and wrote this book is that it is never too late to do another Internet search. In February 2013 we found the stained glass window at St. John's Episcopal Church in Roanoke dedicated to Nannie and her youngest child. It is so tempting to continue researching, but we're forcing ourselves to stop and let the Botetourt County Historical Society publish what we have so that Nannie's story can be shared. We plan to make available as many of these resources as possible, including the transcriptions, in VTechWorks (<http://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu>). We have truly enjoyed our time developing this snapshot of mid-19th Century life in Southwest Virginia.

## Historical Resources and Documentation

### Ann Godwin, Nancy G. Figgat, and Nannie Figgat

One of our first challenges was to identify Nancy G. Figgat who autographed and dated "Octr 29/60" a handwritten recipe book. One clue was the small leather volume that was part of the same manuscript collection. The inside cover was signed "Ann Godwin's Memorandum Book Jany 5th/56." It begins with a few pages of recorded purchases, across the top of which was written "1861 House Keeping Expenses for the Year 1861 C M Figgat." Within the same volume, a page signed "N. G. Figgat" precedes a diary. The manuscript collection also has several undated envelopes, including one addressed to Nannie G. Figgat in Fincastle from Lexington and one from Fincastle to Mrs. Ann G. Figgat in Lexington. Several other distributed pieces of the puzzle came together to corroborate that Nancy G., Nannie, and Ann were all the same person. Four letters of the 44 that we located were signed "Nannie G. Figgat." She signed her first letter to "dear Charlie," Nannie Godwin. According to the correspondence we located, Charles Miles Figgat was the only one who called Ann Godwin "Nannie." Other family members call her Ann.

Our assumptions were corroborated at the Botetourt County Clerk of Court office. Among the documents was the 1859 marriage license that showed Ann Godwin married Charles M. Figgat. Her tombstone in the Godwin Cemetery in Fincastle reads, "Ann Godwin wife of Charles M. Figgat 1835-1919." Lastly, we found that every entry for her in the Roanoke City Directories (1898/99-1919) lists Nannie Figgat as the widow of Charles M. Figgat.

Throughout our chronicle she has various appellations, depending on the author of the document. But, Nancy G. Figgat, Ann Godwin, and Nannie Figgat were all the same person. We, however, have come to know her as Nannie, and use this form of her name throughout this writing. During their correspondence, Charles Figgat usually signed his letters "Charlie," so we also refer to him as Charlie.

## Records of the Godwins and the Figgats

The Godwin family correspondence (11 letters dated 1835-1885), Nannie's diary (1862-1865), the young Figgats' ledger (1861), and the 1800s handwritten recipe books belonging to Nannie and her mother are part of Ms2000-092, the "Southwest Virginia Counties Collection." Gail McMillan, as head of Virginia Tech's Special Collections Department, purchased it in 2000 from the Philadelphia manuscripts/rare book dealer Carmen Valentino. In October 2012 Kira Dietz, an archivist in Special Collections, spotted two more of Nannie's letters from 1863 in a Raynors' Historical Collectible Auctions catalog. These resources are available in the Special Collections Reading Room in Newman Library. The recipe books were digitized and are available at <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/CulinaryHistory/>

### Figgat Correspondence

In Richmond we located 32 letters that Charlie and Nannie wrote from 1859 to 1865. Of these letters, Charlie wrote her 19 letters and Nannie wrote him 13. The Library of Virginia has 27 of their letters plus one letter attributed to his brother, James H. H. Figgat. The Library purchased these at auction in 2001. The Virginia Historical Society has five of Charlie's letters acquired from Donald Tiedeken of Chesterfield.

Nannie wrote her 13 letters between 1859 and 1864, 11 from Fincastle and one each from Charlottesville and Natural Bridge. Her mother, Martha Mary Godwin wrote four letters from Fincastle, addressing them to her daughter or her children, between 1859 and 1885. Nannie's father, Thomas G. Godwin, wrote three letters to his wife from Richmond and Baltimore, 1835-1839, and one from Fincastle to his daughter in 1860. Charlie wrote his 19 letters from 1859 to 1865 while he was in Lexington (12) and various locations (7) during the Civil War including Camp Narrows, Charlottesville, Fairfax Court House, Salem, and unstated locales of the "Head Quarters" of the Second Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia.

### Diary and Ledger

The leather-bound volume measuring 5¼" x 3½" is inscribed on the inside cover "Ann Godwin's

Memorandum Book Jany 5th/56.” The first page is headed December 1855. The penciled writing is faded almost beyond legibility but it may record the purchase of yards of cotton—fabric and thread, edging, and other items. The next five pages (nine sides) are a detailed ledger of expenses that has the heading “1861 House Keeping Expenses for the Year 1861 C M Figgat.”

On July 30, 1862, Nannie again picked up this small volume and began her diary following these pages. For 29 leaves (56 sides) she frequently recorded activities, thoughts, and events through Jan. 12, 1865. Though she “did not regularly interpret or analyze the quotidian, it is obvious that the diary provided a means for her to think about her life in a new way.”<sup>1</sup>

Many blank pages follow the diary before she entered some miscellaneous financial notations dated Feb. 16, 1863 through March 14, 1865. Most of these are labeled “Farmers Bank of Fincastle in a/c with N G Figgat” and appear to document both income and expenses.

Nannie’s diary and the Figgats’ correspondence contain very little information about their finances. While the ledger is informative about what was expended on purchases in 1861, there are just a few mentions in their correspondence and the diary about expenses and income. We have not attempted to thoroughly analyze the Figgats’ finances. Images of each page of the main ledger and the transcription of each page can be found in the Appendices.

### Recipe Books

Two slightly larger leather-bound volumes of equal size, 7½” x 6½”, contain 241 recipes from the 1800s. The volume signed and dated “Nancy G. Figgat Octr 29 1860” contains 159 handwritten recipes and one page of pasted-in newspaper clippings. The other volume has 82 recipes written by a variety of hands as well as newspaper clippings, several of which are pasted on the inside front cover and largely obscure the signature of the compiler, Nannie’s mother, Martha Mary Godwin. The clues as to the date of these recipes are two annotations near the back of the volume. One page has a note about receiving

\$30 from May Nelson on Jan. 7, 1869, and on one of several separate pages inserted is a recipe for Soft Soap annotated June 7, 1867.

### Illustrations

Thanks to Jean Robbins’ trek to Washington and Lee University, we have included several undated photographs by Michael Miley of Nannie and some of her children at various times in their lives. The staff at Special Collections in Leyburn Library, Washington and Lee University (W&L) provided the photographs and gave permission for us to use them here. W&L also provided real estate records, newspaper articles, and other information. The reward poster, the only known picture of Charlie, was made available to us by Mary Laura Kludy at the Virginia Military Institute and is used with permission.

Historical Fincastle, Inc. gave permission to include photos from their publications, including the Godwins’ and Figgats’ residences and the Female Academy in Fincastle from *Around Town*. We have also included exemplar pages from the correspondence and envelopes, ledger, diary, and recipe books in Ms2000-092.

Thanks to Leslie Spigle, we have photographs of the Fincastle churches and the Figgats’ grave markers. She also accurately sketched various cooking tools and vessels that Nannie and Martha Mary would have had in their homes. John Radar provided us with photographs of the historic outbuildings on his family’s farm in Botetourt County, and George Sydnor III allowed photographs of historic cooking fireplaces in his home.

Former Hotel Roanoke Executive Chef Billie Raper selected recipes from both Nannie and her mother’s recipe books, adapting them to accommodate ingredients available today. On a cold winter’s day in December 2012 he prepared seven mouth-watering dishes and professional photographer, Ernie Rakes beautifully captured them.

### Census, Directories, Legal Records

We have interspersed the letters and diary transcriptions with commentary from contemporary newspapers. We took particular advantage

of the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library’s subscriptions to “Fold3 History and Genealogy Archives” and “Heritage Quest Online” for many Confederate service records documenting Charlie’s wages, rations, and forage for his horse, as well as access to census data and slave registries. We especially appreciate the Library of Congress’s *Chronicling America* where we found the advertisements for Figgat & Co. and the newspaper articles documenting Charlie’s banking debacle.

Estate wills, and marriage licenses, and other records at the Botetourt County Clerk of Court Office documented the Figgats’ and Godwins’ relationships and property, including household items in the Fincastle homes. At the Roanoke City Public Library on Jefferson Street, city directories revealed the living arrangements of Nannie and her children and often their occupations.

### Transcriptions

Such a wealth of information and primary source materials have survived about Fincastle natives Nannie Godwin and Charles M. Figgat. The transcriptions are as true to the original documents’ wording as we were able to determine. We have not changed the spelling, punctuation, or grammar, except for standardizing the format and spelling of the dates on the letters and diary. The authors of these documents often wrote “ditto” or used double quotes or “do” to indicate a repeated word. When we were unsure that we transcribed words correctly, we put them in *italics*; an     (underscore) represents a word that is illegible whether because of indecipherable handwriting, stain, tear, etc. Punctuation, or lack of it, is transcribed as it appears in the originals. All place names are Virginia unless otherwise noted.

1. Anderson, “Again in the Providence of God,” p. 14.

## Historical Context

### Characteristics of Fincastle

Ann Godwin was born on April 28, 1835, and called “Nannie” by her future husband, Charles Miles Figgat, who was born in 1836. Her paternal ancestors arrived in Fincastle via Pennsylvania from England. Her maternal ancestors followed a similar path, arriving in Fincastle from Pennsylvania via Ireland from Scotland.<sup>2</sup>

Charlie, as he signed his letters, and Nannie were both born and raised in Fincastle, the county seat of Botetourt. At the time of their births, it was already a “flourishing and wealthy village” according to Joseph Martin’s 1834 gazetteer of Virginia. Among a population of 703, Fincastle had 192 slaves and 43 “Free people of Color.” The population was 67 percent white (468), 27 percent slave, and 6 percent free blacks.<sup>3</sup>

The town had two tailors and two hatters as well as four boot and shoe factories. What wasn’t manufactured in the area could have been purchased from Nannie’s father, Thomas Glynn Godwin, who had one of Fincastle’s six mercantile stores. In the course of our chronicle, he was also a magistrate and a member of the Board of Supervisors of Botetourt County.<sup>4</sup> *Seed-bed of the Republic* records that he was a judge from 1857 to 1867.<sup>5</sup> Fincastle also had a confectionery, two druggist shops, and a “temperance society to cope with its 3 taverns.”<sup>6</sup>

The 260 dwelling houses and mechanics shops would have been locally furnished by the town’s chair maker and any of its five cabinetmakers and house joiners. Charlie’s father, James Madison Figgat, who was one of Fincastle’s four wagon makers at this time, could have also supplied the “well organized fire company.” Other local tradesmen included a gunsmith, four blacksmiths, two tanners, two wheelwrights, a copper-smith and a tin-plate worker, four saddlers, and a saddletree maker.

2. Tyler, *Men of Mark in Virginia*, vol. 2, p. 131-133.

3. Martin, *Gazetteer*, p. 328.

4. Tyler, *Men of Mark in Virginia*, vol. 2, p. 130.

5. Stoner, *Seed-bed*, p. 211.

6. Stoner, *Seed-bed*, p. 486.

Fincastle had both male and female academies where the Figgat and Godwin children may have been educated. The community had many skilled and educated people, including three physicians and nine attorneys. A printing office issued a weekly paper, the *Fincastle Democrat*, published 1834-1868 by Oliver Callaghan and William E. M. Word. Green and Jones began the weekly *Valley Whip* in 1845. But town and county residents as well as their visitors undoubtedly also received their news by attending one of Fincastle’s three still-standing churches, Presbyterian, Episcopal and Methodist.

In 1850, according to the Botetourt County census, James M. Figgat was the only remaining wagon maker. Additional merchants, however, had joined Thomas G. Godwin in supplying goods to the Fincastle community—George Bittle, John Wilson, Marcus and William T. Potter, James and Charles Carper, and James Hannah. Instead of five, there were two cabinetmakers: John Bolton and John Fellers. The blacksmiths were John Anderson, Sr. and William H. Smith, and the gunsmith was Pollard Jennings. The potter was Joshua Hill. Jacob Carper made saddles, Benjamin Ammen was the only millwright, while Jacob Smith was a miller. The only tailor was John H. Backinsto, and the barber was Daniel Pegee. The printers were George Anderson and Charles Shepherd. The census also listed one manufacturer, Michael Ammen, and one hotelkeeper, Thomas C. Lancaster.<sup>7</sup>

In 1854 the Botetourt population had grown to 14,908; 25 percent (3,736) were slaves. The 1855 *Statistical Gazetteer*<sup>8</sup> also recorded that Botetourt County was 550 square miles, with good soil in some parts. The crops included staples such as Indian corn, wheat, oats, hay, and butter. There were six flour mills, five saw mills, three iron furnaces, two iron foundries, one iron forge, and one woolen factory. The public schools had 428 pupils while 62 attended academies or “other schools.” The James River Canal connected Richmond to Buchanan (about 14 miles from Fincastle) and was intersected by the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad.

7. Historic Fincastle Inc. *Newsletter*.

8. Edwards, *Statistical Gazetteer*, p. 183.

The May 20, 1861, *Richmond Dispatch* recommended Fincastle, “... a pleasant, safe and healthful retreat to all who, during our difficulties, would make it a home. The society is good, religious advantages ditto, and there are two excellent hotels—all of which we can endorse.”

### Education in Fincastle

In her correspondence, diary, and recipe book Nannie’s handwriting, spelling, and grammar indicate that she was well educated. She may have attended the “Fincastle Female Seminary,” which was “established several years prior to 1835 by subscriptions from citizens of the town...”<sup>9</sup>

“Towards 1835 the number of chartered institutions of this kind [i.e., girls’ schools] increased rapidly, e.g., ... 1834 Fincastle Female Academy...”<sup>10</sup> Mr. Paine, who became the Presbyterian pastor in 1845, established male and female academies but not denominational schools.<sup>11</sup>



Fincastle Female Academy<sup>12</sup>

On May 16, 1849, the Virginia Legislature “incorporated an institution in the town of Fincastle, by the name and style of ‘The Fincastle Female Seminary’...” The Deed Book also recorded on Jan. 24, 1852, that several trustees were elected, including both Nannie and Charlie’s fathers.

9. Snyder, “Fincastle,” p. 38.

10. Morrison, *Beginnings of Public Education in Virginia*, p. 133.

11. Stoner, *Seed-bed* re 1834 Female Academy (fn1) p. 480-481; Botetourt, *Deed Book* 31, p. 399.

12. Holladay, *Fincastle Presbyterian Church*, p. 43.

### Anderson & wife to Fincastle Female Academy<sup>13</sup>

Whereas, the Legislature of Virginia, by an Act passed the 16th day of March 1849, incorporated an institution in the town of Fincastle, by the name and style of “The Fincastle Female Seminary”, and by the 6th Section of said Act, empowered, and made it the duty of the Trustees of the said Female Seminary, to procure a suitable lot on which to erect suitable buildings for the school. In pursuance of said 6th Section, the Trustees of said Seminary have purchased of John T. Anderson suitable lots adjoining the Town of Fincastle. Now, therefore, this deed, made this 24th day of January 1852, between John T. Anderson and Cassandra M, his wife, of the first part; and Francis T. Anderson, Henry H. Paine, Thomas G. Godwin, James M. Figgat, Robert M. Hudson, Benjamin Ammen and Ferdinand Woltz, trustees elect of a “Fincastle Female Seminary,” of the second part, witnesseth, sixty four dollars and six cents (\$64 06/100) to them in hand paid, the receipt whereof they do hereby acknowledge, the bargain and sell and convey, unto the said party of the second part and their successors in office for ever, all the right, title and interest in and to two certain Lots or parcels of land, containing, each, one hundred and five poles, and designated as Lots, f and g in the plat of Lots laid off on their part of said Anderson’s lands called the “Grove Hill,” adjoining the South side of Fincastle, the said Lots are bounded ...

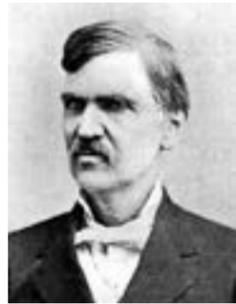
Charles M. Figgat was also well educated based not only on the handwriting and grammar in his correspondence. In 1852, when he was about 16 years old, the Society of the Fincastle Sunday School of the Methodist Episcopal Church elected him assistant librarian.<sup>14</sup> And, during the Civil War Charlie served as a clerk to Generals Stonewall Jackson, Bull Paxton, Richard Ewell, and Jubal Early.

Similarly, Nannie’s father’s correspondence demonstrates through his handwriting, spelling, and grammar that he was well educated. But this was not true of his wife, whose spelling is largely phonetic and whose handwriting is much less legible throughout the 50-year span of her correspondence. In an early letter to her daughter, Martha Mary Godwin humbly acknowledged her poor grammar, “... I hope you will be able

13. Botetourt, *Deed Book* 31 p. 399.

14. Snyder, *Fincastle*, p. 49.

to make it out notwithstanding bad spelling..." The recipes in her book were largely written by Nannie and others.



The success of the Fincastle Female Academy fluctuated. "The church passed through several pastorates in succession until 1855, when the Rev. John Sharshall Grasty [pictured], pastor of the Fincastle Presbyterian

Church, was called to its charge. He was a native of Southside Virginia, educated at Washington College in Lexington, at the University of North Carolina, and at Union Seminary" in Richmond.<sup>15, 16</sup>

**Slaves and Servants in Fincastle**

Though the surviving correspondence and diary do not specifically document their slaves, both the Godwin and Figgat families owned slaves according to the census records for Fincastle. The 1850 register shows Thomas G. Godwin and James M. Figgat with four slaves each. The Figgats also had four men living at their residence; one was Madison Callendar, a 34-year-old black man who was a blacksmith.

The 1860 "Schedule 2 Slave Inhabitants" documents that the Godwins' slaves were two "females" ages 45 and 38, and four "males" ages 51, 38, 31, and 18. The Figgats still had four slaves, but they were considerably older. One male was 63 and the three females were 33, 66 and 90 years old.

Nannie's correspondence and diary provide scant record of the slaves in Fincastle during the

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SCHEDULE 2—Slave Inhabitants in Fincastle in the County of Botetourt State of Virginia, enumerated by me, on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 1860. J. D. Miller Am't Marshal.

NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS.	Number of Slaves.	DESCRIPTION.				Deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.	No. of Slave Inhabitants.	NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS.	Number of Slaves.	DESCRIPTION.				Deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.	No. of Slave Inhabitants.
		Male	Female	Under 10	Over 10					Male	Female	Under 10	Over 10		
<u>J. M. Figgat</u>	1	90	0	0	0		1	<u>J. M. Figgat</u>	1	90	0	0	0		1
"	2	65	0	0	0		"	"	2	65	0	0	0		2
"	3	60	0	0	0		"	"	3	60	0	0	0		3
"	4	50	0	0	0		"	"	4	50	0	0	0		4
<u>J. M. Godwin</u>	5	50	0	0	0		2	"	5	50	0	0	0		2
"	6	50	0	0	0		"	"	6	50	0	0	0		"
"	7	40	0	0	0		"	"	7	40	0	0	0		"
"	8	30	0	0	0		<u>Mr. Figgat</u>	"	8	30	0	0	0		"
"	9	10	0	0	0		"	"	9	10	0	0	0		"
<u>Thos. J. Godwin</u>	10	38	0	0	0		3	<u>James Callendar</u>	10	38	0	0	0		3
"	11	35	0	0	0		"	"	11	35	0	0	0		"
"	12	33	0	0	0		"	"	12	33	0	0	0		"
"	13	31	0	0	0		"	"	13	31	0	0	0		"
"	14	18	0	0	0		"	"	14	18	0	0	0		"
"	15	15	0	0	0		"	"	15	15	0	0	0		"

Fincastle Slave Census, 1860

15. Morrison, *Beginnings of Public Education*, p. 114.  
 16. Holladay, *Fincastle Presbyterian Church A Partial History 1902*, p. 63; photo p. 59.

period of our chronicle. Her mother wrote that it was a "very quiet Christmas among the servants" in 1859 and she mentioned the "darkeys" at Nanny Turner's wedding a few weeks later.

According to the 1860 slave schedule for Lexington, Rockbridge County, Charles M. "Figgatt, teller in bank, 1st door down from NE corner Nelson & Main Sts.," and "Ann 'Nannie' G." employed 1 female mulatto.<sup>17</sup>

Charlie was compassionate in a letter to Nannie when he mentioned a slave's illness and death and the effect on Nannie. On April 17, 1860, he wrote, "I am sorry indeed to hear of Mammy's illness and write you in the hope, with prayer that she may recover, & is ever now much better." On April 20th he alluded to Nannie's first experience with the death of someone close, "As [Tom] did not mention Mammy's name I was certain she was out of danger. O how sad—death for the first time yet such is life—death swallowed up in victory, the grave robbed of its sting, & peace now in eternal sunshine we are permitted to hope is the gain over our loss of the loved & faithful servant."

Among the few descriptions of slaves' activities in Fincastle in the correspondence and diary. Nannie's brother, Rob's letter of Sept. 28, 1860, suggests that there were free blacks in Fincastle because "Old Tom was ordered to leave the county." Her "ever affectionate Bro Rob" recounted what he had heard about a "negro insurrection and that about twenty were in jail." Rob displayed the contemporary attitude toward African Americans when he recounted Capt. Figgat's report

heard some right loud singing in the direction of Mr Tom Nelson's, who now resides where Levi Simpson formerly tabernacled. He came up street and got some gentle men and went down there and found some 20 or 25 negroes holding a prayer meeting. It was after one o'clock they took down the names of all of them and on Monday morning they investigated the matter. You never saw a worse scared sett of creatures in your life. Mr Rice was one of the leaders. They whipped old Tommy and let the others go. I think they ought to have given all of them a little. Old

17. Dooley, "1860 Census for Lexington," p. 24, 41.

Tom was ordered to leave the county by next Tuesday morning. I do not believe they met there for any thing else but to sing and pray and enjoy themselves in their own peculiar way. There were none there except members of the church.

Charlie mentioned on July 24, 1861, that "Crise give me plenty to eat. nothing extra." She may be the 45-year-old female mulatto that the young Figgats "employed." Karen Hess's *The Carolina Rice Kitchen: The African Connection* reminds us that wherever African Americans did the cooking, there were subtle influences even when the mistress read her recipes aloud to her servants. The African food heritage would not have been specifically mentioned, but it would have been passed around by word of mouth by their servants.

On Dec. 29, 1862, Nannie documented that she and her mother traveled to Grove Hill to visit Mrs. Cary Breckenridge where Nannie "hired a girl from Mrs. B. for \$20." She didn't write about the work or the duration of her employment.

One of Nannie's rare statements revealing her attitude toward slavery appears in her March 29, 1864, letter, which documents civil punishments. Her father witnessed one of Capt. Breckinridge's "boys" being sentenced to hang. Nannie is opposed to such punishment, for it can have such a "bad effect when a community becomes so familiar with such horrible things."

Some history of African Americans in Fincastle has also been preserved in church histories, which enhance our understanding of the town leading up to and during Nannie's chronicles. The Fincastle Baptist congregation was organized in 1831 and had three black members, one of whom was a slave. Father Absalom Cornelius Dempsey allowed them to listen from the church balcony as he preached to the otherwise all-white congregation. The African American membership grew and Benjamin Ammen suggested on July 22, 1848, that an African Church be formed in Fincastle. On June 23, 1849, the Fincastle African Church was admitted to the Valley Baptist Association under the "watch-care" of the white church. Rev. John Jones, William F. Bannister, Edmund Gilliam, Jefferson

Gilmore, Samuel Poague, Anderson Miller and John Foster Freeman purchased land upon which to build its meetinghouse. This was purchased in 1866 from John and Lucy Linkenauher at a cost of \$50.00 cash. Out of the African Baptist Church grew six area churches: Lapsley Run, Springwood, Amsterdam, Gravel Hill, Midway, and Lily of the Valley.<sup>18</sup>

### Chronicle of Mid-19th Century Southwest Virginia

Nannie was Ann Godwin, the eldest of the 10 children of Thomas Glynn Godwin (1809-1885) and Martha Mary Moore Robinson Godwin (1814-1891). Nannie's father was the second child born in Salem to James A. Godwin (1770-1842) and Nancy McGarrell Godwin (1777-1862). Nannie's mother was the youngest of the five children of Isaac R. Robinson (1769-?) and Eleanor Moffett Robinson (1773-1856).

The Botetourt Clerk of Court provided the license [pictured], which gives some insight into the marriage of Nannie's parents. Martha Mary's father, Isaac Robinson, wrote from Beaver Dam to Henry Bowyer, Clerk of Botetourt County, authorizing the marriage of his daughter to Thomas G. Godwin. John M. Robinson, Martha Mary's paternal uncle, witnessed this document signing.

Nannie's future husband, Charles Miles Figgat, was the second of the nine children of James Madison Figgat (1811-1882) and Susan Wine-man Tinney Figgat (1813-1895). Susan's mother, Eve Tinney (1795-1871), lived with the Figgats in Fincastle.

Nannie and Charlie grew up and were educated with the prominent families of Fincastle, and their fathers were influential citizens. James M. Figgat, in addition to having a wagon making business, owned a number of real estate properties. He served on the committee to establish a girls' school and was on the founding Board of Directors for the Farmers Bank of Fincastle. Thomas G. Godwin also served on committees to establish the girls' school and the Farmers Bank of Fincastle. When the Bank was established in 1852, Thomas G. Godwin was listed among the superintendents.<sup>19</sup> Several sources

Beaver Dam April 9 1834  
 Mr Henry M Bowyer  
 (Clerk of the County  
 of Botetourt)

You are hereby  
 authorized to issue license to Mr.  
 Thos G Godwin to enter in any with my  
 daughter Martha M Robinson  
 Isaac Robinson  
 John M Robinson

John M Robinson was present at the above Certificate  
 according to law this 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1834

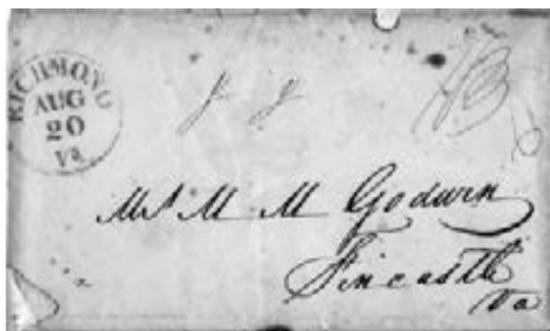
Permission to marry Thomas G. Godwin, April 9, 1834

18. Botetourt, "Finding What Has Been Lost" p. 3.

19. Botetourt County, Virginia Heritage Book, p. 23.

also corroborate that he was a merchant<sup>20</sup> and a leader of the Episcopal Church, where Nannie was married.

The earliest correspondence we located chronicles the Godwins in three letters written by Nannie's father to her mother in the 1830s. The oldest was written less than a year and a half after their marriage.



In the letter dated Aug. 20, 1835 [see Color Illustrations], Thomas Godwin wrote affectionately to his wife just four months after the birth of their first child, a daughter—their “dear little Ann.” “My Dear Martha” received this “first epistle” in Fincastle while “your Tom” was in Richmond on a buying trip to Philadelphia for his dry goods store.

Kiss the little creature again & again for me. The farther the old stage carries me from you the worse I want to see you. I shall lose no time in doing my business & returning to the fond embraces of my dear Mat.

A year later Martha Mary's “most affectionate Tom” wrote from Richmond while on another buying trip, this time to New York.

This city much improved since I was here in the Spring & there are several large buildings now going up, a great quantity of goods in market & merchants busy receiving & selling their new goods.

Martha Mary received another letter written three years later from “faithfully Yours T G Godwin” while he was in Baltimore on Sept. 27, 1839. She was home in Fincastle with two children, “dear little Ann & I. Robinson,” a son born Aug. 8, 1837. This was the first indication that

20. Niederer, *Town of Fincastle*; 1850 Botetourt census; Stoner, *Seed-bed of the Republic*.

the “Rob” in subsequent letters is indeed Isaac Robinson Godwin. When she received this letter, Martha Mary was about seven months pregnant with their third child, Robert Kyle Godwin, who would be “Bob” in the family correspondence. This time her husband was on a disappointing buying trip, traveling again with Salem merchant John F. J. White.

The stock of goods both here & elsewhere is the most in different I have ever seen, indeed there is nothing new. There is a very considerable decline in domest[ic] good[s] but in others there is a very little difference.

While there is a 20-year hiatus in the correspondence, various historic documents have preserved the record of local activities. The *Fincastle Democrat* carried two advertisements (Dec. 8, 1845; June 20, 1846) for clocks sold by T. G. Godwin.<sup>21</sup> The Southwest Virginia Counties Collection documents transactions between merchant Thomas G. Godwin and “Miss Diana Treavy” and “Mrs. Mary Treavy.” Miss Treavy purchased a variety of goods, including gingham, silk girdle, collar, shawl, alpaca, needles, ribbon, coffee pot (38¢), and a tin bucket (25¢) in 1844. Five years later Mrs. Treavy paid \$15 on her note.

By 1855, Nannie's future husband, Charles Miles Figgat, had moved 39 miles northeast of Fincastle to Lexington, the capital of Rockbridge County (population about 17,250). It was the home of Washington College, founded in 1798, and the Virginia Military Institute, established 1838/9.<sup>22</sup> Charlie clerked at H. H. Myer's store for three years before becoming a teller at The Bank of Rockbridge, “The 1st regular bank ever organized in Lexington.”<sup>23</sup>

Our story begins in earnest during the spring of 1859 with a very personal letter between Nannie and Charlie. At 23, he wrote his first letter on May 12 from Lexington to his “Dear Friend” in Fincastle. In it he reveals himself as a very affectionate, modest, romantic, and earnest man.

If it was as easy for me to write as my desire is strong and the pleasure it affords me to do so,

21. Niederer, *Town of Fincastle*, p.33.

22. 1854 *U. S. Gazetteer*, L, p. 600.

23. [Rockbridge] *County News*, Feb. 21, 1895.

signed “Nannie”, and now when it is so how else could I be than proud and happy.

In this letter Charlie acknowledges that Nannie is risking her future by marrying him. He is worried that he was not worthy of her and that her parents might agree with him.

You wonder if I have not had some compunctions in regard to uniting my life to yours. Yes Nannie I confess I have, and they are what I have told you, that it was because I felt unworthy of your love, even if I should be so happy as to win your hand but Nannie I have ever striven to make myself worthy, and it will always be my highest aim and greatest pleasure to honor you, how far I have succeeded you must judge how far I may succeed time will tell, and as, you are willing to risk the future, I shall strive the hardest not to disappoint you. I regret exceedingly Nannie that, that which promises so much pleasure to us should be attended, with other than pleasant feelings to your parents.

... I feel that I am not what I was five years ago, and with the blessing of God I do not mean to be, five years hence what I am now. I have ever striven to make for myself with character, which is all I think worth striving for; whether I have succeeded so far to be worthy of their confidence to such a degree as to justify them in granting unto me that for which my highest aims have been, is for them to determine;

But, he says he will accept their decision even if it is not what he hopes. “But O! will it not be hard, hard indeed to bear. Softened only by the reflection that it is for your happiness.”

At least three months after Charlie asked the Godwins for permission to marry their eldest daughter, his August 31, 1859, letter records that he humbly received her parents' consent, and “all doubt as regards the future was removed.” As was typical of Charlie, he couched his pleasure in the context of his religious conviction.

I am grateful to God that I am to be blessed with a companion through life in whose society my own thoughts and feelings will be elevated and my aims in life will be higher, because I shall desire to honor her, by whom I am so highly honored and that in things heavenly my heart will be brought nearer to God because in sweet communion with one unto whom I can open

I could hope to make this my first letter to you interesting, but where in I fail I hope you will attribute it to my inability to compose and not to any lack of interest, or desire so to do, for surely there could nothing be of more pleasure to me than the privilege of seating myself for an hour to hold converse with the one, of all my friends the most dear, the one who for years I have striven to make myself worthy to be called her friend and now when I am permitted to know from yourself that my efforts have not been in vane, how else could I feel than happy, it could not be otherwise, when I feel that I have now obtained that, for which my whole life has been aimed, and now Nannie it seems as if all I have desired in this life has been granted unto me, even my wildest imagination, desires that I never expected to be gratified, and the greatest, the one most coveted has been give me last, and now I am happy,

And now Nannie why is it that I am the recipient of such a gift, for surely I have nothing to offer in return but my first and only love, yet you are willing to take me as I am, I have neither honor nor wealth to bestow and yet you are willing to leave a happy home and risk your fortune with mine, you are willing after mature deliberation, to place in my hands your future happiness.

In this letter Charlie reveals that he wants to marry Nannie and that he has already asked for her parents' permission. But they haven't yet given their consent. “Did you ever renew the conversation with your Ma? I must confess that I feel anxious to know whether your parents will approve of my proposal plans.”

June 14 Charlie wrote again, gushing with his admiration of her.

As I have told you with regard to my feelings whenever I was permitted the pleasure of enjoying your company, having always a deeper sense of your excellence, so now in your letter it contains so much of self, modest, unassuming, gentle, all that and which alone is the true attraction in the female character, and although the opposite to that which attracts many, it is this in you, with your many virtues that has always held me spellbound and made me feel that if there was not in you all that I might desire, I need not look for it elsewhere. Long have I wished that if I should ever leave home, that I might have the honor and great pleasure to receive a letter

my whole heart and feel that in her bosom beats those feelings in unison with my own and thus together we will lighten the burden of life, and make by the grace of God the path to heaven plain and pleasant...

This letter began with an 1805 quote from Thomas Moore's poem, "The Last Rose of Summer," which could have had a special significance for Nannie and Charlie. His letter notes that a ring is enclosed and that "it is not such a one as I would have chosen, but I had to have it ordered from the maker to get one of the proper dimensions." Perhaps he means to fit her finger but also to accommodate the quote as an inscription. "I am so glad you gave me the motto as it is so appropriate, that it seems there will always be a voice whispering its meaning..."

His letter also reveals a little about Nannie's father's disposition.

No wonder Nannie you so fondly love your dear parents for truly few are blessed with such, many who think your Pa cold because of his manner little know the depth of kindness in his heart. O! how I felt drawn toward them when I read his letter announcing your Ma's acquiescence to our wishes, so tender, in a few words, and a prayer for our mutual happiness, hard will it be to give you up to another. And hard for you to part with them, and this will make me strive but the more to render life to you as pleasant as when with those who first have a place in your affections...

Charlie's brother, William was planning to marry "the lady who everybody thought the best in C[hristiansburg], and I the one in F[incastle]." William Fletcher Figgat, Charlie's older brother by two years was a physician living and practicing in Christiansburg. He was engaged to Matilda Mary (Mollie) Edie.

Correspondence was conveyed by a variety of means and it was not necessarily considered

**To the Clerk of the County Court of**  
*Richmond* **in the State of Virginia.**

I HEREBY CERTIFY, That the following is a correct Statement of a

**Marriage** solemnized by me in the County aforesaid:

Date of Marriage, *December 13<sup>th</sup> 1859*

Place of Marriage, *Fincastle*

Full Names of Parties married, *Charles M. Figgat & Ann Godwin*

Age of Husband, *Twenty Four*

Age of Wife, *Twenty Four*

Condition of Husband, (widowed or single,) *Single*

Condition of Wife, (widowed or single,) *Single*

Place of Husband's Birth, *Fincastle Va*

Place of Wife's Birth, *Fincastle Va*

Place of Husband's Residence, *Lexington Va*

Place of Wife's Residence, *Fincastle Va*

Names of Husband's Parents, *Jas W & S M. Figgat*

Names of Wife's Parents, *J. G. & M. W. Godwin*

Occupation of Husband, *Band Officer*

Given under my hand as a *Minister of the Gospel*  
(legally authorized to solemnize Marriages,) this *13<sup>th</sup>*  
Day of *December* A. D. 1859  
*J. M. Hunter*

Marriage Certificate of Ann (Nannie) Godwin and Charles Miles Figgat

and Charlie were married Dec. 18, though their marriage certificate says that they were married on Dec. 13, the day following his brother's wedding.<sup>24</sup>

Nannie's letters are also replete with religious conviction. For example, "As you have asked that I should pray for you Charlie that your mind should not be so led off from God and heavenly things so do I need the same for of, how great is my coldness and thoughtlessness. But may we not hope that it is but natural that our minds should be engrossed by things of so momentous importance to our worldly interest, though we will pray that it may not continue to be so and that in the future may also concern our spiritual interest."

Throughout their correspondence, Nannie often recounted for Charlie's benefit the sermons she heard, and she would often note them in her diary too. "Mr Ambler gave us a very good sermon Sunday from the text; 'why stand ye here, all the day idle?' I fear it is the case with many of us. Did you ever think of it, that for our sins of omission as well as commission, we are responsible. I fear we all forget that very often..."

In addition to writing about their faith, health is frequently mentioned, as is local Fincastle gossip. She continued her correspondence with Charlie the next day, Friday, Nov. 25, 1859.

I feel very badly this morning Charlie weak and trembling and my head confused so you must not be surprised if I say some foolish things, for I feel as I suppose some persons do after having been on a spree. I believe I was tipsy last night. Dr. [Samuel] Meredith sent me some kind of mixture for my cold which made me sick and drowsy and drunk. The effects have not worn off. Had I known how badly I should feel, I would not have risen, but I hope I shall feel better in a short time. I could not forebear finishing my letter though I can think of nothing interesting; and fear you will find me quite dull.

Mag Callaghan is to be married on the 7th of next month. I hear of Sue Carper very soon to Mr Fagan and go to Pennsylvania. Can it be possible a Carper is going to leave Fincastle? I suppose

private. "I handed your letter to Mary S and she said she felt badly, when she read it and knew for certain that she was to lose another friend [to marriage] as she calls it. She says she did not tell L R but I believe she was telling your Aunt and Mr B before I got out of sight although I told her to obey your instructions."

There is a three month lapse before 24-year-old Nannie's first letter to her "dear Charlie." On Nov. 24, 1859, she wrote about the precarious nature of correspondence—their last letters having passed each other. She also shared some rare humor about their wedding when her uncle who planned to have his cataracts removed asked her to consider delaying "the pickle approaching occasion until he could see it well done, which will be he hopes about next April at which time he expects to have the operation performed. I told him I would of course have to consult the other party concerned."

Nannie took this opportunity to reveal that she knew the secret of his brother's engagement.

You did not surprise me at all by the communication of news concerning William. As he had told me all about it when down and his intention of getting Mollie to consent that it should be on the 13th. But he enjoyed such a strict secrecy even concerning you, that I said nothing to you being determined to let him know I could keep a secret. He said moreover he had written to you not to tell me.

Nannie also wrote: "I hear your Ma is to give quite a large party on the 'occasion' as Nannie T[urner] calls it. There will be considerable gaiety I suppose... P[aulina] Price has determine to remain here until after Christmas, and Nannie [Turner] too, of which I am very glad as I should like my friends near to enjoy with me the great era in my life."

There was a little discord over the wedding dates when both couples wanted to be married on Dec. 13, but the brothers resolved it. The *Richmond Whig* reported on Jan. 11, 1860, that on Monday evening, Dec. 12, the Rev. Charles Miller married, Dr. William. F. Figgat, to Miss Mollie M. Edie, the daughter of Dr. Joseph J. Edie, all being residents of Christiansburg. The same newspaper, however, reported that Nannie

24. *Richmond Whig*. <http://www.newspaperabstracts.com/link.php?action=detail&id=97059>.



Episcopal Church, Fincastle

you heard of Mag's beau, or rather who he was Mr Phelps a teacher in Bedford She will be quite a young bride. I hear they are going to give a large wedding.

Writing back on Nov. 28, Charlie shared with Nannie additional wedding gossip from Lexington.

I received a letter from Ned a few days since he was well and had acted upon your advice as he says he has written to Carrie and told her all, asking a decisive answer and I suppose when we hear from him again we will know how matters stand with him, and can but hope that for I do think they would suit each other exactly.

Poor Mag C[allaghan] is she to be sacrificed upon the alter of her mother's ambition for early marriage as some of her sisters have been I hope not but I should think they wanted to be certain of it as I understand they got the license three weeks ago to keep him from flying the track (but I suppose they did not want to trouble him to go to town when he comes over for her and took them out for him when over the last time...

Charlie also described the compliments he received when his friends and acquaintances heard about his pending marriage. "I received a letter from Jno Anderson a few days since congratulating me upon my good fortune in winning the heart and hand of one so worthy... his high opinion of yourself and thus it is with everyone who knows you and I am congratulated by them in being so happy as to be about to lead to the

alter one of the noblest of her sex." Anderson also sent Charlie \$5 for a wedding hat.

Writing to Nannie also gave Charlie comfort when there was sadness in his life.

I had lost by death one of my little S. S. [Sunday School] Scholars & had set up with the Corpse the night before, & this made me sick, then all the circumstances of his sudden & unexpected death, in connection with our relation as teacher & scholar made me sad indeed, he was about nine years old, a son of God L's. he ran a splinter in his hand a week before & it had gotten well apparently but the night before he died complained of stiffness of the jaw & limbs & died the next night in the greatest agony with lock-jaw. Oh!"

Charlie wrote his last letter as a bachelor from Lexington on Dec. 8, 1859, just a week before their wedding in St. Mark's Episcopal Church [pictured] in Fincastle. "Again – and is it the last time – is the time so near when we shall change this pleasant mode of intercourse for one still more so." He alluded to their honeymoon in a rare display of humor. He wrote about notifying his boss that he "would be away and he seemed anxious for me to get back as soon as I could, but as I very seldom go on occasions of this kind, I'm not disposed to be in a hurry."

Charlie's letter was full of hope that he would make his wife happy.

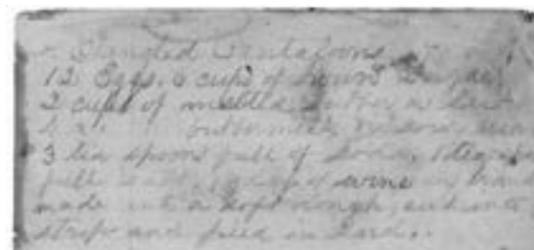
I have long lived hoping against hope and now when all my sweet dreams of childhood are to be realized, the fondest moments of my life will be when I look upon you dear one & feel that you are happy. And Nannie, when I err or do miss, I know that fond heart in all its tender feelings will forgive & overlook & believe me, they will come not from the heart but the head.

The weather for a December wedding was a concern. "It seems as if we are to have bad weather Nannie – well lets take things as they come, if the Sun shines well, & if it rains, we will still not complain." He concluded with gossip carried over from his previous letter. "I saw Mag C[allaghan] that was & her husband as they passed through to day – Mr P[helps] looks a little ancient I think."

Surprisingly, there was no mention of the impending war in these early letters, even though the Rockbridge First Dragoons, "...the flower of the young manhood of Rockbridge..."<sup>25</sup> had been organized on May 12, 1859, and the Fincastle Rifles was formed in Dec. 1859. The "Affairs in Fincastle," part of the regularly-featured "Daily Dispatch" in the *Richmond Dispatch*, Dec. 13, 1859, attempted to explain why there had not been any news published from Fincastle. "The reason is, that our citizens stick to the old adage, which says, "What is everybody's business is no body's business."

Two weeks after their Dec. 13th wedding, Nannie's mother, Martha Mary Godwin wrote a very informative letter from Fincastle. On Dec. 29, 1859, she told about visiting and dining with friends, sewing projects, and the like.

"We did not get the hous put in order until Wednesday Thersday I went out with Eliza J to return her cal's [i.e., house calls]. Friday I made about half a bushel of tangle britches [recipe pictured] for the children (did not wish you had some as you do not like them but thought Charley was duchman enough to like them and wished he and dear Rob had sume)..."



Tangled Pantaloons/Britches Recipe

In addition to detailing whom she visited, Martha Mary wrote about sewing and advice for Nannie about furnishing their Lexington rooms. She and Charlie were living in a boarding house, perhaps the same one he had been living in before their marriage. "I have fethers to fill your pillows. I think ten pound of new fethers will be enough put 2¾ in one pillow and try it if it will do make the other to way the same and put the ballence in the bolster."

25. Driver, *1st Virginia Cavalry*, p. 173; Southern Historical Society papers, p. 377-378.

Martha Mary was not confident in Nannie's abilities to establish a well-furnished household.

You must have blankets and cumfort and maney other things which you have not thought of. I intend giving you a fether bed when you go to housekeeping [i.e., move from the boarding house to their own house], but you will not nede that now. I will send what things you most nede by Tom when he goes, unles you do as I have propped, sheets pillow cases and towel I can send very conveaniently but other things are so bulky that will not pack in small space. Consult Charly about it and let me know.

She missed her eldest daughter: "it dus seam to me more than a month since you went away I think of the weding as sumthing away back younder – but as you are happy my child I will not be so selfish as to regret it."

Nannie's mother concluded her letter with advice, love, and humility.

This is along letter for me I hope you will be able to make it out notwithstanding bad speling, give my love to Charly You must both be good children and neither of you forget your own homes, I wish to do as I would be dun by, I do not want him to give up his own famaly for you and yours, as I have seen sum folks do. I hope your harts are large enough for both. Write me long & frequent letters and do not be backward in letting me know aney thing you want you know if I can give it you will cum frely if not I can say no and you must not think hard.

In addition to Nannie's move to Lexington, Martha Mary Godwin's older sons were away at college. Rob, Isaac Robinson Figgat, was in medical school. He attended Washington College (Lexington), University of Virginia (Charlottesville, 1858/59), and Jefferson Medical College (Philadelphia) before receiving his Doctor of Medicine degree from the Virginia Medical College (Richmond) in 1860.<sup>26</sup> Tom, Thomas Johnston Godwin, was also in college though his December return had been delayed due to smallpox, which did not seem to be much of a concern. Nannie's thirteen-year-old sister, Jennie, Jane Moffett Godwin, appended her mother's letter with "A good many children

26. Tyler, *Men of Mark in Virginia*, vol. 2, p. 131.

being vacinated we have not been but will be as soon as Dr gets some matter.”

Martha Mary also included comments from Nannie’s brothers and sisters: “Henry sais you must not love that little ira [i.e., Charlie] more than you do him And Had [Harriett Godwin] & Mary [twin of Henry Godwin] seam rather jelous too.” She ended her letter in order to finish her work or perhaps supervise the servants’ work. “I must close, they have just brought sum hogs to cut up I do hope they are the last, from your ever loving Mother God bless you M M Godwin Friday 30th”

Nannie’s mother penned our first letter of 1860. Written on Jan. 17, Martha Mary continued to write about furnishing the young Figgats’ Lexington rooms. She had made many household items, some with a sewing machine, including pillows, cases, and sheets. She was concerned that her choices will not be to Nannie’s liking.

am afraid you will not like them as they have a red stripe, could get no others will send you a comfort, a new one, if not one I have. About your curtains I do not know what to say, you will find



The James M. and Susan W. Figgat House, 322 E. Main St., Fincastle

white curtains very troublesome for a chamber, still I do not think aney others look so well, you must use your own judgement If my old parler curtains will suit you for the present (until you can better determin what you will nede) you are welcum to them but I suppose they are too old timy. Your pa will send you some money or a check which you must make go as far as you can towards furnishing your room. I wish I were thaer to help you to make your carpet do try and not make a mistake in cuting it you know you are famus for mistakes, you had better not try to cut it until you get in your room. It will look much prettyer than a rag one I suppose.

In addition to household issues, Martha Mary conveyed some Fincastle gossip. One incident had to do with the wedding of Nanny Turner and James McDowell, whose sister was opposed to it.

He asked her if she never intended to recognize him as a brother again, she told him yes, all wais but never nanny Turner as his wife, thus they parted, she stood in the dore untill the stage started. Mary Spiller told me she never witnessed aney thing so solemn...

The room was fool not withstanding Nanna wanted no one, there was your Aunt Mary the two Spillers several stage pasengers and all the darkeys of both famalaies. I was told that Mary R treated her very affectionetly and invited her to se her when they cum back. William did not go over I beleve this is all of importance about it



On April 2, 1860, Charlie wrote to “My Dear Wife,” who was away for an extended period visiting friends. “Give my love to all the dear ones at your Pas & also to those on the Hill,” a reference to his family’s Fincastle home at Main and Hancock Streets [pictured previous page].

The next letter from Nannie cheered Charlie, as did an unknown item, perhaps a baked good that her mother had sent him. “How can I sufficiently thank your dear Ma – for her remembrance of me, that while you all are enjoying so many good things she should be so kind as to send me so great a rarity & that which I love so much. It came too late for dinner & I shall try it in the morning, many many thanks to her for it.” He also wrote Nannie about how delighted he was that her brother Tom had stopped by on Sunday.

The entire span of their correspondence reveals a very affectionate couple. Charlie wrote 11 days later from Lexington.

O Nannie how can I express the pleasure your last letter gave me although I had no right to expect it yet I hoped that one would & sure enough the dearest & best of wives, who thinks so much of her Charlie filled his heart with joy to know that he is so thought of and so fondly loved. ... O how sad I felt when I read of your suffering your head, & how much I wish I could have been there, to nurse & bathe, as I am wont to do I imagine Nannie would have taken her accustomed place at least for a while instead of the pillow she had to use, & then when Charlie could have rendered back a little kindness for the much my darling showed me in my sickness, it would have made me so happy to hear you say, O that was so sweet & thus I would have gotten a sweet – would I not. I hope you are entirely well now...

He gently reproached Nannie for her extended absence though he recognized his sin of jealousy.

I know you wish to stay until the 15th & by so doing you would have a longer time with your friends, & then the pleasure of an other wedding, & I cannot ask you to come sooner if you wish to stay, but O how can I wait a month longer without seeing my Nannie, but I will not be so selfish as to wish to deprive her of so much enjoyment... the sigh when alone tells me I did not know how much I loved you until you left. O Father forbid that it is too much. “I am a jealous God...” in much weakness do I live continually sometimes in hope & then I am sad because of Sin & the uncleanness of my heart but thanks be unto God

He also shared a little Lexington gossip and mentions court was in session. “The drinking habit was very conspicuous in Lexington and there were many unlicensed drinking places. Just before the War between the States there were eight groggeries and court day was no time for a self-respecting woman to be seen on the streets.”<sup>27</sup> Mrs. Cox, Charlie noted, “has not worn her fine Bonnets yet, I am anxious to see Sallies \$20 one.” And then he teases Nannie, “shall I have a couple of the same put by for you.”

Four days later, on April 17, Charlie wrote again that he missed Nannie and was elated to get her letter.

O Nannie how welcome was the looked for letter for I thought it would come & then its pleasant & interesting contents I wonder if my Nannie feels as happy to read a letter from me as I do when I read yours, for it seems that I cannot write like you, for ever word appears to have a charm about it & ever letter seems more interesting than the last, & this just the kind I love...

Writing on Sundays was not generally considered appropriate.

Nannie I cannot think you did wrong, in writing Sunday as you did, although under ordinary circumstances I would not think it proper, and I trust that on that same day we both had sweet communion with God & were drawn nearer to him

27. Boley, *Lexington*, p. 19.

In this letter we learn that Nannie was expected to be gone for a month. Charlie continued to be conflicted about his loneliness while Nannie enjoyed herself, but he was comforted by his religious convictions.

but I know that if Nannie only thought how lonely I now was, & how happy her presence made me she would not keep me a bachelor, any longer for she loves too much & wants to be here too with her husband. And now my dear wife it is my daily prayer that we may be both kept in the right way that we be to each other a guide & taking Gods word for our guide we may be enabled to point out the road to heaven

For the first time we hear about the growth of Lexington and a possible change in the young Figgats' housing situation. "We have a prospect of a new home after awhile as the Bank speaks of building in connexion with Pettigrew across the street & if so, we will occupy the dwelling part of the house."

Three days later on April 20, 1860, we learn that Charlie had a usual time when he wrote to Nannie. "Again has the regular time arrived for me to hold a little pleasant chat with you and although I cannot promise to be very interesting, know that Nannie feels the same way about my letters that I do with regard to hers, for she has told me she loves to get them." He wrote that he was healthy and his weight "reached again 175 [pounds]<sup>28</sup> at which mark I hope I may stay. O I do wish & always pray that my Nannie might be given perfect health ... please excuse me Nannie if I seem over anxious, for I cannot help feeling so, and I trust that my prayers for your strength are in accordance with Gods will..."

A month later on May 18, 1860, Charlie described Lexington as "unusually dull, more so than it has been since the Small-pox times." He teased Nannie that they had been separated for so long their friends must have forgotten that they were married.

And so people will not let you be a married lady well if they dont believe it tell them to ask Mr Ambler [who married them] and from a recollection of what passed between us (if he did pass it wrong) I am certain he can testify to the con-

trary; well I know that there is one any how that has not forgotten it, and in the kind letter before me is an other proof, for while she could find among her many friends, plenty to occupy her time and thoughts yet she withdraws from them and writes her absent husband, and in such away that he feels that he comes first in her thoughts, and whose pleasure is considered & happiness thought of at all times.

Nannie wrote to Charlie the following day from Charlottesville. She was concerned that her plans for returning to Lexington could not be finalized. "I am sorry to say I am not able yet to tell you when I am coming or how for there is such a bustle & no finding out anything. Pa & Ma spoke of going Wednesday, if they do, of course I cannot go with them, as we would get there too late for the boat [i.e., a ferry across the James River], & I should have to wait until Friday. ... I am in a great hurry now, & only write to let you know I am coming sometime or other."

Charlie's "fondly attached, Nannie" was as ardent and devout as he. "And now must stop, & hope soon to see my dear dear husband who is so sincere, affectionate, indeed everything that's good to this one who daily prays, that she may be enabled to be the same to him, & that he may be long spared to her, & both may endeavor to keep each other in the straight path, that leads to glory & to God."

Back in Lexington with Charlie one month later, Nannie received a letter from her father who wrote from Fincastle on June 21, 1860. He sent news of many visitors and her younger sister Ella's "ecstasy" when a piano arrived. He also complained about her brother, Tom, who should have "stood a first rate examination not a good one only but a very good one. I do not think I am mistaken when I think he has mental capacity equal to most youths and superior to many. He may probably be a little lazy, possibly don't study as hard as he might do." Her father asked for Nannie's help in determining if Tom needed financial assistance, and he alluded to a business transaction.

I expect, as usual he is 'hard up.' If he is not, then his financial condition is entirely unlike

most of folks here abouts. I speak experimentally of one of the inhabitants of this place. But, thank goodness, I have got Jas McD[owell] receipt in full, and of course feel relieved of a heavy load th'o I had to borrow a small am't of money to enable me to do so.

By Oct. 17, 1860, Nannie was again in Fincastle writing to her "Dear Husband." The letter was replete with talk of illnesses. She was suffering from a cold so the previous evening, after paying house calls, she tried to remedy it with "a foot bath, & molasses stew it still seems to keep fast hold & will have to go its own way I suppose." This home remedy was a concoction of warm milk and molasses. (See Nannie's beverage recipes for further explanation.) Nannie must have preferred to try it after the adverse effects of the cold medicine the doctor had prescribed and she wrote about on Nov. 25, 1859.

Nannie was often the conveyer of sad news in Fincastle. She wrote Charlie that her good friend Mag Callaghan "was quite ill, having given birth to a babe in the morning which is dead, & she had been sick for several days. Pa thought it best that Ma should go out last night, so she went on horseback, and I don't know when she will return, but hope this evening. I feel uneasy about Mag, but hope the best." Nannie also wrote, "Measles are prevailing very generally here & half Mr Gould's school has it." She was concerned that Charlie would become ill and she reported not having seen Charlie's mother. "I am afraid some of them may be sick."<sup>29</sup>



Prof. and Mrs. Benjamin Gould

After her marriage and move to Lexington, Nannie returned to Fincastle often for extended

29. Holladay, *Fincastle Presbyterian Church*, the Goulds p. 49.

stays, and Charlie visited when he could take time away from his job at the bank. She pleaded, "please try & make your stay as long as possible when you come up, for they all think so hard of you at home that you speak of staying such a short time and come so seldom... They all seem to think my stay here is scandalously short, but I reckon you will think it will be long enough."

While they were separated from each other and from family and friends, they relied on precarious mail deliveries. "Ma was quite shocked that he [Tom] hadn't received a letter from home & pities him exceedingly... I have just received your most welcome letter & am so glad I can send you another immediately James F[iggat] sitting by me, and sends love &c."

Nannie closed with love and affection for her husband. "Does Charlie dream about his 'little darling'?" Oh! I love that epithet from him I love best, he says it so sweetly & affectionately, but he is always so. I reckon this would make some of them bucketty, so I'll stop."

*The Richmond Dispatch* for Dec. 4, 1860, reported that in Botetourt "the secession spirit is on the increase, still there is an overwhelming majority in the county for the Union." On April 13, 1861, it reported that in Fincastle "The people are beginning to arouse themselves, seeing the danger to which they are subject by waiting." And, "We had speeches to-day (Court day) from gentlemen, all of whom were in favor of secession."

In June Nannie's brother Rob and Charlie's brother James H. H. enlisted in the Botetourt Dragoons. "The original 1860's 2nd Virginia Cavalry Co. C was a militia unit formed in 1859 to protect and defend Fincastle, Virginia (Botetourt County) from Northern aggression. In April of 1861 the "Botetourt Dragoons" were called to active service as Company C of the 30th Virginia Mounted Infantry. After reorganization of Stuart's Cavalry in April of 1862 the 30th became Company C of the 2nd Virginia..."<sup>30</sup>

We found only three letters and there are no diary entries for 1861. On July 2, 1861, Charlie's brother, James H. H. Figgat, wrote from Fairfax

30. 2nd Virginia Cavalry Co. C. <http://www.2ndvacavalrycoc.org/page2.html>.

28. Charlie was about 5' 10" tall.

Court House to one of his brothers, most likely Charlie. James provided our first evidence that Nannie and Charlie had a baby.

I was glad to hear that Nannie was doing so well, & were so nigh convalescence. I hope she is by this time entirely well & that Thos James is improving & becoming a fine healthy child. Is he pretty, handsome, ugly or how I imagine a little red faced sub nosed crying creature. I don't know. Yet if he is so he may afford you the same delight if he were the most perfect formed of all creatures."

In fact, Nannie had given birth to their first child on May 17, 1861, perhaps in Fincastle with her mother at hand.

Though not yet enlisted, being in Lexington Charlie had access to more war news than they had in Fincastle. His July 24 letter named many comrades among the casualties at Manassas and provided Nannie with a "correct list of our causalities." Some had been brought to Lexington and news of others he passed along from Dr. Joe McClung's retelling. "We suffered but little in comparison with the danger, yet many of our familiar have to mourn the dead." Charlie shared details too. "Bradly was struck with a shell & so mutilated & as not to be recognized afterwards. Bill was buried at home today, & the others I understand on the field, of the Rifles but one was killed dead." And, "Wm Patton had been sick, but got better, got drunk & died."

He wrote of the death of another comrade, but he couched it within his religious convictions. "It is sad to think he has been taken off & without being ready, may the Lord have pardoned his & the sins of all who have been killed... But you no doubt have enough of war without me making up my letter with such items, but O what cause for gratitude we have for if God had not been on our side, what could we have done. O glorious victory, wondrous power but unto God..."

Charlie wrote about the upcoming march to Fairfield, where the "militia" hoped "to organise 4 companies of vol-trs. To make up our [county] quota, but I doubt if they succeed & if not we will send off about 800—we are preparing tents

& knap-sacks canteens &c & trying to make them as comfortable as possible." The *Richmond Dispatch* described a similar recruiting situation in Botetourt.

Daily Dispatch: August 20, 1861

Affairs in Fincastle. August 14, 1861.

Some days ago we had lively times in our town, occasioned by the daily assembling of the militia, who were called together for the purpose of holding themselves in readiness to march whenever the call from the Governor should arrive.

Upon the first occasion of their drill they were informed by their commanding officer that ten per cent, of the white population was required to be represented in the field before the county could be exempted from the liability of a draft; one hundred was then wanting to complete that number, and unless they were speedily furnished the militia would be called out en masse. Under these circumstances many stepped forward and volunteered their services in the defence of their country; and I believe the quota of Botetourt, amounting to upwards of eight hundred, has been, or will be, furnished in a few days. Sharp-Shooter.

From Lexington on Aug. 5, 1861, Charlie wrote sweetly.

I am well & getting along very well but although I have said nothing about missing you I begin to feel that something is wanting, & Nannie knows what that is - her own sweet presence & that of the little one who sends me so many kisses. I will pay him back when I see him, and spank him for pulling your nose.

He also wrote about one of his heroes, Col. Sandie Pendleton,<sup>31</sup> who would become his third son's namesake, and about Robert E. Lee.

Our companies are now all full & there has been 2 or 3 new ones formed they will go to the north west, a great number of troops are going out, 1000 a day pass up the central road & all the wagons to be had in the county are pressed to carry the equipment & baggage. Gen Lee is out there & will no doubt in a short time have things

31. Alexander "Sandie" Swift Pendleton (Sept. 28, 1840 – Sept. 22, 1864) was an officer on the staffs of Stonewall Jackson, Richard S. Ewell, and Jubal A. Early, with whom Charlie also served as a clerk.

all right. Wise's men do not like him & have no confidence in his ability Some of the Rangers are here & from them we learn that his army is more like a Big Muster than a regular army. No order at all.

The next morning Charlie continued his letter outlining Lee's next battle with nearly 20,000 Confederate soldiers on Cheat Mountain. "There cannot be much doubt about the result. May God give us an other Manassas, and may that corrupt portion be soon purged of all its vileness."

In his closing he humorously complained of the summer heat. "Has it been any ways warm up the road? I think I must be loosing flesh every day for it seems that I cannot keep cool any way night or day. I expect if you were here, you would get kicked out of the bed some night, & for fear I hope it may cool off before your return."

Activities in Fincastle included the formation of the Soldiers' Aid Society. According to the *Richmond Dispatch* for Sept. 11, 1861, the "ladies of Fincastle and vicinity" came together "to contribute to the comfort and health of the soldiers who have left their homes to defend their country." The *Dispatch* also reported on Dec. 27, 1861, "Refugees from the Western counties are coming to, and going through this place [i.e., Fincastle], almost daily, being driven from their happy homes by the Hessians of the North."

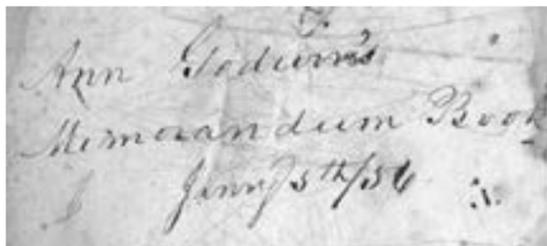


Nancy McGarrell Godwin's Headstone

The following spring Nannie's paternal grandmother, Nancy McGarrell Godwin, died on May 31, 1862, 20 years after the death of her husband, James A. Godwin. She was buried with other family members near the Methodist Church on land that was later donated by their son, Thomas G. Godwin, and would become known as the Godwin Cemetery.



The Thomas G. and Martha Mary Godwin House, 104 E. Main St., Fincastle



Nannie's aborted attempt to keep a diary in 1856

While Nannie had evidently intended to keep a "memorandum book" in 1856, she did not begin to record details of her life in this small leather bound volume until more than six years later on July 30, 1862. Her diary begins by recording the baptism of her first son, Thomas Godwin Figgat, born on May 17, 1861. "Oh! That we may have strength given us to keep the vows made then & there & bring him up in the nurture & admonition of the Lord..." Her diary entry contradicts James H. H. Figgat's letter of July 2, 1861. Instead of naming their first son after both of their fathers, hers Thomas and his James, Nannie and Charlie named their son after her father, Thomas Godwin Figgat. He was usually referred to as Godwin.

When she started her diary, Nannie and Charlie were living in a boarding house in Lexington, though she often visited Fincastle. However, in her second entry, written on Aug. 2, 1862, Nannie recorded that she and her son would return to Fincastle to live in "my Father's house there to seek protection & care during my husband's absence." She wrote that Charlie broke up their happy home "to take his place among his fellow men whose lots have been cast; in the Army separated from all he holds dear ... Oh! That this little band may soon be reunited in our own happy & peaceful home & that the trumpet of cruel war may never more call forth our dear ones."

Though the Godwins' house at the corner of Main and Church Streets was destroyed by fire in 1870, Nannie's oldest brother, Rob, recorded in 1903 that the space between their house and Mr. Lewis Housman's residence was "occupied by a frame attachment," which was the Godwins' dry goods store. After the fire only the

house was rebuilt.<sup>32</sup> Charlie's family's home was also in town, about three blocks up Main Street at the corner of Hancock Street.

While he had not yet officially enlisted, on Friday, Sept. 5, 1862, Charlie wrote his "Darling Wife" from Camp Narrows. It was very late at night after he had packed for a 2 a.m. "march westward, not to stop I am in hopes until we see the Big Hog Pen... I hoped to hear from you tonight but no letter came, direct to care Gen E[chols] 1st Brig Army SW. Va, via Dublin." Most of his letter beseeched God to be merciful and protect his obedient family.

Sources supplementing our research include the published diaries of Lucy Breckinridge and Letitia Burwell, both of whom lived in close proximity to Fincastle. Lucy recorded in her diary on Sept. 7, 1862, that "After church Mr. [Thomas G.] Godwin assembled us around him and read the [war] news... Mr. Charles Spears [brother of Nannie's good friend, Sallie] had been killed."

On Sept. 9 Nannie declared, "my Heavenly Father has again favored me & his friends in allowing [Charlie] to visit should not our faith be strong. Oh! May I never doubt, but always believe He will be there ever kind & may I not murmur but say in all cases 'Thy will be done.'"

Thanksgiving, decreed by President Jefferson Davis for Thursday, Sept. 18, 1862, was also the end of Charlie's Fincastle visit one week before his official enlistment in the Confederate Army. "During the respite in September-October, 1862, Gen. Robert E. Lee's army increased in size, adding more than 20,000 new, straggling and/or returning men."<sup>33</sup> Nannie wrote in her diary saying good-bye to Charlie. "Heaven grant that we may soon meet again, under more hopeful circumstances. & that whatever may happen to us in the Providence however painful the circumstances we still trust in God. & hope we may be safely delivered through them all."

The following Monday, she recorded that her mother left to make the 100 mile journey to Charlottesville with cousin L. Nelson's family. Martha Mary Godwin went to see her 21-year-

32. Godwin, *Fincastle Fire!* p. [5].

33. Surkamp, "Civil War in Jefferson County"

old son, Tom, who had typhoid fever. Mother and son returned to Fincastle on Oct. 8, as did her 19-year-old son, James, who arrived on furlough. In the meantime, Nannie chronicled that Mrs. A. Wilson died and that she received a note and two letters from Charlie, as well as a "draft" from Mr. Myers for \$197.85. We don't know much about the young Figgats' finances, or if this is the same Myers that Charlie had worked for in the 1850s before he began his career as a bank clerk in Lexington. Though financial notations surround her diary and annotations like this \$197.85 are scattered throughout their correspondence, there is no indication as to why Nannie was receiving money.

Driver records that on Sept. 20, 1862, Charles Miles Figgat, a teller at the Bank of Lexington, enlisted in the 1st Virginia Cavalry, having been exempt March 16, 1862.<sup>34</sup> However, CSA Muster Rolls consistently give his enlistment date as Sept. 25, 1862. From the time of his official enlistment, Charlie was detailed as a clerk to the 2nd Corps, Army of Northern Virginia.

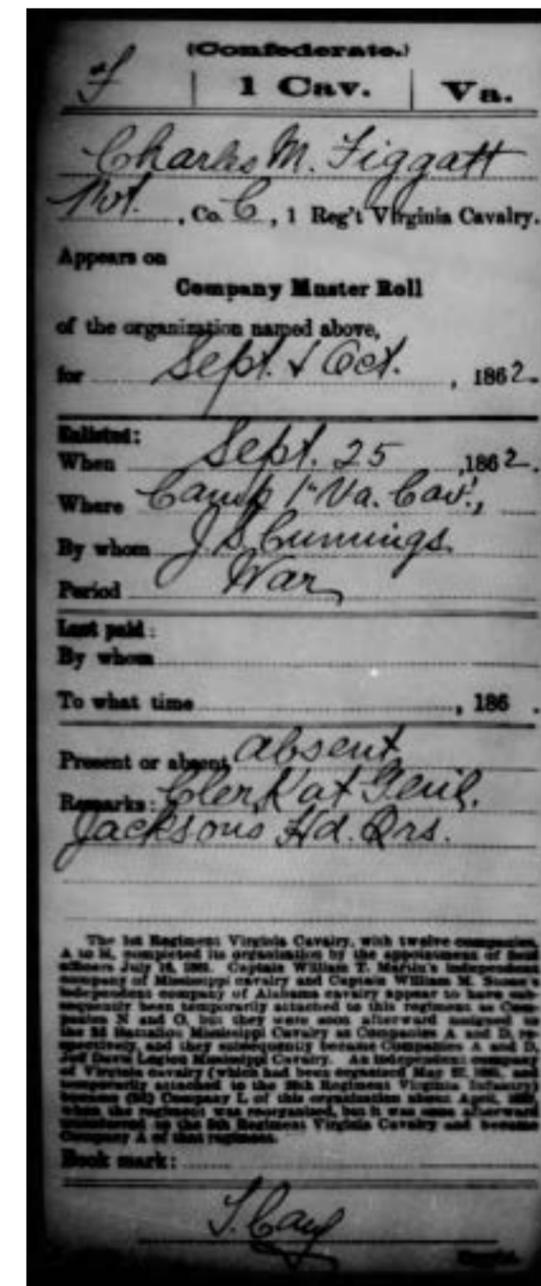
Twelve Muster Rolls for Company C, First Regiment, Virginia Cavalry<sup>35</sup> [one pictured] name Charles M. Figgat (sometimes Figgatt), and are bimonthly records from Sept./Oct. 1862 to July/Aug. 1864, for almost every pay period.<sup>36</sup> These records usually note that Charlie was "absent" from his assigned regiment because he was "Detailed as clerk at Genl. Jackson's Hd. Qrs." through March/April 1863, at Gen. Ewell's headquarters May/June 1863 – Jan./Feb. 1864, and at Gen. Jubal Early's headquarters May/June – July/Aug. 1864. We do not have any information about how Charlie got his assignment as clerk. Some soldiers got their assignments through nepotism, but the primary qualifications were education and penmanship.

Brigade headquarters would have had difficulty functioning without clerks. They kept administrative files and records and made copies of correspondence before the advent of photocopiers.

34. Driver, *1<sup>st</sup> Virginia Cavalry*, p. 173.

35. Official Record on file – UDC Reference Dept. National Archive Microfilm #324 Roll #51.

36. Fold3 Archives: <http://www.footnotelibrary.com/image/#16216805957>.



"Clerks were an important but almost invisible part of Army of Northern Virginia headquarters. Like their counterparts in modern armies, their contribution was significant in keeping the administrative wheels greased. Also like their modern counterparts, they get little credit for unglamorous work."<sup>37</sup> However, not only according to Charlie (see March 25, 1863, letter),

37. Bartholomees, *Buff Facings and Gilt Buttons*, p. 204-205.

but also in the recorded correspondence (Oct. 5, 1862) of Brigadier General Elisha Franklin Paxton, Charlie was recognized for his work as a clerk. “

Oct. 5, 1862, Brig. Gen. Paxton, Bunker Hill:

The army was never so quiet as now... Whilst the army has been apparently idle, I have been unusually busy during the last week. Everybody seems to be making application for something, and my office is crowded with business. I do scarcely any writing, leaving it all to my clerk, Mr. Figgat. If I undertook to do the writing, my eyes would not last long. But as it is, I think I shall be able to do my work without injury. My office is one of much importance and responsibility, and I trust I may be able to fill it without suffering injury to my sight. I think, Love, if this war lasts much longer, you will get to be a pretty good farmer. It really seems as if it would last forever. Both parties seem getting used to it, and the signs of peace and quiet are less, if anything, now than this time last year.<sup>38</sup>

According to surviving Confederate service records for Charles M. Figgat, he earned \$12 a month as a soldier and an additional 25¢ a day “while on detached service as clerk in AAG Office 2d Corps A N Va.,” i.e., in the Assistant Adjutant General’s Office, 2d Corps Army of Northern Virginia. Because he was not serving with his assigned unit, he also received 75¢ a day “for commutation of rations while on detached duty as clerk at Hd Qrs 2d Corps A N Va.”

In addition to wages and rations, Charlie was paid 40¢ a day “for use and risk of private horse” at least through 1863 according to surviving records. Confederate Army records for Feb.-June 1864 document that he was given rations for his horse in the form of “requisition for forage for one private horse in the service of C M Figgat.”

While Nannie’s letters were filled with flowery language and religious fervor, her diary entries tended to be terse commentary. Even so she manages to convey sentiment. “Rec’d a letter from Charlie today. Answered same, sending with a comfort by Nat Logan.” (Oct. 9, 1862)

Ten days later without any prior indication, we learn from her diary entry on Oct. 19 that “Thus has God seen fit in his all-wise providence, to place in my care & keeping another lamb.” Her second son was born at 3 o’clock “with but little travail... May he give me the strength to raise him up in the nurture & admonition of the Lord & in his dear fathers absence to be able to give him the care of both.” The next day a single line records that she finished a letter to Charlie to “apprise him of our new joy.” Two weeks later she seemed to be suffering from postpartum depression when she recorded that she put on her “wrapper & sat up most of the day but feel lonely & sometimes sad thinking of my absent Husband but am resigned & await the wish of God when I may see him.”

Her diary still has very little news of the war but almost daily entries record that Nannie sent and received letters from Charlie. She briefly noted visitors, preachers, other births, and deaths. “Dr. Grant’s little Kate died of Dyphtheria was buried today” (Oct. 21, 1862). Mrs. Eve Tinney, Charlie’s maternal grandmother, returned from Christiansburg on Nov. 6. She had been visiting her eldest son, William. He and his wife, Mollie, now had two children, Eva Sue (born April 29, 1862) and Joseph Eddie (born Sept. 14, 1860).

Nannie’s Nov. 8, 1862, letter to Charlie indicates that others usually care for their new son. When he was three weeks old, she noted that she “dressed my little one for the first time.” She also mildly complained about the brevity of Charlie’s letters, chiding him that it was because the daylight is short. “I have an idea of sending you some candles if I have a chance, or Ma says she’ll let you have one of her lamps, as you have to cut short your letters.”

When she did not know the location of Charlie’s regiment, she speculated based on news as well as hearsay. “I suppose the enemy intend trying the south side this time. It is also said that a larger force is in Highland advancing towards Stanton, and I reckon some of you will scatter over that way.” She teased Charlie, “The first tho’t that struck me was, they’ve sent Jackson there, and as they go thru Charlie can run up here to see us. I then tho’t it hopeless, as you

w’d be left so far behind.” However, she reconciled her situation.

So I reckon I’ll have to sit down & do what I can for my little ones & let them do wh’t they can for me, & let my dear husband go his way alone, tho surrounded by thousands, no one on whom to bestow his caresses of tenderness & love, w’h he was want to lavish on those dear to him, & no dear ones to receive them who were so fond of being thus petted & caressed. But we will try not to think too much of that.

Nannie did not usually write about food or commodities, but on Nov. 13th she documented that her 23-year-old brother, Bob, returned empty-handed from Monroe where he went with M. Hinkle to purchase pork.

Typhoid fever and diphtheria were mentioned quite frequently. Nov. 15 Nannie noted that her mother, who had brought Tom home from Charlottesville four weeks earlier suffering from typhoid, had been in bed for several days. Nannie was concerned that her son would be further exposed. However, she and her sisters spent an enjoyable day making a dress for Mary, their youngest sister, while Nannie’s older son,



Presbyterian Church, Fincastle

Godwin, spent the day at Grandma Figgat’s. She noted on Nov. 16th that he was fretful all day. Though Martha Mary was better the next day, they left her mother alone, which meant that Nannie had “little time to read” on this “gloomy, cloudy day.”

The next day Nannie provided further corroboration that she was accustomed to her mother and others looking after her children because she noted “Had to mind baby today also.” She still had several callers--Aunt Mary Robinson, her daughter Eleanor Jean, and Miss Haller, who stopped in on their way to Mr. Mead’s. For the first time since he was baptized three-and-a-half months previously, Nannie wrote about her one-and-a-half year old son. “My dear little G[odwin] is amusing me by reading a letter from his Papa. Oh! That he would see him too.”

At the end of the week, Nannie’s brother, Rob, arrived “very unexpectedly on a short furlough.” He was a private in the Confederate Army. While “the Heavenly Father is indeed kind to us, allowing us to see these dear ones so often,” she lamented the “long absences.” Nannie knew that she lived a privileged life, “may I not look forward to one happier still than with my dear husband Thou! who hast all my life long given me all & more than I could ask, to the world I look & then w’d I trust for the future & that this my prayer may be answered.”

By Sunday her mother was still “too unwell to keep baby” so Nannie did not go to church. She did find time to write to Charlie and said in her diary that his father had planned a trip to “the camp.” Nannie sent with him two pairs of drawers, a pair of pants, and socks for Charlie. She delivered the letter and the clothing to his father, noting that she “enjoyed it so much, the first time I had been there for 2 months.”

Sundays were often notable for their sermons, and Nannie would hear them in any of the Fincastle churches. It was not unusual for Nannie to attend church several times a week or to hear more than one sermon on a Sunday. The Nov. 30, 1862, sermon by Rev. William McGuire, Rector of Fincastle’s St. Marks’ Episcopal Church, was about “knowing therefore the ter-

38. Paxton, *Memoir*.

rors of the Lord, we persuade men.” This sermon was also noted as being quite good in Lucy Breckinridge’s diary.

The following Sunday Nannie listened to the Rev. John Sharshall Grasty preach at his Presbyterian Church on that “remarkably cold day” and she heard the “circuit rider for the coming year,” Mr. Crenshaw, give the sermon at the Methodist Church. Mr. Grasty was frequently mentioned, not just by Nannie but also by her mother. Some Sundays when Nannie went to church, neither the preacher nor the circuit rider would be there. For example, on Dec. 28 her diary recorded “Expected Mr McGuire to have communion to-day, & a huge congregation assembled but he did not come.”

As a member of the Soldiers’ Aid Society Nannie noted on Monday, Nov. 24 that “the ladies have met to-day to cut out clothing for our poor destitute soldiers.” They were fortunate that Fincastle had a woolen mill. Benjamin Ammen, the owner, “made [cloth] for the Government” but supplied “the soldiers of the county first,” according to Nannie.

“Fatigue shirts, or ‘hunting-shirts,’ were particularly popular among volunteer militia of Virginia. The Fincastle Rifles – who eventually enlisted as Co. D, 11th Virginia Infantry – were formed in Botetourt County during December 1859, and wore a ‘fanciful uniform’ reported in the *Alexandria Gazette* as being ‘a plain linsey hunting shirt – black and red.’ Their uniform was also described in the Dec. 13 *Richmond Dispatch* as “though cheap, is very pretty and neat, consisting as it does of a common plaid linsey hunting-shirt, with green baise cape, black pants, and glazed cap—a uniform that the poorest man can buy for we do not wish to deprive those in the humble walks of life of the benefits and advantages pertaining to a military training.”<sup>39</sup> “Among the cavalry companies wearing a version of the state uniform were the Botetourt Dragoons of Fincastle, who adopted ‘a blue cloth suit, trimmed with yellow’ in January 1860.”<sup>40</sup>

On Nov. 25, 1862, Nannie expressed her worry

39. *Richmond Dispatch*, Dec. 13, 1859, p.4.

40. Field, *American Civil War*, p. 4-9.

about the upcoming “fierce battle” at Fredericksburg where Charlie wrote that he was headed. She wrote her prayer for his well-being. “Oh! thou God of battle who givest not victory, always to the strong, do then be our strength in this our time of great need & with great might come among us & help us.” Four days later Tom Godwin returned to the war carrying Nannie’s letter and a pair of socks for Charlie. On Dec. 3 her 19-year-old brother Jimmie also left to rejoin his Army unit. As each one left, Nannie lamented their going in her diary. When Jimmie left, she wrote, “Oh God go with him, & protect him & bring him again to his happy home.” At Tom’s departure she wrote, “oh God grant protect him from danger & death as thou hast heretofore done, & return him safely again.” This left just her father and her brother, Rob who was on furlough, as the only men at home, and Rob came down with diphtheria.

According to Nannie’s diary entry for Dec. 7, Charlie’s father returned to Fincastle without seeing his son or delivering the clothes Nannie had sent with him. She and her father visited Mr. Figgat to “hear some ac’t of his trip. Much suffering in the Valley among the inhabitants. We know nothing as yet of the horrors of war. Mr F returned thru L[exington], all well there; staid at Mr Bell’s with Jimmie & companions.” On Dec. 9, she noted that Jimmie was back in Fincastle, “having gone as far a Charlottesville but was detailed on service at home, in Capt. [James B.] Wilson’s company,” the Fincastle Company of the Botetourt Home Guard.<sup>41</sup>

Nannie was not deterred by Mr. Figgat’s unsuccessful delivery. She recorded that she “Sewed hard to-day to make a bed-tick & got some things ready to send to Charlie.” She documented the cold winter of 1862: Catawba Creek was “frozen over more than two inches” and the “Finest ice being hauled that has been for several years.” Still, visitors called at the Godwin home, including Mrs. Carrington and Ed R on Dec. 8, and P[auline] Price and Nanny Turner on the evening of Dec. 11.

Nannie attended speeches by various dignitar-

41. Weaver, *Virginia Home Guards*, p. 31.

him & return in safety to his home.” After two years, he had received his appointment as an assistant surgeon.

Christmas day! when we sh’d all feel joyful, because of the birth of a Saviour on this benighted & ruined world. Oh! may I always feel that holy joy, & a thankful heart. On other accts I felt sad, very sad, for others hearts are this day bleeding because of the absence of dead ones *never* again to be assembled around the family fireside. And I am separated from the dearest of all others, but I ought not complain for he is protected from the deadly missiles of our foe & has been mercifully preserved in health & strength

In the weeks following Christmas 1862, Nannie was very busy socially. It is not clear who was caring for her children. From the 1860 Slave Schedule we know that the Thomas G. Godwins had six slaves, including two “females.” Martha Mary and Nannie “spent the rest of the day in calling.” They “left baby at home & Godwin, quite unwell but the girls kept them very well.” These “girls” were her sisters--Ella (Eleanor, 17), Jennie (Jane, 16), Haddie (Harriet, 13), and Mary (11). The “girls spent the [next] day at Mr. Callaghans, the evening at G. Carpers.”

On Jan. 3, 1863, Nannie attended the Methodist Church [pictured] to hear Mr. Field. “I have summoned the year with many good resolutions oh God help me to keep them through thy strength.” On Jan. 6 she noted making a pair of drawers for the Fincastle Rifles, and on Jan. 9 she was “Very busily engaged making a dress.” Nannie recorded Kate Glasgow’s wedding dress, “a black Bombasine w’h cost \$150. I cit it as an incident of the time & high prices.”

Nannie recorded sad news in her diary on Jan. 14, 1863. Ten year old Maria Lewis Williams, the only daughter of Dr. Charles and Jane Williams, “died from Diphtheritec Cramps,” after a week-long illness. Mr. Garland preached at her funeral and she was buried in the Fincastle Presbyterian Church cemetery the next day.

“Such a Shock to her parents, & friends. Oh! God grant that it may be for their good, & give them strength to bear anything ‘the will of the



Methodist Church, Fincastle

ies as they traveled through Fincastle. On Dec. 8, she reported in her diary, “Mr [William R.] Staples, a member of the Confederate Congress, who spoke on the state of the country. A great many persons expected the trial of Dr. Rucker, but will not begin until tomorrow.” Actually, Dr. William P. Rucker’s trial for “horse-stealing, murder, and siding and assisting the enemies of the State of Virginia” did not begin for two weeks. In the meantime, on Dec. 13, Nannie went to the Botetourt Court House to hear Mr. Tucker, the Attorney General, speak about the case of the Commonwealth vs. Dr. Rucker.

Dec. 13, 1862, was Charlie and Nannie’s third wedding anniversary. “Oh! that the next may be spent in company with my dear absent husband.” She noted the previous Thursday’s Battle of Fredericksburg “with decided victory at our arms. Thanks be to God for his favor to us, & prayers, for its continuance.”

Two days before Christmas Nannie recorded that her brother, Rob, had “started on his long & weary ride to the part of the army to w’h he is assigned for duty, in N. C. May Heaven protect

Lord be done.’” They would need her prayers. On Feb. 4 Maria’s brother, George, died of consumption. The next day Nannie attended his funeral in the snow and recorded getting a cold.

Jan. 20–22, 1863, saw torrential rains, heavy mud, and an unexpected warm spell that thawed the frozen ground.<sup>42</sup> The following day Nannie “Had a bad walk up to G Carper’s & shopping” and similarly the next day, “Had a horrid walk to E[piscopal] Church heard Mr McG[uire].” Still, Nannie returned in the evening and noted “Congregations of 14 adults 2 children, only 6 gentlemen.”

Nannie and her sons visited Charlie’s father on Jan. 23, 1863. In her diary she alluded to various business dealings. “Rec’d letter from Mr Baker & one from Mrs. Northern on business. Sent Mr Bowyer check for \$75. During this week rec’d *rece’ps* from S. M. Dold [Samuel Miller Dold, Lexington merchant] and the State Auditor.”

Her Feb. 11 diary entry also recorded receiving checks from Mr. Norgrove for \$3.11 and \$33.75, the latter having a matching ledger notation for Feb 16, 1863, “Chk on Bk Rockbridge.” That same day, Nannie also noted in the ledger a \$1,378.11 “Chk on Bk Rockbridge.” With “Elharts ck on C States,” the account totals \$1,486.86. The ledger also documented a June 30, 1863, check from Mr. Norgrove for \$50.00. The Norgroves were mentioned several times in both Nannie and Charlie’s correspondence, but there is no indication of why money is changing hands.

Sometimes it was a week or more between letters from Charlie. But when they arrived Nannie rejoiced, as on Feb. 9 “Oh! with what pleasure do I receive these silent messengers of true & lasting affection.”

Most Sundays Nannie recorded who preached and the topic of their sermons. When she didn’t go to church, she often did a “morning exercise.” On Feb. 15 she recorded “A rainy morning but quiet during day. Did not go to C[huch]. Sentence in my morning exercise ‘Friendship is the delight of youth, the pillar of age, the bloom

42. *Encyclopedia Virginia*, [http://www.encyclopediaivirginia.org/Weather\\_During\\_the\\_Civil\\_War](http://www.encyclopediaivirginia.org/Weather_During_the_Civil_War).

of prosperity, the charm of solitude, the solace of adversity, the best benefactor & comforter, in this vale of tears.’”

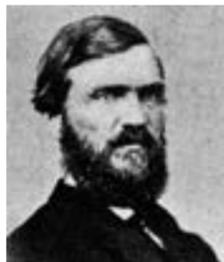
As he sometimes did, Charlie unexpectedly arrived in Fincastle on Feb. 20, 1863, and stayed nearly two weeks. Nannie did not usually write in her diary when she could talk to Charlie in person, so the only note she made during this time was when he visited his father one Sunday afternoon. She and her sister, Haddie, walked up in the evening in several inches of snow. When she resumed her diary the afternoon of Charlie’s departure, March 3, we learn of the precarious way news of death and war traveled.

Sunday evening heard a report that G Price had been killed in a charge of cavalry in Stafford Co on Wednesday 25th. All the week passed & no certainty until Tuesday 10th Mrs. P rec’d a telegram from John (who had gone to find out something about it) saying he was on the way to Fredericksburg for his remains, w’h he got & brought home Friday 13th. Charlie accompanying Buried that afternoon with honors of war.

Though Nannie’s diary often recorded that letters were sent and received, she did not always reveal their contents. When she did, they were usually brief remarks such as on Feb. 16. “Rec’d a letter from my husband to-day, so kind & affectionate as they always are.”

Charlie wrote to Nannie on March 25, 1863, from the Culpepper headquarters of the 2nd Army Corp. Well into the war, his letter documented the variation in food supply for the Confederate soldiers, but there had not yet been any mention of food shortages.

When I spoke about having nothing but middling [a flour and meal mixture] I did mean that it was ourselves for this was the case for a while with the Genl & every one round us, but we get ham now and many thanks to Mrs. Logan we often have the very nicest fruit roll, alias Pig [a



Mr. Grasty segment of citrus fruit or apple)... I forgot to tell you when speaking of eating that I was invited out the other day and had turkey, butter, egg,

cornbread, etc. and enjoyed it very much, having just come off of middling.

In this long missive, Charlie also told Nannie about a compliment he received from Gen. Jackson.

...suppose am doing my duties satisfactorily as Genl J continues to compliment me to his friends. Mr. [Rev. Beverly Tucker] Lacy came into my tent one morning & was speaking of my duties & told me that the Genl had just been talking to him about me, and spoke highly of my efficiency & said that when Paxton left he was afraid that I would go also, which he did not want as I was worth any two clerks that he had ever had. Now you wont think this is vanity will you, for it is not. I could not help hearing it when Mr. L came specially to tell me & then left, but I only want to tell my darling...

Charlie often praised his wife’s virtues in his letters and wrote about his attending religious services. “We had preaching by Mr L[acy] that morning in a large tent it was a bad day & could not go out to preaching had a prayer meeting in the evening & thus we passed a pleasant & I hope not an unprofitable day...” He also urged in this letter and others forthcoming that, not only would there be faith in God and the righteousness of the War, but that the army would continue to be well fed and supplied.

I am sorry that there is so much uneasiness in the country, about the state of the army & country, but hope it may do much good, in urging the men to the [agriculture] field, and to putting those at home to calling upon God for his help... with the almost certain expectation of winning -- as to our falling back on account of want of supplies it is simply ridiculous, for why should that be the case now when we have near 4 mo. & undergone all the hardships that we have... if we go back for supplies it would be to go out of Va. and Gen Lee’s request to the 2 masters last winter was to use every means to keep up the stock, as he thought that by holding this position would tend to shorten the war. So you see that if persons would only take a common sense view of things

they would not be so exercised about nor believe ever wild rumor they hear.

Jennie, Nannie’s 17 year old sister, Jane, had

been very ill for at least three months. On Jan. 25 Nannie’s diary first reported “Jennie very weak fear she has symptoms of Typhoid fever Dr. to see her.” Charlie inquired on March 25, 1863, and on March 30 Nannie noted in her diary, “do not think she can recover O God prepare us for the dread separation & enable us to say Thy will be done. Dr. W[illiams] brought Dr to see her, both think she has Scrofula [tuberculosis] O Father spare her great suffering.” Two days later she recorded, “Thought Jennie sinking rapidly, but revived during the day. Dr Wms ceased his visits...”

On April 5 Jennie was too weak to take communion. This is one of the few incidents where Nannie’s diary and her surviving letters to Charlie overlap. “She requested to see Mr Grasty<sup>43</sup> [pictured] last week & conversed with him, but not a great deal, for she can’t talk much. Then Sunday Mr McGuire came up, she asked in the morning that she might commune, but in a short time after told ma, that she did not think she could bear it, so if it please God, she will drink of the fruit of the wine, anew in his kingdom.”

On April 7 Nannie recapped the previous week’s activities and apologized to Charlie for not writing sooner. “I know you can think that where there is one as ill about the house as dear Jennie, that there is naturally some confusion, much anxiety—etc., so that one cannot always write when they would wish.” Nannie wrote of her sister’s emaciated body, and “tho I dread the hour of her release from her sufferings yet it will be a relief.”

Several times in her letter she wrote that Jennie was not in pain. “Yet is so weary & if she did not think it wrong would wish the hour of her departure were at hand. But she seems afraid to express a wish in any way for fear she might not be resigned to God’s will... As she suffers no pain, she cannot realize that she must die, & asks us why we think she can’t get well.”

Nannie’s father may have appeared cold and stern to many people, as Charlie described him four years earlier (Aug. 31, 1859). But Nannie’s

43. Holladay, *Partial History*, p. 69.

letter shared his true demeanor in the face of Jennie's impending death.

Ma is surprising well & bears it with so much fortitude, but poor Pa is almost heart broken, for the some may think him cold, beneath that exterior has a deep affection w'h I think few men have & he is so tender to her He looks so pale & sad, I feel more for him than any of the rest & he is so silent with it all, keeping it to himself, fearing to speak her name.

Jennie survived until April 24 when Nannie recorded in her diary that "for the first time has the grim monster invaded our happy family circle and transferred one of the previous links of this chain to a brighter & happier home above the skies." Her strong religious beliefs made it easier for Nannie to accept. "A holy quiet reigned around" as the departing spirit, calmly, sweetly left its frail tenement of clay to rise to the bosom of her Savior Not a murmuring voice was heard the tears could not be restrained for a dear sister & daughter, yet God saw fit to do it, & 'he doeth all things well' & while suffering by the stroke we w'd kiss the rod..." Jennie was buried the next day in the cemetery next to the Methodist Church.

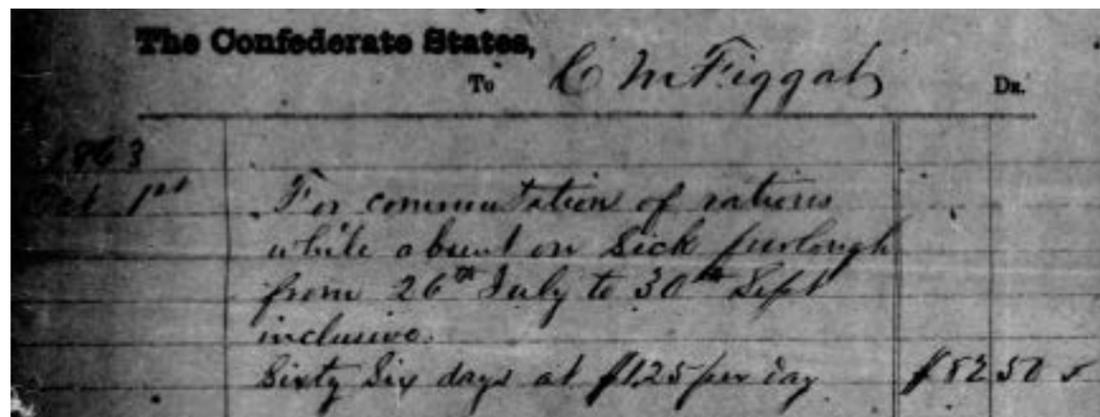
By May 2, 1863, the war had reasserted itself into Nannie's diary as she recorded the Battles of Chancellorsville, but "Tom again by the interposition of a merciful Providence is saved from death or severe wounds." She also noted Stonewall Jackson's demise. In Charlie's next letter, May 15, 1863, from Culpepper headquarters, he repeated several times that things had changed with Jackson's death. "Things dont look

natural nor congenial about here now, no piety, no prayers, no fear of God, nor reverence for His Holy name." He noted many deaths: "Oh! what a sad week has just passed over first Grandma Davidson buried—then Gen Paxton & then Gen Jackson and now Ed W & 4 others of the town and county have lost limbs and it will not be surprising if Col Edmondson dies."

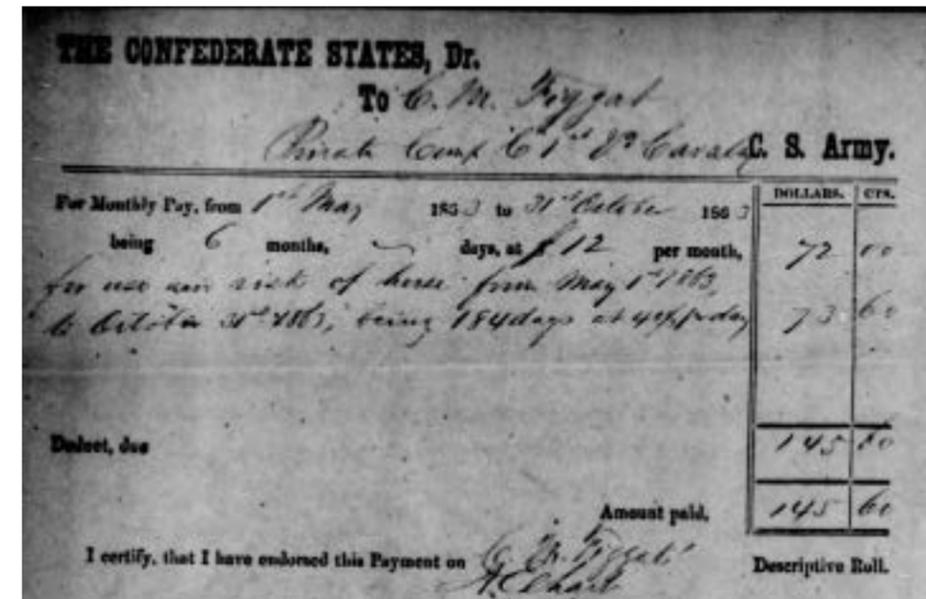
Things are sadly changed here now my dear, and we know not what Genl. J was until he was taken away, and no one who was not here all the time with him can comprehend what his loss is, and how much it will be felt. Genl. Hill who now commands shows none of striking characteristics of a great leader, that were so evident in all of Genl. J movements even about camp Hd Qrs he may be a good fighting Genl. But if he can plan and execute I will be very agreeably surprised, but if the men do not become disheartened, and think that no one can lead them but Jackson all will go well for Lee

Charlie also sent Nannie reassurances about their rooms in the Lexington boarding house, which it appears they had sublet. "Mr W tells me that our furniture etc is as well taken care of as possible and speaks of the highest terms of Mrs. Henderson, as to her neatness, and care, and says that while every thing was well cared for by Dr C. it is even better now than then they use the back rooms and thus the carpet is not used as they say they have no use for that room. Mrs. H is a cripple. I believe."

Later in May, life in Fincastle seemed quite normal and pleasant as Nannie noted travels and visitors. Her parents went to Rockbridge and the



Record for "commutation of rations" for C. M. Figgat, Oct. 1, 1863



Record of payment to C. M. Figgat in exchange for "use and risk of horse"

following week her sister-in-law, Mollie Figgat, visited from Christiansburg. Shortly thereafter, the Nelson family left after a six-week visit. Hosting extended visits indicates that food shortages were not a concern among her family and friends in Southwest Virginia. The war did not deeply interfere with their social activities.

Nannie occasionally showed the strains of the war, but she was steadfast in her religious convictions. On June 18, 1863, just three days after receiving one of Charlie's letters, she complained that she didn't know where he was.

Where I shall direct a letter to you or where it may find you I cannot imagine, for we have many rumors of Gen E's travels, but nothing certain, tho so long a time has elapsed since you reached C.H. we have heard scarcely nothing & I wish sometimes I were in Lexington, for there we were so often in sight of news from the Valley. Tho I rec'd a letter from you Monday, yet it is now it seems so long since it was written at C. H. & I fear so much that it may be still longer ere I hear again, for I guess you are kept constantly busy, & then where will my dear Charlie be? Very probably on the soil of another & alien state...

Though his last furlough had ended less than four months ago, Nannie chided her husband for not getting home more often.

If you don't soon come, you will not be able to realize that you left a baby at home, for he is so fast becoming a man. I put short dresses on him Monday & he is beginning to crawl very well already. Last week he cut one upper tooth, & here this week before any one thought of it, he had two lower ones...

This letter had news and Fincastle gossip. She reported that her father went to Richmond to purchase goods for his store, but she did not expect that he would return with much since Mr. Wilson had just returned from a similar trip with only two small boxes. For the first time we learn that the Godwins have a farm outside of town to which her father might like to move for a year or two. Nannie, however, preferred to stay in town near friends and with better access to news. "I feel like being near to friends and where I can hear everything directly."

There is a four month interval between Nannie's June 18 letter and Charlie's Oct. 21, 1863, letter. She made only five scant diary entries during this time. It is remarkable that none of Nannie's immediate family had been killed or severely wounded. However, on July 3 she tersely and unemotionally noted:

In battle Gettysburg Tom was severely wounded in arm had to have it amputated Heard he was mortally wounded. Latter part of month In Au-

gust rec'd a letter from him Robinson captured in Maryland saw his name in list of prisoners in Ft McHenry [Baltimore, Maryland]. Heard from him first at Johnson's Island [Lake Erie, Ohio] in August

Throughout the surviving correspondence and diary, there is no other mention of Tom's amputated arm.

On July 29 Charlie "returned home and was very sick for three weeks." In her next entry, Sept. 29, Nannie reported he returned to the Army at Orange Court House.

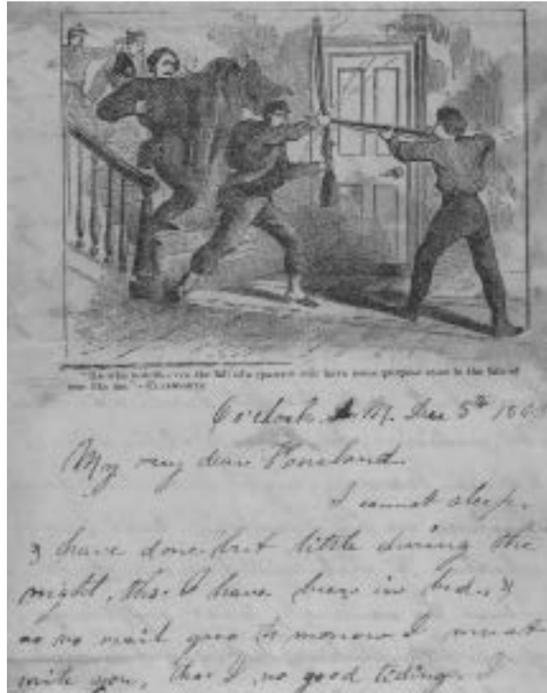
Confederate records also document that Charlie was "absent on sick furlough from 26th July to 30th Sept inclusive" On Oct. 31 he received \$82.50, \$1.25 per day for 66 days.

On Nov. 3 Charlie received his usual pay of \$12 a month for the previous six months. He also received 40¢ a day, \$73.60, for the "use and risk of [his] horse" for the same period.

Charlie wrote from headquarters near Brandy Station, Culpepper County, on Oct. 21, 1863, about his disappointment in a recent campaign and the desolation around Prince William County. "It was the most complete and shameful failure that has occurred during the war." He also mentioned missing his son Meade's first birthday on Oct. 19. He closed his letter with this example of his faith: "may our Heavenly Father grant unto him and us all many days of happiness, together, in this life and in the world to come." Nannie noted in her next diary entry, Nov. 4, that she and her sons came home from an undisclosed location via Bonsack and were picked up in a hack (horse-drawn carriage) at Bonsack's Depot by her youngest siblings, 12-year-old twins, Henry and Mary.

When the Virginia Home Guards were formed in late 1863, Nannie's father joined the Bote-tourt Scouts and Couriers, as did her 24-year-old brother, Bob.<sup>44</sup> The Fincastle Cavalry included Charlie's father as well as his youngest brother, Montais Taylor who was about 15 years old. On Nov. 9 Nannie reported that the home guard was called out to meet the "enemy advancing from Lewisburg" but two days later she noted that the

44. Weaver, *Virginia Home Guards*, p. 36-37.



Nannie's Letter on Union Stationary

home guard had dispersed without fighting.

On Nov. 27, Nannie noted in her diary that Meade was ill from teething. She wrote that the previous week he had been treated twice by "lancing germs" and had "spasms." Treatments consisted of "mustard bathe to feet, cold water to head, & mustard to spine."

Nannie wrote two letters to Charlie on illustrated Union stationery, Nov. 27 and Dec. 5, 1863. In the first letter she almost wanted to complain about not receiving a letter from him. However, she "Welcomed a dear bro' from a 4 mo's imprisonment!" Rob "arrived in excellent health, & of course good spirits, looking well, & as Bob says 'dressed in store clothes...'" Rob told her that his cellmate, Col. Harman "cried like a child when he left, he is so very anxious to get home..."

Unfortunately, the remainder of this letter focused on Meade's declining health. "I wish I could give you a better report, but cannot say he is much if any better... the medicine seems to have no effect... tho' I have had much cause for joy to-day this evening I felt sad & dispirited & oh how much I wanted to see my Charlie. I took

a real good cry & feel better since."

This is one of the few times Nannie revealed being disheartened, writing about her personal situation—her physical and mental health.

"The principal cause was finding an ugly looking spot on my breast, w'h looked as if it might be a rising, & as the babe has not been able to suck as much as usual, I feared I had been careless in not keeping it as cleer [sic] of milk as it ought to have been & when I discovered it, I almost got sick, with dread & apprehension of pain, particularly when my little one, needed so much of my \_\_\_\_\_. Now please don't be uneasy, for really now I think my fears may have been premature, for there is so little soreness it may be a pimple, as I have one on my hand. I would not have told you of it, only I tho't you would wonder why I was so sad, & I felt as if I could scarcely help telling you, for you know how I love to tell you of all my sorrows as well as joys, knowing I have such a ready sympathiser, I have been cheerful as I could be, when my dear babe seemed to suffer so much not thinking of myself at all, but this evening I suppose because my heart was tender..."

Nannie ended her letter on a lighter note, recounting a story about Godwin.

Pa came down street to-day, & some one called to him from the P.O. he looked up, & there was his hopeful grandson said he came to buy some candy, (of w'h Mr H has just rec'd a lot, & uncle Bob had been giving a glowing description to G.) it goes at only \$8 pr lb, & he had gone up alone, to get some & surprise us I suppose. "but nary bite did he get Mr H say a ¼ will not get enough to put in a hollow tooth.

Her next letter, also written on Union stationery, has an illustration of the shooting of Union Col. Elmer Ellsworth. This Dec. 5, 1863, letter was an extremely difficult one for her to write. She had to inform Charlie that there was no hope for the recovery of their younger son. She began her letter at 6 a.m.

I cannot sleep... I must write you, tho' I no good tidings. I cannot say there has been any great change in our precious little one, but what is, is for the worse. Hard, hard it is to tell you, hard for me to think it, but I cannot see that there is any hope for his recovery...

I don't know whether to wish you here or not, to witness the seemingly great sufferings of our little darling, but you know I can't help wanting you, oh my dear Charlie to help me bear, & that I may help you, this first sorrow of our married life.

Nannie expressed greater misery in her diary on Dec. 7, describing here and not in her letter to Charlie, Meade's horrible pain and suffering and, finally, his last breath. But she was steadfast in her religious beliefs. "At 10 o'clock & 10 min this night the spirit of my darling babe took to flight to the bosom of his Savior. O could his dear Papa have been with him & me, but Go knoweth what is best, & I will cast all my cares on Him."



Charlie Meade Figgat's Headstone

They buried Charlie's son and namesake, Charlie Meade Figgat, in the cemetery next to the Methodist Church on land that the Godwins would later donate to the Church and is today designated the Godwin Cemetery. Then as now his marker is near that of Nannie's sister, Jennie—Jane Robinson Godwin, who had died just eight months earlier on April 23, 1863.

Quite often Nannie's letters to Charlie included reassurances that he had not been forgotten, especially not by Godwin, now his only son. Nannie reported an incident when they visited Meade's grave three weeks after his death. "I said to him, 'don't you wish you & mama could see little brother.' 'Yes & papa too.' I had not spoken of you at all, so you see he doesn't forget

you..."

Dec. 13 was Nannie and Charlie's fourth wedding anniversary, but there is no mention of it in her diary. Two days later, however, Nannie wrote,

Aroused this morning before 4 o'clock with the startling intelligence that the Yanks were rapidly advancing on F & would be here in a few hours. This proved a mistake they went to Salem burnt Gov stores &c, & returned to find their rapid retreat cut off by swollen streams. Cits [i.e., citizens] of this place kept in suspense & dread until Sunday Gen Fitz'Lee with part of his (Cav) Division passed thro' amid the cheers & smiles of the inhabitants,

There was no mention of Christmas 1863 in Nannie's diary and there was scant mention of it in her Dec. 26 letter. She wrote Charlie that Godwin would not say his prayers. "Once when I asked him why he wouldn't pray to God, & he said 'God is too big.' I reckon it will be best not to force him, or tease him too much about it... I think he is a good deal like his Grandpa G [Nannie's father] when he takes a notion that he don't want to do anything no coaxing will get him to do it." This very long letter is full of activities. Nannie seems to have put Meade's death in perspective when she wrote,

God grant that I may be able to teach obedience while young & that I may have strength & firmness, & also lead him by example, in the way w'h leads to Holiness, & God. Otherwise, rather let me lay him beside the other dear little one, hard tho' the trial would be Would that he could also have the training of his dear father & his example, but I pray & hope that it will be granted him in after years, when it will be even more needed than now. I will trust & wait.

The Dec. 26 letter also documents their rare disagreement over finances, perhaps the rental of their house in Lexington. "I wrote to your uncle not to let Capt H have anything when the year was [out] unless he had rented for a longer time. Can't find out when it is out. I think he ought to be turned out any how, for offering only \$1,000 so you wrote it either you made a mistake or the man is beside himself you valued them at \$2,000 when we came away."

With the new year, 1864, came reasons to celebrate, including a 30-day furlough for the Botetourt Dragoons and a month-long visit from Helen Moffett (Jan. 7-Feb. 9). However, it also brought the deaths of Bessie McD and "Old Aunt Ginny," possibly the 90-year-old slave mentioned in the 1860 census records for James M. Figgat. Six months after Tom returned from Gettysburg where he lost his arm, she recorded on Feb. 23 that he was taking provisions to their brother, Rob.

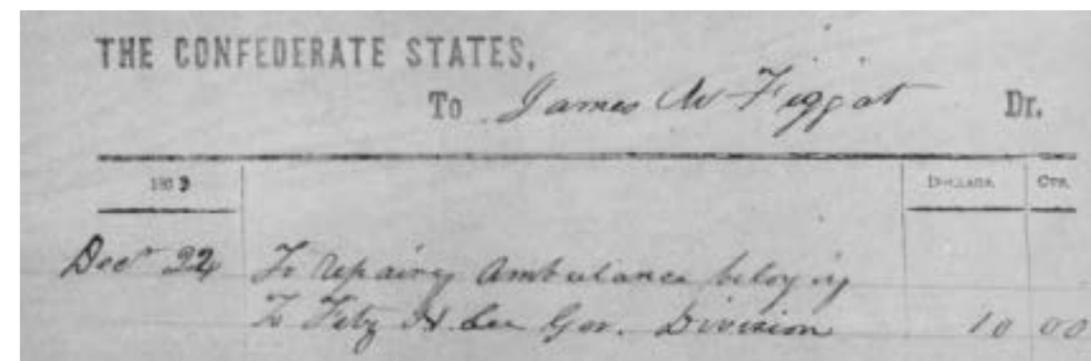
Confederate Army records also show that on Feb. 13, 1864, Charlie received \$136.13 for "commutation of 1st years clothing from October 8, 1862 to October 8, 1863."

Our next letter from Nannie to Charlie is dated March 17, 1864, three days after she received his letter. She bemoaned that he would not be home on furlough though several other families heard that their sons and fathers would be. Even though she was depressed about this, she wrote to Charlie with some humor about her exasperation with their son.

Godwin annoys me very much playing with a pet chicken Henry has here in Ma's room, about as big as your thumb. He keeps me squalling at him nearly all the time, for fear he should squeeze it to death. Now he hits it with the big ball, now \_\_\_\_\_ round it making me think he is jumping on it every minute, & laughing as he has scarcely ever done since his dear bro' died, for he plays with it in the same way... He said he was mightily sorry Papa couldn't get a furlough, as if he knew all about what it meant, & he has a piece of candy put away for you that his uncle Tommy bro't him.

Nannie also injected some humor into her letter about running out of paper.

This is my last sheet of paper, so I reckon I can't write any more until you bring me some. I expect if you would ask Col Pendleton tonight pretty he would get Mr See or Mr Ewell to make a "special Order" in your case, & send you home in a hurry. Tell Col. P, I say please intercede, or give you permission himself for you have waited so patiently, & may-be some day he will know what a very great favor he will confer on you & me he has not been married long enough yet to realize it.



James M. Figgat, Charlie's father, repaired wagons for the Confederate Army

Confederate Army records document that Charlie's brother William had returned to Christiansburg to practice medicine, including "medical treatment for Negroes "Anderson & George" employed as laborers in the service of the C. States, in the March-August 1864 There being no C. S. surgeon at or near this place (Christiansburg Montgomery Co.) and as medical treatment was necessary in the case of these two negroes."

Charlie enjoyed a three week furlough in Fincastle, which ended on April 11. On April 25, 1864, he wrote about being accustomed to being homesick after a furlough, going with Col. Sandie Pendleton to hear Dr. Murray "rode preach," news of seeing family and friends in other parts of the army, and his optimism for the war's successful conclusion in light of recent North Carolina battles.

Nannie's diary recorded that Charlie was home again briefly in late May but "quite sick from fatigue." On June 14 and 18 she documented the unexpected burning of the Virginia Military Institute and private homes in Lexington, and the mid-June arrival of Union Troops in Fincastle, "alarming me very much but doing little mischief." She also reported that they retreated down the Kanawha Valley "completely demoralized" and with "numbers suffering from starvation."

About a month later, Nannie's diary entry for July 12, 1864, and her July 19 letter to Charlie documented an extended family trip to Stone Castle at Natural Bridge. She mentioned that she had not heard any news since Charlie wrote 19 days previously and she asked after her

brother, Rob. Another month passed before we learn from her Aug. 12 diary entry that she had gone to Lexington on "business" and returned to Stone Castle "with Misses Atkinson from Alexandria, boarders at my Aunts, refugees from their homes."

Her diary entries for Aug. 27 and her Sept. 20 letter record that Charlie sent goods home to her. "Your valuable bundle is safe at hand, & eagerly opened." Nannie's letter shared everyone's joy, but her son's was representative: "Godwin seemed as if he w'd take leave of his senses entirely, rolling & tumbling in every direction, thro' yarn & cloth, telling each one that his Papa sent this..." The bundle included cloth for at least three suits and several skirts. She recorded some of her expenses and the need "for dye-stuffs to color [her clothes] with they are so worn..." Nannie let Charlie know that if he could send her some dyestuff, she could resell them at a profit. This long letter also contained quite a bit of gossip, including the marriage of Mr. Davis to "Miss Thurman, a lady of uncertain age, somewhere over 40 I believe."

Nannie also reported that in several of Charlie's letters she found him "gloomy" and was surprised that he had not been previously. She reiterated her religious conviction, "my dear be not overmuch cast down, for has He not said, 'I will be with you in six troubles, & in the seventh I will not forsake you,' & do we not know that this has so often been verified..."

until at last, a merciful Father, seeing perhaps that we too lightly appreciated our numerous blessings stretched out his hand & took unto

himself one of the lambs entrusted to his care, & cannot you dear Charlie rejoice in this even tho' there was so much to sadden us. So you see we can still count our blessings ... I will try to follow our own brave country women's example, & bear what ever comes, even if our own beloved Virginia has to be given up to our vandal foe

The Figgats' financial situation is revealed somewhat in Nannie's letter to Charlie late in the war. Sept. 20, 1864, she suggested that they speculate on dry goods to make money, that he would have to borrow money to buy a horse, and more.

You say my dear, that you have given a ch'k on me for \$100 & I have nothing to pay it. I have given you an acct of the way in w'h I spent the money I got in L in wool & cotton. Its true I will not now have use for all of it, & will sell some of it, but am going to make me a linsey<sup>45</sup> dress, w'h I very much need, & I fear it will take near all I sell to pay for dye-stuffs to color it with they are so worn \_\_\_\_\_. If you have an opportunity & want to speculate just buy some & send it home to sell. Logwood & bluestone \$6 piece for instance. I reckon you'll have to borrow money if you buy a horse. I went up to see Mr McCreery this morning if there were any interest on the Confed Bond. It was due in July, but he says a draft from you is necessary, & if you want it just send it to me, & he will draw it, or if you choose, let it remain until Jan. I have about \$40, w'h will be enough for me now Will it not do, for your uncle R to try to collect that money from Dr C but for articles missing & pay himself as far as it will go, w'h ought to be right far, for most of the things missing were with him.

That Charlie's father was still a wagon maker is also documented in surviving Confederate service records [pictured]. Again on Sept. 13, 1864, James M. Figgat received \$36.00 "To repair one Government Wagon." Capt. J. J. Allen, Assistant Quartermaster authorized payment.

Dec. 13 was Nannie and Charlie's fifth wedding anniversary, but there was no mention of it in her diary. On Dec. 28, 1864, she wrote a long letter to him about "more tangible proof of our thoughts of you than mere words can express in the shape of a box..." She described in considerable detail the contents of his Christmas box.

45. This is short for linsey-woolsey cloth woven with a linen weft and wool warp.

"Your dear Parents" provided the pudding, butter, potatoes, beans, dried apples, apple-butter, and apples, she wrote. Martha Mary Godwin also included dried apples, plus a jar of pickles, cakes, and a bottle of molasses. Mrs. Rebecca Gray donated "half cheese," and Nannie McDowell sent Charlie more apples. His wife added a jar of her peach pickles, which she had made for him the previous summer, along with dried damsons. Nannie also sent her husband a coat, socks, two collars, and a pair of gloves.

Throughout the correspondence and Nannie's diary we never get a sense that the Godwins or the Figgats had financial difficulties during the war or suffered from food shortages. However, Nannie wrote that their son Godwin's haversack, which he got for Christmas, contained raisins, filberts, almonds, and candy—all saved from Nannie and Charlie's wedding, "5 years since"!

She also wrote about being sad without Charlie during the holidays and her wish for money so she could do more for him and for others with less than she had.

This feeling of mine was increased Saturday night by Nannie McD[owell]. Who commenced telling me, of how jealous she felt, couldn't help (tho' she knew it was wrong), to see others coming home, & their dear ones so happy, & how she had cried that evening until she couldn't cry any more, & in the presence of others. Oh I felt everything she said so acutely, & my heart was so full I couldn't speak.

While Charlie was not home for the holidays, he did make it to Fincastle for 11 days beginning Jan. 20, 1865. He was back at headquarters the following month when he wrote on Valentine's Day, Feb. 13. "After I left I thought so much of you and our parting and knew you were hiding the deep feelings of your leaving hard and that after I left you would have a long cry..." He also reported getting a promotion, for which he was not proud for himself but that it would be a "pleasure to darling" and would give her a "more prominent place in society." Evidently, Charlie's promotion had been in the offing for several months. Nannie's Nov. 27, 1864, letter passed on advice from his father, "go to a camp of instruction before you accept lieutenantancy."

merciful God, preserve & guide those near & dear to me & grant unto them a speedy return in peace, sweet peace. O for thy name's sake, for thy honor & glory may this be." This was Nannie's last diary entry.

On March 23, 1865, when Charlie was in Salem he wrote Nannie his last known letter. He wrote about speculating on "spool cotton," i.e., thread.

James wanted me to get him trimmings for a coat in R but I did not get that far. I enquired the price of Va staff button in L. price \$4 a piece. I intended to make an investment in a small way in spool cotton as I could have bought it at \$70 a Doz (Coats 200 yds) & understood it was selling at \$25 a spool in F[incastle] & thought to buy a few doz & take home & make enough to pay expenses. I saw it offered single spool for \$8 & cannot see why it is so high in F.

Two weeks later, on April 9, 1865, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House.

### The Figgats in Post-war Lexington

Nannie and Charlie returned to Lexington following the war. In September 1866, the Lexington Savings Institution opened and Charlie was its cashier.<sup>46</sup> That same month Nannie gave birth to their third son. He was named after one of

Charlie expressed his confidence in the Confederate Army: "[if] we are to have another, if possible more bloody year than any before, but I am hopeful and ever confident, if the people at home only do their duty... We have no cause to falter now—only let the hearts of those who have been so long from home be strengthened by encouraging words and sympathy, with renewed assurance of thought and affection..."

We may yet be happy together... O I wish I could be with you and together teach him [their son, Godwin] as we would like him to grow up; to hear his tales and experiences; his mis-haps and hopes teach him to be thoughtful and remember what is happening... O how I wish to be with you how much I can never tell, can only feel it in my heart often aching heart; but God's will be done."

Three weeks later on March 7 Charlie again arrived home unexpectedly. "But this was sad too, for he had the week previous been captured, by the Yanks with almost the whole of Early's little army" at Waynesboro. "My dear Charlie wandered in the mountains, until Sunday when he got to Stanton, there procured a horse & came home." A week later Charlie returned to the war, "the enemy threatened Lburg and then the S. S.



Gray's New Map of Lexington, 1877

Road. Where they will stop we can't tell. Oh!

46. [Rockbridge] *County News*, Feb. 21, 1895

Charlie's war heroes, Col. Sandie Pendleton.

Our last letter from the 1860s is a fragment from Martha Mary Godwin dated March 27. Since it notes the death of Captain Breckenridge, we have dated it 1867. She mentions hand hemming nine yards of stiff linen that day, although she also records that her two youngest daughters (Haddie and Mary, ages 18 and 16, respectively) were making a chemise with a sewing machine. Martha Mary wrote, it "is giving out again. The feed wheel refuses to take the work through it has been a great help to us this winter. Haddie has lerned to sew on it very well we have often wished for sum of your work that we might help you. You must cut out a bundl & send it up to the girls"

Although Nannie had moved back to Lexington from Fincastle almost two years previously, Martha Mary still missed her oldest daughter: "If I only could stop in and se you all sum night how glad I would be." Nannie did have help running her house. According to the 1870 Census, Caroline Adams, a 20-year-old white woman, and Rachel Black, a 12-year-old black girl, also lived with the Figgats.

Charlie's lifelong profession was in banking. In the 1860 census his occupation was listed as "Bank Teller." In 1868, The Lexington Savings Institution changed its name to the Bank of Lexington.<sup>47</sup> In the 1870 census records for the "Town of Lexington, in the County of Rockbridge," Charles M. Figgat's personal estate was valued at \$3,500. It also documents that he and Nannie, both 34 years old, had three children, including their first daughter, recorded as one-year-old Jessie. The census record for the Figgats also indicates that Nannie's 30-year-old brother, Bob (Robert Kyle Godwin), whose personal estate was valued at \$500, lived with them.

Five years after the end of the war, Charlie's devotion to his heroes had not waned. On Oct. 24, 1870, the executive committee of the Robert E. Lee Memorial Association elected Charlie its treasurer. When the committee was reorganized, he was reelected on May 31, 1873. Ten years later in the Programme of Ceremonies

47. [Rockbridge] *County News*, Feb. 21, 1895

at the Inauguration of the Lee Mausoleum, the Lee Memorial Association, "placed on record, in fitting terms, their high appreciation of the valuable services (services rendered as a labor of love) of their treasurer, C. M. Figgat, Esq." [and others].<sup>48</sup>

In addition to being employed at the bank, Charlie was involved in other activities. The Jan. 28, 1872, *Roanoke Times* documented the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Buena Vista Glass Company on Dec. 20. "Mr. C. M. Figgat, of Lexington, in the chair. Mr. J. W. Collins, secretary of the company... The annual report of the president and board of directors was read and submitted."

The 1936 Works Progress Administration's (WPA) historical inventory of Rockbridge,<sup>49</sup> recorded that on May 19, 1873, C. M. Figgat purchased the 1810 Reid-built house from M. V. Yellot. This two-story brick house was "located in a beautiful lawn" on the south side of West Washington Street nearly opposite the General Robert E. Lee home and the Lee Memorial Chapel.<sup>50</sup> The Figgat House was included in the inventory for its "historical significance" because it had belonged to the Figgats and others from "the best families of this community."

This could be the house where the Figgats were living with their six children when the 1880 census for Lexington documented Thomas G., 19; Sandy P., 14; Jessie, 11; Janie, 7; Sue, 5; and Miles, 10 months. Godwin, Sandy, and Jessie were the only children in school. Also listed with the Figgats' household were five servants, four blacks: Phoebe Crumbles (b. 1825), houseservant; Amanda Crumbles (b. 1840), cook; Mary Crumbles (b. 1865), "at school;" Elisha Johnson (b. 1850), laborer; and a Mulatto, Letcher Eubank (b. 1858), laborer.

Our final two letters are from Nannie's mother. Martha Mary Godwin addressed a letter to her

48. *Programme of Ceremonies*, <http://leearchive.wlu.edu/reference/books/ceremonies/>

49. Special Collections, Leyburn Library, W&L.

50. David Rumsey Map Collection [http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~207918~3003515?qvq=q:virginia+lexington;sort:Pub\\_List\\_No\\_InitialSort,Pub\\_Date;lc:RUMSEY~8~1&mi=0&trs=2](http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~207918~3003515?qvq=q:virginia+lexington;sort:Pub_List_No_InitialSort,Pub_Date;lc:RUMSEY~8~1&mi=0&trs=2)

children on, Nov. 18, 1885, two months after the death of her husband, Thomas Glynn Godwin, on Sept. 11.

Please ask Mr T<sup>51</sup> to let me know what pork is selling at it is offered here at 6ct have not heerd of aney sales O aint it strange that I have to think of such things. Do not worry about me I am getting along prettey well the boys are very kind... Don't forget to write your lonely old Mother



Thomas G. Godwin's Headstone

Unlike her letter of Dec. 27, 1859 when Martha Mary wrote about hogs being delivered and needing to be "cut up," she no longer had a ready source of pork.

Charlie's devotion to his war heroes persisted. Twenty years after the war he served as secretary of the Stonewall Jackson Memorial Association. "The monument will in all probability be the last one of an expensive kind erected to the memory of a Confederate hero, and it is proposed to make it the most beautiful of all," according to the Feb. 27, 1886, *Daily Picayune*.

In 1887 Nannie's brother, Bob, Robert K. Godwin was the head of the Lexington Development Company, which had purchased the "Clifton" property, about 25 acres, for \$6,000. While James McDowell was improving access to the railroad station, others saw creating a cross street as a means of developing building sites west of town. "...R. K. Godwin, who spent considerable time in 1882 lobbying the Town Council to open the proposed street, even going so far as to offer

51. Charles W. Tyree was her daughter, Mary Martha Godwin's husband.

to donate shade trees..."<sup>52</sup> He built six houses on a street he named Godwin's Row (renamed Jackson Avenue by 1982). However, his company went bankrupt five years later in 1892,<sup>53</sup> and in 1895 he was a teller at the Bank of Lexington where Charlie was the cashier.

### Chronicling Charlie's Downfall

The weekly Rockbridge *County News* covered the story in great depth on Feb. 21, 1895. It noted that the C. M. Figgats lived simply and "unostentatiously," and that "his salary never exceeded \$1,800." But it also said Charlie "was never satisfied with devoting himself to his duties at the bank, arduous though they were, but for twenty-five years has devoted much attention and much money to outside interests..." It listed many of his investments, including hundreds of shares in Rush Run Coal and Coke, Royal Coal and Coke, Red Ash Coal and Coke, and Lexington Manufacturing. He owned many houses, lots, and acres of land in and around Lexington. He also "engaged in farming, furnished money to farmers and dealt in cattle..."

But, the article also noted that he did not manage his business affairs well, either because "he could not give personal attention for lack of time or gave careless attention through his dissipation." For example, it noted that from 1875 Charlie owned and operated the Goshen stage line until 1882 when it was replaced by the railroad. "When the boom started he went in very largely and it is estimated that the extent of his transactions at Buena Vista alone reached in the neighborhood of \$50,000."

And yet all trusted him. During the panic twenty months ago, the bank of Lexington which must have been then totally bankrupt, was one of the few banks in the country that never closed its doors or announced a limitation on the amount of withdrawals by check. The ability of the man [Charlie] and the confidence of the people in the man then was absolutely wonderful. He took the situation in hand; the directors practically left it all to him... And that shell of a bank at times when so many solid ones went down, weathered the panic. No personal inconvenience was suf-

52. Hadsel, *The Streets of Lexington*, p. 84.

53. National Register of Historic Places: Clifton [property located: N side SR631 2000' E of jct. w/US11].

ferred by the people, no interruption was given to business and as much, if not more, money during that period was deposited than was withdrawn.

The dignity and importance of a bank board has never, perhaps, been exceeded in any community and the quiet Mr. Figgat was largely responsible for it.

“But the quiet and adroit Mr. Figgat fooled them all.” Charlie was failing both personally and financially.

He has for many years been known as a drinking man and gradually the habit grew upon him. He doubtless drank deeper potions to quiet his conscience. He was always more or less under the influence of liquor in recent years and during the past two years his incapacity for business was visible at the bank counter as well as elsewhere. The board of directors through the president, Mr. Nelson, warned him last Spring that his habits must change and he promised amendment. Since January 2 the board took the matter in hand and ten days before his flight he was called before the board and reprimanded. He gave them solemn assurance that “they should never have occasion to speak to him again on the subject.” ...

But, at 9 o’clock Friday morning, Feb. 15, 1895, the president of the Bank of Lexington, John L. Campbell, posted a notice on the bank’s front door, “This Bank closed for examination.”

When that paper was placed on the bank door the board of directors were assembled in the bank. They had been hurriedly brought from their breakfast tables that morning by a summons from the bank president, Mr. Campbell, who had come to the bank shortly after 8 o’clock in response to a note to him from the bank’s clerk, Mr. R. K. Goodwin [Nannie’s brother, Bob]. This note was received by Mr. Campbell at 7:45 o’clock that morning and simply asked him to come to the bank “as soon as possible—before 9 o’clock if possible. I have something of the utmost importance to communicate in regard to the bank.” When Mr. Campbell arrived he told him that Figgat was gone and was a defaulter. Figgat had left on the C. & O. train at 3:30 o’clock the day before, giving as his destination Rush Run, W. Va., where he has an interest in coal mines. About the time the bank closed for that day Mr. S. P. Figgat [Nannie and Charlie’s son] found in

the cash drawer a sealed letter addressed to R. K. Godwin. He gave it to him at 4:30 o’clock that afternoon.

According to the *Highland Recorder* for Feb. 22, 1895, Godwin had also found a note in his drawer from Charlie. It was addressed to Prof. Alexander L. Nelson, immediate past-president of the bank. Charlie confessed that his “account was short.” He also stated that he had been defrauding the bank for 15 years, but he would not take any money with him as he left town.<sup>54</sup>

Unknown at the time, Charles Miles Figgat walked away from his children and his wife of over 35 years, his friends, and his life long career at the Bank of Lexington, forever.

Friday morning Godwin pointed out to the bank president five packs of old envelopes which lay in a recess under the counter beyond the cashier’s window. They were old used envelopes received through the mail by the bank in the course of business, and split open at one end as they had been when first received. These were ledger accounts of the Bank of Lexington, but none appeared on the books of the bank. Any one who happened to see this might probably conclude that they were valueless old paper upon which the cashier had at times figured and which were carelessly left there. And yet an examination satisfied the board that this represented the amounts of deposits of the bank to the round sum of \$25,000. It was the small depositor class, largely the ignorant and careless class. Small farmers, Students and Cadets, maybe some poor woman, a negro laborer or a negro washwoman who had a small amount to deposit in bank temporarily or as a saving, had their accounts kept on the back of those old envelopes.

#### “How Brought to Light”

The flight of Figgat and the discovery of the defalcation is variously accounted for. There had been lately a good deal of dissatisfaction with the bank. ... There was delay in preparing the balance sheet that should have been presented January 1st. It was thought by the board to be somewhat excusable as the bank building was at that time torn up with vault improvements and the bookkeepers’ work was much interrupted. Godwin took the books up stairs to his room above and there worked to make out the balance sheet.

54. *Highland Recorder*, Feb. 22, 1895.

#### BANK AT RICHMOND, VA., CLOSED.

Failure Due to the Shortage of Cashier C. M. Figgat.

RICHMOND, Va., Feb. 15.—The officers of the Bank of Lexington tonight decided to make an assignment to secure its creditors. Its liabilities are \$71,000. C. M. Figgat, the cashier, left town suddenly, and a letter from him announced he spent money in private speculations. The accounts are confused, and the amount of his shortage is not known. Figgat belongs to an old and honored family.

#### “Letters Left Behind”

When John P. Welsh, a warm friend of Figgat’s, heard Friday morning the statement that he was a defaulter and had fled, he could not believe it and went at once to his home to see his son, S. P. Figgat. His idea was that he would learn his whereabouts, go after him and bring him back, that the shortage could only be small and that his friends would see him out. S. P. Figgat could give him no information or comfort. He told him that his father had left some letters in a tin box in his possession for his friends and he wanted Welsh to take and distribute them. This Welsh consented to do and did at once, thinking that in the letters he might get some information of Figgat’s whereabouts. The box was opened and letters contained in large envelopes were found addressed to Mrs. C. M. Figgat, S. P. Figgat, A. L. Nelson, Bank of Lexington, R. K. Godwin, M. Miley, Jas. Straub and C. W. Irvine. These Welsh distributed.<sup>57</sup>

Robert K. Godwin’s letter from Charlie:

I cannot understand or explain the condition which you told me the books were in, but I write this to say and that emphatically, you have had nothing to do with bringing it about. I and I only have done anything that is wrong. I know that you would lose your right hand rather than do a wrong deed and no line or figure have you ever made that was not proper and right, and I take all the blame and responsibility on myself and I alone must suffer the consequences—but my ever dear and loving friend I have not done wrong willfully and knew not what I had done until now—forgive me all the pain I have caused you and don’t think too meanfully of your friend. (signed) C. M. F.<sup>58</sup>

His statement is that when he finally made it out he discovered that it showed the amount due depositors to be \$176,000 instead of \$79,000 as per bank statement of January 1st. He called the attention of Figgat to it. He said it was wrong, that he would straighten out the books and make it all plain. That Figgat neglected to do so and that on Wednesday of last week he informed him that he was going to bring the matter to the attention of the board; that he was going to bring matters to a head. Then Figgat’s flight followed. Godwin does not pretend to deny that for some time he had known that Figgat was falsifying the books and taking the bank’s money. But declared that he had no idea of the extent of his transactions and thought that Figgat had ample property to make good any shortage in the bank. He also stated that he always acted under the idea that Figgat was the superior officer in the bank and himself a subordinate and that he (Figgat) could do what he pleased.<sup>55</sup>

#### “Virginia Cashier Gone Wrong”

The oldest accounts of Charlie’s embezzling funds while working at the Bank of Lexington for nearly three decades date from Feb. 16, 1895<sup>56</sup> and were published in the *Washington Times*, *Alexandria Gazette*, *Norfolk Virginian*, and *Chicago Daily Tribune* [pictured]. Under the headline “Virginia Cashier Gone Wrong,” The *Washington Times* printed four short sentences and misspelled Charlie’s last name, as would frequently happen. It reported that the bank was safe, though “C. M. Figgat” had suddenly left town because of “unfortunate private speculations of the funds of the bank.” The *Chicago* newspaper noted that the Figgats were “an old and honored family.” Understandably, several newspapers reported that the bank’s customers were coming into town to verify the rumors, which did not initially receive much credence.

55. [Rockbridge] *Country News*, Feb. 21, 1895.

56. The two local newspapers, the *Lexington Gazette* and the [Rockbridge] *County News* were weeklies, so other newspapers reported the scandal before the locals.

57. [Rockbridge] *Country News*, Feb. 21, 1895.

58. [Rockbridge] *County News*, Feb. 22, 1895.

The *Norfolk Virginian* reported that the Bank of Lexington closed its doors though C. M. Figgat was “bonded for \$30,000 which is deemed sufficient to cover all losses, if any.” The *Alexandria Gazette* further reported that Charlie had probably been shorting the bank for 20 years, and that after a full day with the accounts, the bank could not say how much was missing.

#### LEXINGTON BANK \$140,000 SHORT.

Believed Cashier Figgat Took Much Money Away with Him.

RICHMOND, Va., Feb. 10.—[Special.]—The examination of the Bank of Lexington shows a shortage of \$140,000. It now seems clear that Cashier Figgat took a large amount of money away with him. Other persons are said to be involved.

The second day of coverage, Feb. 17, had extensive reporting. Over 800 words detailed the bank’s situation in *The Times* of Richmond. These were subsequently summarized in *The Charlotte Observer* and the *Chicago Daily Tribune* [pictured] on the same day and by *The New York Herald* a day later. The paper reported that the bank was short over \$145,000 and had “a little over \$6,500 with which to pay depositors \$72,000.” Among the concerned depositors were several Lexington institutions, including the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), Washington and Lee University, and the county treasurer, which left the reporter to conclude that the situation “will seriously cripple business here for some time to come.” A few days later, *The Washington Post* reported that the VMI Board of Visitors would “arrange its finances to meet the emergency” so that the school could go on as usual.

#### “The stillness and surprise was painful for a time”

Lexingtonians were especially perplexed when additional details revealed that \$8,000 deposited on Feb. 13, just two days before Charlie’s sudden departure, could not be found. Not only had he seemingly left his wife and children without property, but he had lied again in the note he left before “absconding,” a frequently used term to describe his hasty departure. Charlie’s last actions drastically reduced the credibility of his departing note that was supposed to exonerate

the bank’s teller, Robert Kyle Godwin, Nannie’s brother. According to the Richmond news, “rumors are flying thick and fast from all quarters” that others were also involved.

#### “Figgats Big Defalcation”

Many believed that Charlie would be quickly apprehended. “He is a man that can be easily distinguished from many others.” By the third day following Charlie’s “defalcation,” a contemporary term for embezzlement, the news had spread further west. The *San Francisco Chronicle* as well as the *Chicago Daily Tribune* ran the same stories on Feb. 18. Though they did not add any new details, their language was stronger, declaring that business was “almost paralyzed on account of the wreck of this financial institution” and that the depositors were “bitter towards those responsible for the careless manner in which the affairs of the bank were conducted... it is likely that nearly everything will be lost.”

A more regional report published the next day in *The Washington Post* reported several new developments. Robert K. Godwin had been formally charged with knowing that Charlie was “kiting” accounts. He was released on \$500 bail. The bank president said the “surety bonds” would probably pay \$.65 on the dollar but Charlie’s “deed of assignment” was actually in favor of the guarantors and not the bank. These included \$10,000 in life insurance and possibly \$25,000 worth of stock in New River coalmines and the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad.

According to the Feb. 19 *Post*, the bank offered a reward of \$100, which it hoped would be supplemented by Governor O’Ferrall. Civil authorities were “hot on his trail,” using this physical description of Charlie:

- 55 or 60 years old
- 5 feet 10 inches
- 190 pounds
- Full head of hair, slightly gray
- Full beard and mustache
- Face flabbily bloated from drinking
- Walks slightly stooped, head slightly hung
- Ordinarily talked in a mild, mumbling tone,

with a rising inflection

- When talking moves uneasily, as if to turn around

The *Alexandria Gazette*, also published Feb. 19, reported that with the demise of the Bank of Lexington the directors of the Rockbridge Savings Bank would “carry on a general banking business” and changed the name to the Bank of Rockbridge. The same day the *Baltimore Sun* reported that the Lexington church congregations were small and showed the effects of the financial calamity. In one of the rare displays of sympathy, this newspaper reported, “In some churches prayer was offered for the innocent and afflicted family, who have the sympathy of all.”

#### “Mass Meeting Takes Action to Bring Rascals to Justice”

Among other newspapers, Columbia, South Carolina’s *The State* reported on Feb. 19 that resolutions had been adopted and the governor should offer a reward, the grand jury should investigate, and justice should be brought to those responsible.

The *Chicago Daily Tribune* declared that Nannie’s brother (misnaming him Goodwin), “is innocent of complicity in the robbery.” It also elaborated on the theory that Charlie might have been in Chicago not only because he took a westbound train, but also because he had spent “considerable time” at the 1893 World’s Fair. The paper’s sources described Charlie as having affable manners and smooth speech. *The State*, offered additional traits: “legs slightly bowed, short gray beard, full gray moustache, eyes dark gray almost brown, walks slightly stooped and very slowly on account of some inward affliction, full stomach, ruddy complexion, face flaggy.... his appearances show him to be addicted to drink.”

#### “A Heavy Defalcation”

Five days after the Bank of Lexington closed its doors, newspapers in Knoxville, Tennessee, Santa Fe, New Mexico, New York, and Baltimore, Maryland, redistributed old news or borrowed from the *Washington Post*, which received a ‘special to the Post from Lexington.’ *The Post* published several revelations on Feb.

20, including that Charlie “ran up the steal to the grand total of \$159,200,” which could grow because the bank officers requested that all pass books and certificates of deposit be handed in for comparison.

*The Post* revealed that “Figgat’s system of falsifying the accounts of the bank were most systematic and wide-reaching in their effect, covering almost every account with the institution.” It even published a sample of his system of defrauding the bank’s customers, as did the *Baltimore Sun* and the *Knoxville Journal*. *The Sun* noted that Rockbridge public schools might have to close since all the school’s funds from the state had been deposited in the defunct bank.

Equally big news was the verification of the rumors that some depositors had received packages that Charlie left behind on his way out of town. Charles W. Irvine’s package contained “several negotiable notes and a deed of trust in Buena Vista Lots, in which he and Mr. Figgat were mutually interested, two bonds and currency.” J. A. Straub’s package contained Rockbridge County bonds, cash, plus a note from Charlie. *The Post* reported, “The contents of the envelopes were valued at \$3,300.”

#### “Figgat Has Fled the Country”

On Feb. 21, 1895 the *Washington Post* reported (and the papers in Atlanta, Charlotte, and San Francisco redistributed the news) that the Rockbridge Savings Bank would open on March 1 to take the place of the Bank of Lexington. It also declared that Charlie must have left the country because

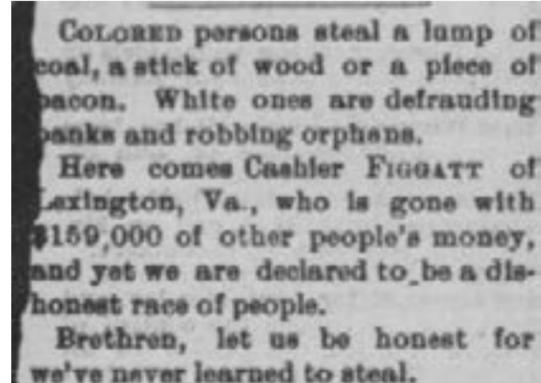
It would be impossible for Figgat to remain in any part of the United States long without detection, for the reason that he is known personally by every one of the thousand students of Washington and Lee University and cadets of the Virginia Military Institute who have been at these schools here during the past thirty years. Some old student or cadet would be sure to recognize him, and no one knows this fact better than Figgat.

*The Planet* [pictured], one of the largest and most widely read papers in Virginia, reported news of particular interest to Richmond's African American community. Charlie Figgat's defalcation caused the editor, John Mitchel, to write on Feb. 23,

Colored persons steal a lump of coal, a stick of wood or a piece of bacon. White ones are defrauding banks and robbing orphans.

Here comes Cashier Figgatt of Lexington, Va., who is gone with \$159,000 of other people's money, and yet we are declared to be a dishonest race of people.

Brethern, let us be honest for we've never learned to steal.



**\$500 REWARD**  
FOR THE APPREHENSION OF  
**C. M. FIGGAT,**  
LATE CASHIER OF THE BANK OF LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA.

WHO LEFT LEXINGTON, VA., VIA THE C. & O. RAILWAY GOING WEST FEBRUARY 14th. HE WAS ON THE F. F. V. TRAIN THE NIGHT OF THE 14th, AND IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE GONE ON TO CINCINNATI REACHING THAT CITY AT 8 A. M. ON THE MORNING OF THE 15th IF HE DID NOT LEAVE THE TRAIN AT SOME INTERMEDIATE POINT.

**DESCRIPTION:** Mr. Figgat is about 60 years of age; heavy built; 5 feet 8 or 9 inches high; bow-legged (throwing his knees to the side in walking); walks slowly and as if in pain; wears a full beard, but light; ruddy complexion; hair and beard originally dark but turning grey; talks slowly, and as if hesitating for the proper word; teeth clenched and lips open; nods his head frequently in talking; short neck; throws head forward and elevates shoulders in talking; occupied; appearance of drinking man; repeats his yes three, "yes-yes-yes." Had two small loose-fitting with him. When Mr. Figgat left Lexington he had on a plain dark grey overcoat, mutton weight and without velvet collar, dark gray suit, black shoes but; several trial shoes. He reached Cincinnati via C. & O. R. R. on the morning of the 15th about 8 o'clock.

THE ABOVE REWARD HAS BEEN OFFERED BY THE VIRGINIA STATE AUTHORITIES.

Ex-Cadets of the Virginia Military Institute and Students of Washington & Law University, to every man of whom Mr. Figgat is well known, are requested to communicate with the undersigned if Mr. F. has been seen by them since February 12th.

**R. R. WITT, Sheriff,**  
LEXINGTON, F. O., ROCKINGHAM COUNTY, VIRGINIA.

Increasing." *The State* reported, "It is probable additions will be made to the \$150,000 shortage already found."

**"Probing Bank Steal: Assistant Cashier Godwin, of Lexington, Arrested, Guilty Knowledge"**

On March 2, an editorial in the Eastern Shore Accomack newspaper, *Peninsula Enterprise*, called for the Bank of Lexington directors to be held accountable. "Their negligence culpable... A revival of the sense of obligation is needed." In response, Bank of Lexington trustee Col. James Kerr Edmondson combed through the bank records and compared the passbooks dropped off by the bank's customers with the ledgers. According to the *St. Louis Republic* of March 8, he found "small steals here and there" until his assistant, J. W. McClung, came upon two pass-books belonging to C. W. Irvine & Co. The "Co." was known to be Charlie. According to the *Republic*, Charlie and C. W. Irvine had done "business in real estate in Buena Vista in boom days from 1890 until very recently ... overdafts the sum of \$51,500, a sum they never had to their credit."

The amounts deposited by C. W. Irvine & Co. as shown by the pass-books, were not verified by the bank ledgers, as is usually done but by an examination of the bank "scratcher," that is, the book on which the deposits are jotted down at the cashier's window at the time they are received.

That day's *Baltimore Sun* also reported that "it was known that Figgatt and Irvine had been intimately associated in business transactions, especially in speculations in Buena Vista." Charlie and Charles W. Irvine's association was documented, for example on Feb. 5, 1893, when the *Richmond Dispatch* reported in the "Lexington's Social Budget." "Messrs. C. M. Figgat and C. W. Irvine have gone on a two-week's trip through the South, their objective point being Sherman, Tex., where they will visit Mr. Irvine's brother."

The *Sun's* March 2 article concluded with the grand jury's indictments: C. M. Figgat, five felony counts embezzlement and grand larceny; R. K. Godwin, two felony counts for making

On Feb. 23 newspapers announced that Virginia Governor Charles Triplet O'Ferrall provided a \$500 reward. A wanted poster included a somewhat out-of-date profile of Charlie's face, and it offered additional and more specific identifying characteristics.

According to the poster C. M. Figgat left Lexington on the FFV – Fast Flying Virginian, a passenger train of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway. He was headed to Cincinnati and due to arrive at 8 a.m. on the morning of Feb. 15 "if he did not leave the train at some intermediate point."

The C&O collector recalled for the *Highlander Recorder* that he sold Charlie a ticket from Huntington, West Virginia, to Cincinnati, Ohio, and that the collector spent time with Charlie in Cincinnati. But the *Highlander* reported that the collector was dissatisfied with the reward offered. In fact, the Woodstock newspaper, *Shenandoah Herald*, reported "Gov. O'Ferrall said yesterday that the brother of the defaulting cashier (i.e., James H. H. Figgat) had rescued him in a hot cavalry combat during the war and consequently it was a painful duty to proclaim a reward for the brother of his friend."

Three days after walking to the train station in Lexington, Charlie was reportedly in Chicago. Two days later *The Washington Post* reported that he had gone to Europe. But the next day he was still in the U.S. according to *The Charlotte Observer*. A little over a week later on March 1, Charlie was in Cincinnati, according to the *Highlander*, which also reported that speculation had him traveling through Texas to Mexico.

There were many other contradictory reports. The *Santa Fe Daily* reported, "The loss of the Virginia military institute will temporarily cripple it." But the *Charlotte Observer* said that the loss of \$20,000 would "in no wise affect that school or force it to close." The exact amount of Charlie's embezzlement was also unclear from the newspaper reports. *The Macon Daily Telegraph* reported, "The steal ran to the grand total of \$159,200." But the *San Francisco Chronicle* played it safe with the headline "The Shortage

false entries in the bank's books; and C. W. Irvine, three felony counts for receiving money knowing it was embezzled and stolen.

#### “Four Years in the Penitentiary”

Two months later on May 7, 1895, Judge J. C. Grattan of Harrisonburg presided over the trial of Robert K. Godwin. The Hon. John Randolph Tucker, also on the law school faculty at Washington and Lee University, and Frank Glasgow, “a prominent young attorney,” defended him. Capt. James Bummgardner of Staunton conducted the case against Godwin for the state. Over 30 witnesses testified and the bank records were “put under the magnifying-glass.” The next day the jury deliberated for only 30 minutes before it found Godwin guilty of making fraudulent entries in the bank books and sentenced him to four years in the penitentiary. Additional indictments that had been brought were “quashed by agreement of counsel for both sides.” His conviction would not be appealed, according to the May 9 *Charlotte Observer*.

A few days later trustee Edmondson was in court for the Bank of Lexington to recover funds from Charles W. Irvine, which would in part pay the depositors of the defunct bank. According to the May 17 *Washington Post*, Edmondson was entitled to recover “\$42,441.21, and \$35,396.91 of this amount to bear interest from February 15, 1895, until the same is paid.” Irvine’s trial, however, was postponed until July.

In the mean time, Edmondson received \$11,000 on Charlie’s \$30,000 surety bond. In addition, the trustee received \$12,000 on the Figgats’ property, which Charlie had signed over to the bank in his parting note, to “indemnify his surties from any loss.” The *Highland Recorder* reported on June 21 that this would result in a ten per cent dividend to the depositors on July 18. It was not until Sept. 28 that the *Alexandria Gazette* reported that “At Lexington a decree was entered ordering the sale of the real estate of C. M. Figgatt.”

The WPA’s historical inventory of Rockbridge documents that “W. T. Shields was appointed by the court as special commissioner in the cause: Assigned Bank of Lexington vs. C. M. Figgat.”

He sold the Figgats’ house on Washington Street to Mrs. Lucy W. Preston, February 1, 1896.”

#### “Trial of a Bank Wrecker”

The trial of Charles W. Irvine began on July 5, 1895. As with Nannie’s brother, Irvine was defended by Tucker and Glasgow with Senator John W. Daniel added to the defense. Judge Gratten presided again. *The Washington Post* speculated that the prosecution had surprisingly not made its case that the Irvine and Figgat partnership extended beyond real estate and stock investments during the boom days to defrauding the Bank of Lexington. The next day “dozens of the best men in this and other sections were heard” testifying on behalf of Irvine’s “standing as a business man.” The Wednesday morning, July 10, 1895, edition of *The Roanoke Times* reported Irvine’s acquittal.

#### “Knew but Kept Silent”

Six months after the conviction of Nannie’s brother a special dispatch to *The Baltimore Sun* from Rockbridge County reported that “thousands of leading citizens of both town and county” had signed a petition to Governor O’Ferrall calling for Robert K. Godwin to be pardoned.

**Rockbridge County Notes.**  
[Special Dispatch to the Baltimore Sun.]  
LEXINGTON, VA., Nov. 8.—The many friends of Robert K. Godwin, ex-teller and bookkeeper of the defunct Bank of Lexington, now serving a term of four years in the State penitentiary, being convicted of complicity with Charles M. Figgat, the defaulting and absconding cashier of that bank, in abstracting the funds of the bank, are busy getting up a petition to be presented to Governor O’Ferrall asking for the pardon of Godwin. The petition is circulating all over the county and has already been largely signed by thousands of the leading citizens of both town and county.

They were not successful in convincing O’Ferrall. Nannie’s brother spent 32 months in prison before being exonerated by Governor James Hoge Tyler. According to the *Lexington Gazette* for March 9, 1898, the Governor said,

This man has been a victim of circumstances. While he is, no doubt, guilty of a technical violation of the law, it does not appear that he received any of the funds taken from the bank. His only crime was in sheltering the real criminal, who was his sister’s husband, and had been

his benefactor. He is certainly not a criminal in the usual sense. His suffering has been vicarious, and I unhesitatingly grant his pardon... Mr. Godwin is now at the home of his sister, Mrs. Figgat in Roanoke.

#### “Death Reveals the Secret”

Charlie continued to be a fugitive for four years. He next made the news when his death was reported in 1899. The earliest report found was the March 1 *Lexington Gazette* and the *Virginian-Pilot*. “Death Reveals the Secret: C. M. Figgat Died in Colorado...” was the first news about Charlie’s life after he left Lexington on Feb. 14, 1895.

Robert K. Godwin cleared as much of the mystery as would ever be known about his brother-in-law in a letter to J. P. Welsh in Lexington on Feb. 27, 1899.

On the 13th of February Turner McDowell, of this place [Fincastle], received a letter addressed to J. H. H. Figgat (McDowell is J. H. H. Figgat’s administrator, and that is the reason the letter was given to him by the postmaster), stating that a man by the name of “Charles Miles” had died at his house at Lockett, Colorado, on the 1st of February, and wanted to know what he knew of him. The man (J. W. Willis by name) said that he found a little slip of paper in his prayer book, on which was written in pencil: “Write to J. H. H. Figgat, Fincastle, Va.” We were almost perfectly satisfied that the letter referred to our Mr. F., but to be satisfied beyond a doubt my brother James wrote to Mr. Willis and to-day we received a long letter, setting forth all the facts, and we now have no doubt that the man referred to was Mr. F. He sent the little slip of paper of which I speak and the writing is unmistakably Mr. F.’s writing. He sent also his prayer book, in which the name “Charles Miles” is Mr. F.’s writing. He says that Mr. F. came to his house in May 1895, and stayed some time, went away and stayed somewhere at a hotel, and then came back to him. He died of heart disease, and only complained a short time before his death; and died suddenly, retaining consciousness to the last. Mr. Willis is a farmer and commissioner of the revenue. He does not say anything about what Mr. F. did, except that he did a little writing and adding for him on his books. He says he paid his board, \$3.50 per week, and had about \$28 when he died; that he was decently buried, and tells of

the kind of coffin and clothes in which he was buried; that, the amount expended was more than he had, and that friends, of which he had many, paid the balance. His description is very accurate in many particulars. Mr. Willis says that he had seen Mr. F. to take a drink, but that he did not drink to excess.

#### “Embezzling Cashier... Positively Identified”

Subsequently, Clerk of the Circuit Court, Robert R. Witt, who had been the sheriff of Rockbridge County when Charlie’s embezzlement was discovered, followed up with J. W. Willis, writing to him directly. Witt sent Willis Charlie’s photograph, writing samples, and a copy of a newspaper containing the letter Willis had addressed to J. H. H. Figgat. The April 1, 1899, *Baltimore Sun* published Willis’s response,

The card and letter you sent me is Charles Miles’ handwriting. The picture is his likeness, and a good one. I took the picture to my daughter’s and presented it to my granddaughter that is eight years old and asked her whose picture it was. She knew it, and said it was Mr. Miles. I then presented it to another granddaughter, five years old, and she said that it was Mr. Miles. Your paper mentioned the date when he came to my house.

He stayed with us about two years. When he left my place he went direct to Hooper, Col., and worked at a hotel and was there fifteen months and was taken sick and had to give up his job. He came near dying at that time. The doctor requested him to go to some place where it was not so high; if he remained here, he would die with heart trouble. During the time he left my house I saw him every few days—called in to see him while he was sick. Knowing he was scarce of money, I invited him to come back to my house and make me a visit before he left. So he came, and died in about ten days after he came.

There is no mistake: It is the picture of Charles Miles as we knew him. I could send you fifty affidavits to that effect if necessary.

He was buried about five miles southwest of Hooper, Col. Hooper is a railroad station and I go there almost every week. Mr. Miles while working at the hotel generally met all passenger trains coming to Hooper. When he came to my place he said he was traveling for his health and thought Colorado was a good place to stop. He

was polite and gentlemanly, but seemed to keep his home to himself.

When he went to work at the hotel there was no price mentioned, and when he was taken sick at the hotel the landlord had him taken away.

The people moved him to another house, and he stayed there till he got able to get out. He wanted pay for his work. The man refused to pay him. So they left it to two men and they allowed him \$8 per month for what time he stayed. When he died he had but \$28.10 in cash and some little trinkets.

Almost four years to the day after Charlie walked away from Lexington--the bank and his family and friends, he died in Lockett, Colorado. The news and events surrounding Charlie's embezzlement were widely reported, appearing in newspapers in at least a dozen states outside of Virginia. Newspaper reports have survived and been digitized from as far west as New Mexico and California, and throughout the southeastern United States. But when he died in 1899, only the local and regional newspapers reported the conclusion of this major bank's downfall at the hands of a single cashier.

Nearly seventy years later the story of Charlie bringing down such an important financial institution in Virginia was included in Allen W. Moger's *Virginia Bourbonism to Byrd: 1870-1925*. He wrote of Charlie's impeccable reputation for two decades as a banker and religious and civic leader. Moger also tried to explain Charlie's behavior somewhat, when he wrote,

Figgat had invested \$50,000 in the Buena Vista Company and had speculated in real estate, coal mining, transportation, cattle growing, and farming. Also the bank was known to be involved in the Lexington boom... The cashier had left for parts unknown the day before the crash, reportedly to look after his coal-mining investments in West Virginia...

By carefully manipulating bank records Charlie had robbed the Bank of Lexington of about \$180,000, with severe losses during times already hard on stockholders and depositors. Many local residents, cadets and students at the two local colleges, the county treasury, and others lost heavily. Virginia Military Institute lost

about \$20,000. The Washington and Lee University faculty suffered considerably, having just been paid with funds drawn from the bank, in which they had deposited their checks.<sup>59</sup>



### The Figgats in Roanoke

Nannie [above] left Lexington and moved to Roanoke sometime after Charlie's "defalcation" in February 1895, but at least by 1896 when her home on Washington Street in Lexington was sold in an attempt to recover some of the embezzled funds. Moving about 50 miles southwest when she was in her early 60s, was Nannie's last move. She lived out her life in Roanoke with most of her adult children nearby. According to the Roanoke City Directories (RCD), her eldest son, Godwin was already living there when his mother arrived. While Godwin had lived at several Roanoke locations, the 1898/99 directory listed Nannie, Godwin, and two more of her children, 32-year-old Sandy and 27-year-old Jane. All four Figgats were then living at 130 Day Avenue Southwest. Charlie's 50-year-old brother, Montais Taylor Figgat, also lived with them that year.

The RCDs for 1900 and 1902 also list the youngest Figgat children, Miles Floyd Figgat and Sue Madison Figgat, both in their early 20s. The *Directory of the Churches of Roanoke* for 1903 also listed the Figgats: Nannie, Janie R. (Miss), Jessie T. (Miss), Miles F., Sandy P., and Sue M. (Miss) as members of St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church. The 1912/1913 church directory included Nannie, Sandy, Miles, and Godwin with his wife. Nannie and her adult children lived together in the same Day Avenue

59. Moger. *Virginia Bourbonism*, p. 141.

house until after her death in 1919, except that Godwin moved into another Roanoke residence with his wife, May, in 1909.

If Nannie left Lexington with the hope of escaping Charlie's infamy, she was not successful. Every Roanoke City Directory listed Nannie as the widow of Charles M. Figgat.



### The Children of Nannie and Charlie Figgat

**Thomas Godwin Figgat** was born on May 17, 1861. After the Civil War he moved with his family from his grandparents' house in Fincastle to Lexington. He attended Washington and Lee University, following in the footsteps of several of his uncles on both sides of his family, including William F. Figgat (1855), I. Robinson Godwin (1857), James H. H. Figgat (1858), Thomas J. Godwin (1861), and Robert C. Figgat (1869). Godwin is listed among the 1881 graduates in the 1888 catalogue of W&L alumni, which also notes that he was working in the Machine Shops

in Roanoke.<sup>60</sup> Michael Miley took this photograph of Godwin in 1883.

The first of the Figgat children to move to Roanoke, he is listed in the oldest available city directory, 1887/88, as living at the corner of Jefferson and Salem Avenues. It also listed him as a clerk at the Shenandoah Valley Railroad and vice president of the YMCA. Godwin was one of many who moved to the "Magic City" during the 1880s when it was one of the fastest growing urban areas in the South..



T. Godwin Figgat, 1883

Godwin continued to work for the railroad after it was merged with the Norfolk & Western, though he took a brief hiatus in 1898-1899 when he and his brother were merchants operating as Sandy P. Figgat & Co. (see Cuisine Links) On Oct. 17, 1899, the Washington, D. C. *Evening Star* listed T. Godwin Figgat among the 306 new members elected to the YMCA. The Baltimore City Directory for 1903 listed "Godwin Figgat T, clk, 1120 Madison Ave."

60. W&L, *Catalogue of Alumni*, p. 190, #3596.

However, Godwin only left Roanoke temporarily; the RCD listed him in 1904/05 when he once again was a clerk at the Norfolk and Western Railroad. In 1906 his wife, May Burnett Figgat, moved into the Figgats' house on Day Avenue. Their son, William Burnett Figgat, was born the following year. The 1912 Episcopal Church directory listed them at 921 Roanoke Street Southwest Roanoke. The 1926 directory listed these three Figgats at 1232 Clarke Avenue. William graduated from Roanoke College in 1927.

Godwin died on June 9, 1935, at 74 at his home on Clark Avenue Southwest<sup>61</sup> and was buried at Roanoke's Evergreen Burial Park. According to the 1940 U.S. Census, William and his mother were still living in Roanoke on Clarke Avenue. William later became the second husband of Roanoker Anne Funkhouser Francis.

**Sandy Pendleton Figgat** (1866-1942) was Charlie and Nannie's third son and the first child born after the war in September 1866. He was named after one of Charlie's war heroes, Alexander (Sandie) Swift Pendleton. Sandy also attended Washington and Lee, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1886/87. Michael Miley photographed him in 1885.

Sandy occasionally appeared in the society news. For example, the Nov. 10, 1895, *Richmond Dispatch* reported "A beautiful german held to honor the "two charming daughters of Colonel Thomas M. Semmes..." The dance was led by Sandy P. Figgat.

Two years later the *Roanoke Times* for Aug. 15, 1897, announced under the headline "Changes Hands" that Sandy P. Figgat & Co. took over the "popular grocery firm of Pitman & Evans." From Aug. 24 the paper was peppered with almost daily text blocks announcing: "Sandy P. Figgat & Co" at 116 Salem Avenue West. (See Culinary Links)

As opening day drew near, the advertising intensified and on Sept. 26 multiple advertisements appeared on the front page. Beginning on Oct. 3, the *Roanoke Times* published illustrated ads in weekly installments until at least Feb. 23, 1898.



Sandy P. Figgat, 1885

The Roanoke City directories for 1898 and 1899 listed both Sandy and his partner/brother, Godwin as "grocers," following in their maternal grandfather's footsteps as merchants. The following year, however, Sandy was listed as a clerk for the Norfolk and Western Railroad. We have no information about why Figgat & Co. closed their business.

The *Lexington Gazette* announced in the "Personals and Briefs" for Sept. 13, 1899, that Sandy P. Figgat, of Roanoke, had visited there on Sept. 9. A year later on Aug. 19, 1900, we found "Sandy P. Figgat, Roanoke," listed among the summer visitors to Rockbridge Alum Springs noted in the *Richmond Dispatch*. Beginning in 1900 according to the Roanoke City directories, Sandy and Godwin were both railroad employees.

The following year on Sept. 8, 1901, the *Roanoke Times* reported that Sandy was among the founding Board of Governors of the Roanoke Country Club. That year he also won the club championship "...making a record for the course of 43 out and 40 in—a total of 83 for the eighteen holes. Mr. Figgat used the famous McGear clubs, his driver having been in use two years." He also won the club championship in 1902.

Under the headline "General M'Donald Lee Names Official Staff" in the *Richmond Times Dispatch* for Feb. 8, 1911, "Sandy P. Figgat, Roanoke," was named to the Resolutions Committee of the Virginia Division of the United Sons of Confederate Veterans. At their May 1912 reunion he was the "inspector general," according to the May 6 *Washington Herald*. "The chief feature of the four-day reunion will be the parade of the veterans and their sons. To obviate the discomfort attendant upon the march, a change has been made in the usual programme, which will render the parade more short and more effective."

Sandy lived with his family in the 130 Day Avenue house until 1923 when he and two of his sisters, Jane and Sue, moved to 1118 1st Street, also in southwest Roanoke. Sandy died in 1942. In his will he left as his heirs his sisters, Sue M. Figgat, 72, and Janie R. Figgat, 75, both living in Roanoke on Walnut Avenue according to the 1940 U.S. census, and a nephew, Godwin's son, William Burnett Figgat.

The *Fincastle Herald* carried Sandy's obituary on Feb. 26, 1942, "Sandy P. Figgatt, 75, of Roanoke, a native of Fincastle, died Saturday afternoon at his home in Roanoke, where he had been a resident since 1897, employed by the N & W Railway company until his retirement a few years ago." Funeral services were held on March 2 at Roanoke's St. John's Episcopal Church. He was buried with most of his family in the Godwin Cemetery next to the Methodist Church in Fincastle.



Sandy P. Figgat's Gravestone

**Jessie Figgat** (Jan. 1869-1909) was the first of Nannie and Charlie's three daughters. She is listed with her family in the 1870 and 1880 Lexington censuses. Michael Miley took her photograph in 1887.

In the 1900 U.S. census she was listed as a trauma nurse. In 1903 she was listed among the members of Roanoke's St. John's Episcopal Church, though her address was recorded as



Jessie Figgat Agnew

61. Barnes, *History of Roanoke*, p. 757.

Nashville, Tennessee. This is also the first place where she is listed with a middle initial, T. The next piece of evidence about Jessie is her listing as a Roanoke resident when she graduated at 37 in 1906 from the "Training School" at the Tewksbury, Massachusetts, state hospital.<sup>62</sup>

Though not listed in the RCDs with her mother and siblings, Jessie was living in Roanoke in 1909, 10 years after her mother and siblings initial move to 130 Day Avenue Southwest. She is listed as Mrs. Jessie F. Agnew just once in the 1909 Roanoke City Directory. That same year Charlie's 50-year-old brother, Montais Taylor Figgat, was again listed with them in the Day Avenue house.

We have no information about Jessie's husband, Mr. Agnew. Her marker in the Godwin Cemetery in Fincastle records the death of Jessie Figgat Agnew in 1909.



Jessie Figgat Agnew's Gravestone

**Jane Robinson Figgat** (July 1871-1954) moved with her mother to Roanoke when she was about 27. "Miss Sue Figgat, Mrs. N. G. Figgat... Miss J. R. Figgat" were listed among the guests at the wedding anniversary celebration of Mrs. S. M. Woodard, in the Dec. 12, 1897, *Roanoke Times*.

According to the Roanoke City directories, Jane was a librarian at the Roanoke Public Library 1898-1902. She lived in the same 130 Day Avenue house until 1923 when the RCD listed Jane and her brother, Sandy, at 1118 1st Street Southwest. Her gravestone in the Godwin Cemetery in Fincastle does not indicate that Jane ever married and the RCDs always list her as Miss.

62. Massachusetts State Hospital, *53rd Annual Report of the Trustees of the State Hospital at Tewksbury*.



Jane R. Figgat's Gravestone

**Sue Madison Figgat** (Dec. 1874-1949), Nannie and Charlie's youngest daughter, moved to Roanoke in 1902. However, the "Misses Janie and Sue Figgat" were named among the guests on Jan. 9, 1898 at the "charming afternoon tea" given by Miss Mary Lorraine, according to the *Roanoke Times*. Sue did not marry and her occupation is only listed in the 1918 RCD when she was a Red Cross nurse. She moved out of the Day Avenue house with Jane and Sandy to 1118 1st Street Southwest in time for the 1923 directory listing.

The Roanoke City Courthouse Clerk's Office documents that Sue M. Figgat provided a testimonial for her brother Sandy's will on Sept. 18, 1946, while residing at 109 Walnut Avenue Southeast. She died in 1949 and is buried with her family in the Godwin Cemetery next to the Fincastle Methodist Church though her gravestone is nearly illegible.



Sue M. Figgat's Gravestone

**Miles Floyd Figgat** (June 1879-1927), the youngest child of Charlie and Nannie, moved into the Day Avenue house in Roanoke in 1900 when he was 21 years old. Like his brothers, he worked for the Norfolk and Western Railroad. The RCDs listed him as a clerk, travel freight

agent, and chief clerk. The Aug. 30, 1902, *Roanoke Times* documented that "Mr. Miles Floyd Figgat of Roanoke" had visited friends in Salem the day before. He was no longer listed in the RCDs after 1912. He died in 1927 at the age of 48 and was buried in the Godwin Cemetery in Fincastle. There is a stained glass window at St. John's Episcopal Church in Roanoke, which his siblings dedicated to Miles and their mother. (See Color Illustrations)



Miles F. Figgat's Gravestone



Godwin Cemetery next to the Methodist Church



Nannie died in 1919 and was buried in the Godwin Cemetery with her children, except Godwin, and her parents and siblings. She was an exemplary woman of her time. A quote of Mrs. Husted about Mary Randolph of Virginia fits Nannie also: "Her intrinsic worth needs no eulogium" though her children made sure that there was a lasting remembrance of their regard for her in a stained glass window in Roanoke's St. John's Episcopal Church. (see Color Illustrations)



Nannie Figgat's Gravestone

### Conclusion

“History has shown that even famous families ... have triumphs, misfortunes, and scandal,” wrote Jonathan Daniels in his 1972 book, *The Randolphs of Virginia*.<sup>63</sup> In spite of the scandal Charlie caused, the Figgats and the Godwins of Fincastle left a rich legacy to the town and to Botetourt County. Throughout their lives, Nannie’s and Charlie’s fathers were important Fincastle professionals, as were their sons, Thomas J. Godwin, Robert Kyle Godwin, James Godwin, Dr. Isaac Robinson Godwin, and James H. H. Figgat, Dr. William Figgat, and Robert Figgat. Both Nannie’s and Charlie’s fathers were leaders beginning in the early 1830s, for example, participating in the organization of the Farmer’s Bank, which is still in business as the Bank of Fincastle. Later both fathers had sons employed by the same bank – James H. H. Figgat, Robert Kyle Godwin, and James Godwin. James H. H. Figgat was a Civil War hero, an attorney, a legislative delegate, as well as a president of the Bank of Fincastle. The Godwin and Figgat families contributed to Fincastle and Botetourt County as community leaders in business, education, banking, medicine, government, and the church.

Nannie [pictured], in her early sixties, made Roanoke her home with her adult children. The older sons followed briefly in their maternal grandfather’s footsteps, becoming merchants; later they were clerks with the railroad. The daughters served the community as a librarian and as nurses.

The Figgats in Roanoke were a well-adjusted and socially accepted family. Nannie’s adult children were active in the community, and both Godwin and his son, William, married Roanoke natives. All were members of St. John’s Episcopal Church. Clare White, in her history of the church, wrote:

The congregation was made up of the scions of the Roanoke Valley’s planter elite and business and professional men (and their wives) from outside the area, was in turn the particular product of the urbanization of Roanoke, the dominant

city of the region from the late nineteenth century to the present.<sup>64</sup>

From the beginning to the end of our story, there is no doubt that Nannie is the heroine. She held strong religious convictions throughout her life, which she clearly demonstrated during the war and her personal hardships. Her writing showed empathy for her friends and her community in troubled times and deep affection for her parents, Charlie, and her children.

Nannie preserved the family history largely through her letters and diary. She also gave us a glimpse of her family’s culinary history, especially in her hand-written recipe book but also in notes in her letters and diary. The transcriptions of her letters and diary follow immediately, then her recipes and her mother’s.

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63. Daniels, *Randolphs of Virginia*, p. 98.

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64. White, *St. John’s Episcopal Church*, p. 185..