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Orphans, White Unity, and the Charleston Orphan House, 1860-1870

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Digital Object Identifier: https://doi.org/10.13023/etd.2023.485

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ORPHANS, WHITE UNITY, AND THE CHARLESTON ORPHAN HOUSE, 1860-1870

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DISSERTATION
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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By
Ruth Poe White
Lexington, Kentucky
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2023

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

ORPHANS, WHITE UNITY, AND THE CHARLESTON ORPHAN HOUSE, 1860-1870

This dissertation explores the ways the Charleston Orphan House, a nineteenth-century whites-only benevolent institution, promoted white unity in South Carolina between 1860 and 1870. Just as it had during the antebellum era, the Orphan Home knit together white society by providing poor white families a source of social security, middling white families a source for cheap labor in the form of indentured service, and elite whites an opportunity to display social prominence. Yet, maintaining this delicate balance throughout the siege of Charleston and the Home's eventual evacuation to Orangeburg, South Carolina was no easy feat. The Chairman of the Board of Commissioners Henry Alexander DeSaussure and the Principal of the Home's School Agnes K. Irving played crucial roles in maintaining daily operations.

After the war, the institution returned to Charleston, but re-establishing its central role in white society only became more important. In a state where Black freedmen and women far outnumbered white South Carolinians, political and social control of the state and of the city was in flux. Indeed, the U.S. Army, including Black soldiers of the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts had even maintained camps on the Orphan House grounds until the children returned to the city. In this climate, as historians have shown, overt violence against Black people, political tampering, and maintaining white unity became crucial tools in the fight to preserve white supremacy. The last of these tools, white unity, has not been fully explored, and yet this is one of the reasons that the Orphan House commissioners admitted their peak numbers of children in the years immediately following the Civil War.

Ironically, however, just as the Charleston Orphan House played a pivotal role in maintaining white hegemony, its staff and children sometimes upended the social order within the institution. Most notably, New York-born Principal Agnes K. Irving increasingly took over managing all aspects of daily life within the Home, including the duties of the steward and matron. In this way, a northern woman became the single-most important person in a southern patriarchal institution, although her position did sometimes lead to conflict with other female staff members. Then, the children themselves had a surprising level of agency, able to negotiate how they left the

institution and in what indentureships they entered. Some orphans eventually became respected members of society, and, just as the Orphan House commissioners had hoped, most of them seemed devoted to white supremacy, although some were embittered by the Confederacy.

In this way, the Charleston Orphan House offers a unique window into nineteenth-century white society. The board of commissioners kept detailed minutes of their meetings, and they engaged in thorough written investigations of in-house conflicts. They also maintained files on the children admitted into the institution, including applications and letters requesting admission and requests for children to be released or indentured. Commissioners who visited the applicants' homes also left notes about their observations, which combined with the application letters offer an opportunity to study poor whites in this period. Some letters even came from former Orphan House wards. Equally important, the Home's physician Dr. William Harleston Huger, left a journal that includes weekly notes on the general health of the institution and of special cases under his care. Other sources used in this study include nineteenth-century newspapers and records of the Charleston City Council.

In exploring the perspectives of the three groups most directly connected to the Orphan Home – the commissioners and staff, mothers of institutionalized orphans, and the Home's children, this dissertation makes three arguments. First, just as it had during the antebellum era, the Charleston Orphan House helped forge white unity, by actively suppressing cross-racial connections and by encouraging poor white allegiance to their elites. Secondly, most of the poor white mothers who applied for their children to enter the Home were committed to traditional patriarchal values and used the Home as one method for regaining the promises of patriarchal protection. Finally, despite the expectations of their parents and of the commissioners and staff of the Orphan House, orphans used the resources at their disposal to shape their lives, especially during the Civil War. In the midst of the deadliest war in American History, the end of slavery, overt racial violence, and Reconstruction-era politics, my dissertation explores the ways elite white Charlestonians saw benevolence, poor whites, and white children and how those views fit into the greater struggle for white supremacy.

KEYWORDS: Orphans, Children, Poor Whites, Nineteenth-Century Healthcare, White Supremacy, Civil War Era and Reconstruction

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11/21/2023
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ORPHANS, WHITE UNITY, AND THE CHARLESTON ORPHAN HOUSE, 1860-1870

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11/21/2023
                Date

DEDICATION

For Elias and Ezra, my boys, who taught me what it meant to be a mom
and who reminded me what it was like to be a child.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation owes a debt of gratitude to a community of individuals without whom this project would not have been possible. First and foremost, my advisor Dr. Amy Murrell Taylor read every chapter multiple times, perceptively pushing me to sharpen my conclusions. At a pivotal point, she also offered shrewd guidance about narrowing my scope to the Charleston Orphan House. Her generosity with her time and her patience with me as I juggled teaching, research, and parenting responsibilities offer a model in mentorship, and her own research has pushed me to excel as an investigator. This dissertation would not have reached fruition without her support.

I also want to thank the other members of my committee, who offered a thriving intellectual community. Dr. Mark Summers, whose boundless knowledge on early American history and especially Reconstruction is an inspiration. His seminars and his expertise transformed the way I research and expanded my understanding of the period. Equally important, Dr. Erik Myrup's passion for history and his salient question, "where is the story?" drove much of the research and writing in this project. I hope many stories of children, mothers, and Orphan House staff resonate with readers. I also want to thank Dr. Andy Doolen, whose English seminar challenged me to more closely consider the specific language in my sources and to look beyond the traditional tools of the historian. Dr. Doolen also graciously allowed me to write a research paper on Horatio Alger's 1867 *Ragged Dick.* Although this children's novel and its setting in New York City did not feature in this dissertation, that research gave me an early opportunity

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INTRODUCTION. THE CHARLESTON ORPHAN HOUSE, 1860-1870

On Thursday, October 18, 1860, the Charleston Orphan House celebrated its seventy-first anniversary. Reflecting on this momentous occasion, one orphan named James Moore gave an official "salutatory," hailing the city of Charleston for adopting "as her own, the poor and forsaken orphans of the city, and gather[ing] them for all time within the merciful arms of her love and protection."[1] The protected children Moore described had been – and would continue to be – exclusively white and were a crucial cog in the society that elite whites created and wanted to maintain. Indeed, the orphan home served two primary purposes. First, it helped unite white society across class lines, with elite white benevolence promising to better the lives of poor white families. Secondly, it very practically prepared children "for usefulness in life."[2] Without timely intervention, the argument went, these poor white children would become permanent dependents on the city, rather than contributing members of society.

Willie Emlyn, another orphan boy who spoke at the same anniversary celebration, echoed this sentiment when he praised the city of Charleston as one of the great cities in history. He argued that a man's duty was to "subdue the forest, and conquer the wilderness, and dig, and sow, and reap, that man may live. So also, intelligent human labor must plan the thoroughfares and build the dwellings, and pursue the arts, and ply the trades of cities."[3] The purpose of men like him, in other

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[1] "Order of Exercises for the Celebration of the Seventy-first Anniversary of the Charleston Orphan House," October 18, 1860, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[2] Charleston City Council Meeting Minutes, December 3, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[3] "Order of Exercises for the Celebration of the Seventy-first Anniversary."

words, was to work, and in this case – to work for Charleston. As a result, elite whites in Charleston confidently ranked this institution as one of the city's most important and most worthy of pride, having served roughly two thousand poor children by 1860.[4]

The institution's centrality to life in nineteenth-century Charleston and its connection to poor white Southerners make the Charleston Orphan House and its history a window into the cross-class relationships between poor and elite whites in South Carolina between 1860 and 1870, and the way that race shaped those relationships. How the institution addressed the rising needs of poor white orphans in this period offers a lens into local politics, class relations, and the struggle for white supremacy in the South throughout the Civil War and first half of Reconstruction. This is especially important given South Carolina's unique role as the first state to secede from the Union – and its cities' prominent role in modeling what Confederate institutions would emerge, or how they would evolve. This dissertation will explore the Home's goals between 1860 and 1870, its relationship to race and white supremacy, and how poor white women and children incorporated the Home into their own lives.

By the outbreak of the Civil War, the Charleston Orphan House, the oldest municipal orphan house in the United States, had been in operation for seventy years. In 1790, the city of Charleston had passed an ordinance establishing the institution, and by 1794 the Charleston Orphan House, as it became known, opened on the corner of Calhoun and St. Phillip Streets in service to the city's poorest white children, explicitly

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[4] Barbara Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders: Assisting the Poor in Charleston, 1670-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993).

setting these orphans apart from their Black counterparts. In practice, most of these "orphans" were half-orphans, children whose fathers had died or were severely infirmed. Mothers were frequently destitute but still alive.[5] In this way, the Home provided shelter, improved medical care and nutrition, and educational opportunities that such children were unlikely to obtain outside of the institution. This also granted white orphans opportunities that were denied to Black children, and it served the city by minimizing the number of children entering the adult world dependent on the city – and the Orphan Home's sister institution, the Alms House – for social welfare.

The Orphan House stood as a beacon of elite white wealth and benevolence, uniting poor whites and elites, while also symbolizing the city's status as one of the great cities of the nation. The city council, combined with generous private donations, funded the institution, while elite white men elected by the city council to serve on the Home's Board of Commissioners maintained supreme authority. Modernized and wealthy, Charlestonians believed that they had created a model for white unity: Elite whites supported and ran the institution; middling merchant, artisans, and farmers found compliant, educated apprentices; and poor whites found necessary care for their children.

As residents of the "cradle of secession," Civil War-era Charlestonians were also hyper-aware of the Black majority in the state and of the nation's eyes on them. Images

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[5] For more this nineteenth-century reality surrounding institutionalized "orphans," see, Timothy A. Hacsi, *Second Home: Orphan Asylums and Poor Families in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); and John E. Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House: Children's Lives in the First Public Orphanage in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

of benevolent whiteness helped shield them against accusations of being archaic in their

reliance on slavery and in driving the city, and the South, into secession.[6] As part of the

federal government's plan for Reconstruction, Charleston also became the seat of the

de-facto government of both the Carolinas, or the Second Military District, with Major

General Daniel Sickles and later Major General R. S. Canby at the helm. The U.S.

government's primary concern was with the loyalty of white Southerners and the

protection of the rights of freedmen, both of which outraged white Charlestonians.[7] In

this climate of tense divisions between white Southerners, U.S. soldiers, and Black

freedmen, the Orphan House stood as an idyllic symbol of elite white Southern

superiority, where the children of deceased poor white Charlestonians could find

succor. This belief maintained, in contrast, that Northern asylums had failed to protect

their wards, while Black families were unable to provide for their children, even with

federal protections.

Charlestonians began invoking the Home as a way to raise themselves above

northern locales, where their society and their culture seemed superior to that of the

North's, even without slavery. In its remarks on the asylums in Pennsylvania, for

instance, the Charleston *Daily News* reported that "horrible stories are told of the

treatment of orphans . . . and the most disgusting stories are told of the filthy state of

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[6] For a close examination of benevolence in Charleston and of its connection to the city's image, see Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders.*

[7] Michael Brem Bonner and Fritz Hamer, eds., *South Carolina in the Civil War and Reconstruction: Essays from the Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2016); Walter J. Fraser, Jr., *Charleston! Charleston!: The History of a Southern City* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989); Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders*; and Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

the accommodations."[8] Stories of Charleston's "noble institution" and its wards instead claimed it to be "one of the finest and best institutions on the continent."[9] Commentators marveled at the architecture, grounds, benevolent enterprise, and the orphans' discipline, and the home became one of the most popular sites to visit in Charleston, just as it had been before the war but with a new, culturally-based and competitive North-South tinge that outlasted the military conflict.

Indeed, that cultural war, and the Home's role in it, had begun before the war, as visitors abounded from throughout the United States and even abroad. In January 1860 alone, visitors hailed from Florida, Virginia, California, Savannah, New Orleans, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Maryland, and Massachusetts. International visitors included Reverend and Mrs. Jonathan Payne of Cape Palmas, West Africa, B. N. Pycock of London, England, and Scotsman David A. Pearson. One visitor later in the year even claimed Australia. In their remarks in the Register of Visitors, such visitors wrote, "delighted," "very much pleased," or called the institution "a beautiful place" and "worthy of the state & of the world."[10]

During the war, visiting rates naturally dropped, and most guests beyond 1862 were South Carolina natives or citizens of nearby states like Georgia. However, the Home's most distinctive wartime visitors included General Robert E. Lee, who signed the visitor log book on March 5, 1864, and then again April 26, 1870, within less than a year

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[8] "Orphan Asylum in Orangeville and orphans at the Guard College," *The Charleston Daily News,* November 8, 1867.

[9] "Places of Note in the City," *The Charleston Daily News,* February 16, 1870.

[10] For examples, see Sam Barnete and B. W. Pearce, Register of Visitors, 1854-1911, April 25 and 26, 1860, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

of his death. "Gen stone-Wall, Jackson Mar 5, 1860" also appears in the margins of one

page although the date appears to be inaccurate considering this preceded the First

Battle of Manassas when Jackson acquired his nickname. Confederate general Pierre

Gustave Toutant-Beauregard also visited in November 1862, when he wrote that he was

"both surprised & delighted at the success of this Institution, which does so much honor

to those who founded it, & so much credit to those who have charge of it."[11]

Confederate officers clearly saw the Home as an important symbol of the potential for

benevolence in the South, and that message only became more important after the war.

By January 1866, English and Scottish guests once again joined tourists from

Massachusetts, New York, Tennessee, Arkansas, Florida, Maryland, Georgia, San

Francisco, and Philadelphia.[12] The Orphan Home was a subject of interest and curiosity

to those outside the South, making it a point of sectional pride during a period of

divisiveness.

       Locally, the Charleston Orphan House was also central to providing for the

economic needs of the city. With a population of just over 70,000 in 1860, reliance on a

laboring class of poor whites was an inevitable, necessary reality. This class provided the

manual labor necessary in an antebellum urban society, including dredging the harbor

and building streets or working as seamstresses and domestics for elite whites opting

for wage over enslaved labor. As historian Seth Rockman explains, these positions

meant lifelong, hard manual labor for low wages and with no guarantees of continued

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[11] G. T. Beauregard, November 12, 1862, Register of Visitors.
[12] Register of Visitors, 1860-1870.

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employment. The poor often took on multiple positions just to subsist, even though

they were also crucial in sustaining an antebellum city.[13] In practice, this reality also

ensured that some laborers, crippled by injuries, sickness, a death in the family, or even

a large family with several children, could not subsist. The Civil War only compounded

this reality, so that in the years afterwards, some desperate orphan children asked to

enter the institution themselves, offering a powerful example of their ongoing attempts

to exert some control over their marginalized lives. In February 1866, when a

commissioner visited ten-year-old Walter Ryan upon receiving his aunt's application, he

concluded that Walter was "a bright lad and begs to be taken into the Orphan House. He

says he has no father and is afraid he will never see his mother who left him before he

was old enough to know her."[14] The boy must have been relieved when the

commissioners agreed to his admission.

Although private orphanages also operated in Charleston, the Orphan House was

distinctive from these in that it catered to all white Charlestonian children. For example,

two Catholic Orphan Asylums (one male and one female), run by the Sisters of Our Lady

of Mercy, primarily catered to Catholic children, although they did receive a small

annual stipend from the city council in support of these efforts.[15] In South Carolina but

also all over the U.S., the Civil War also accelerated the emergence of institutions for

orphans. In response to emancipation, for example, the Freedmen's Bureau opened a

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[13] Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

[14] Application for Admission for Walter Ryan, February 8, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[15] "The Catholic Orphan Asylums," *Charleston Daily News,* February 15, 1869.

"colored Orphan Asylum" for Black children in South Carolina.[16] Then, in January 1867,

the governor of North Carolina Jonathan Worth praised the "noblest charity" in efforts

to open schools for the orphans of Confederate soldiers throughout the Carolinas.[17] The

Charleston Orphan House, although never specifically focused on Confederate children,

already had such a school in place.

The first of its kind, in many senses the Charleston Orphan House was unique. Its

commissioners envisioned themselves as benevolent patriarchs, whose job was to best-

approximate the ideal family life. They also wanted to make clear distinctions between

their wards and Black slaves, eschewing, for example, corporal punishment in part for

this reason. This ensured that race was the singular most important element shaping

this Home's unique character. Poverty – and the need for orphanages – was a national

issue. Conversely, slavery and the defense of it was increasingly and distinctly Southern.

But the combination of a wealthy urban city and the slavery issue ensured that the

Orphan Home offered a vision of racial superiority. Slaves, often donated to the Home

but occasionally purchased or born at the institution, completed the most grinding

household and groundskeeping duties, including the scrubbing, hauling, lifting and

digging. They were never classified or treated as institutionalized orphans. Upon

entrance, all accepted children were also scrutinized for whiteness, and children with

darker, "mulatto" skin were refused admission. This process reinforced the idea that this

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[16] "Report of General R. K. Scott: The Freedmen in South Carolina," *Charleston Daily News,* December 28, 1867.

[17] "Schools in North and South Carolina for the Orphans of Confederate Soldiers," *Charleston Mercury,* January 17, 1867.

institutional privilege – and the educational opportunities it promised – were a racial

advantage, making the white poor more like their wealthy counterparts.[18]

This dissertation is deeply reliant on the work of other historians, and scholars

have not ignored the Charleston Orphan House or its unique window into the past. John

Murray offers a sweeping study of the Home from its genesis in 1790 until 1860, while

Barbara Bellows's *Benevolence Among Slaveholders* dedicates a full chapter to the

Home, offering thoughtful analysis into the commissioners.[19] Together, the two authors

persuasively show the ways the Orphan House was fundamentally conservative, overtly

designed to help conserve the social and racial order. This included, as Felice F. Knight's

unpublished dissertation shows, slavery, numbered at more than 100 slaves who

worked in domestic labor on the grounds or within the Home up to the outbreak of the

Civil War when records of slaves trickled off.[20]

However, all of these studies end at 1860, and none of them extend their

assessments into the war or Reconstruction. The only study to address the Charleston

Orphan House over the course of the Civil War is Newton B. Jones's article "The

Charleston, Orphan House, 1860-1876." As Jones explains, despite facing serious supply

chain and disciplinary issues during the war, after 1865 the commissioners were able to

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[18] Bellows, Benevolence Among Slaveholders; and Felice F. Knight, "Slavery and the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1860," PhD diss. (The Ohio State University, 2013).

[19] Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders.* Less analytically driven, Susan King and Wylma Anne Wates also provide windows into the Orphan Home, with particular emphasis on admissions dates and records on those admissions. See, Susan L. King, *History and Records of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1899,* 2 vols. (1984; reis., Greenville, SC: Southern Historical Press, 2019); and Wylma Anne Wates, "Charleston Orphans, 1790-1795," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 78, no. 4 (October 1977): 321-339.

[20] Knight, "Slavery and the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1860."

rebuild the Home's reputation for success and financial efficiency. In this way, Jones

provides a foundation for further exploration into this period. This dissertation more

fully explores the commissioners' motivations and adds the perceptions of the children

and their families. This is especially important in the decade between 1860 and 1870

when massive war-induced casualties, emancipation, and the 14th Amendment upended

the antebellum social and racial order.

Because of their centrality to this dissertation, this study is also dependent on

scholars who have discussed orphans during the Civil War and Reconstruction. The

death toll alone – an estimated 750,000 soldiers – ensured that orphans increasingly

took center stage in the public imagination, with newspaper entries like "Atlanta has

155 widows, and 294 orphans of Confederate soldiers."[21] Historians like Catherine Jones

show that nation-wide debates erupted over how to respond, especially in cities with

the greatest population growth and displacement, like Richmond but also Charleston.

These debates considered whether such children were criminals and dangerous to

society and in need of control, or if they were pitiable victims of the war in need of

protection. In turn, popular literature, like the beloved author Horatio Alger's 1868

Ragged Dick which featured an orphan hero, implicitly called on readers to support poor

children.[22] Orphans became particular targets for aid. Nevertheless, no single book-

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[21] "Georgia Items," *The Charleston Daily News,* February 14, 1867. The estimate of 750, 000 dead soldiers is from J. David Hacker, "A Census-Based Count of the Civil War Dead," *Civil War History* 57, no. 4 (December 2011): 307-348. For work on Orphan Homes in the United States and the increase after the Civil War, see, Hacsi, *Second Home*; and Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1992).

[22] Catherine A. Jones, *Intimate Reconstructions: Children in Postemancipation Virginia* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2015). For additional work that explores wartime orphans, see Sarah D. Bair, "Making Good on a Promise: The Education of Civil War Orphans in

length study of Civil War orphans exists. Indeed, in order to understand the evolution of

social welfare policy, scholars including Timothy Hacsi and Theda Skocpol have focused

on orphan homes and other institutions in the years before or after the war, while

scholars such as Sarah D. Bair, Mary Niall Mitchell, Catherine A. Jones, and Judith

Giesberg have touched briefly on Civil War orphans in articles or individual chapters.[23]

For that reason, this project builds on the nineteenth century orphan historiography,

but it also relies on the work of scholars interested in Civil War children and poor whites

more broadly.

Scholars have only recently turned to studying children during the Civil War era.

Most notably, the preeminent overview on how the war entered into the lives of boys

and girls of both regions is James Marten's *The Children's Civil War*.[24] Marten argues

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Pennsylvania, 1863-1893. *History of Education Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (2011): 460-485; Judith Geisberg, "Orphans and Indians: Pennsylvania's Soldiers' Orphan Schools and the Landscape of Postwar Childhood," in *Children and Youth During the Civil War Era,* ed. by James Marten (New York: New York University Press, 2012); and Horatio Alger Jr., *Ragged Dick or Street Life in New York,* edited by Carl Bode (New York: Penguin Books, 1985). *Ragged Dick* received extensive praise from people of all ages both in its initial publication in serial format in the nineteenth-century periodical *Student and Schoolmate* and in its novel form (published by A.K. Loring). It had wide readership. Gary Scharnhorst and Jack Bales, *Horatio Alger, Jr.: An Annotated Bibliography of Comment and Criticism* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1981); and Ralph D. Gardner, *Horatio Alger, or The American Hero Era* (Mendota, IL: The Wayside Press, 1964).

[23] Hacsi, *Second Home;* Mary Niall Mitchell, "'Free Ourselves, but Deprived of our Children': Freedchildren and Their Labor after the Civil War," in *Children and Youth During the Civil War Era,* edited by James Marten (New York: New York University Press, 2012): 160-177; Catherine A. Jones, "Reconstructing Social Obligation: White Orphan Asylums in Post-emancipation Richmond," in *Children and Youth During the Civil War Era,* edited by James Marten (New York: New York University Press, 2012): 173-187; and Jones, *Intimate Reconstructions*. See also, Elna Green, ed., *Before the New Deal: Social Welfare in the South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999). Geisberg and Bair, in turn, focus on white Civil War orphan homes in Pennsylvania, the state which established more soldiers' Orphan Schools than any other after the war. See, Judith Geisberg, "Orphans and Indians;" and Bair, "Making Good on a Promise." Yet, the focus of these studies is on Reconstruction politics and emancipation, rather than cultural ideas about the *Confederate* orphan over the course of the Civil War.

[24] James Marten, *The Children's Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). For a less interpretative and more anecdotal discussion of children in both regions, see Emmy E. Werner, *Reluctant Witnesses: Children's Voices from the Civil War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998). See also, James Marten, *Children for the Union: The War Sprit on the Northern Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004).

that the war politicized children, making them utterly committed to their countries' war efforts, while Edmund Drago's *Confederate Phoenix* suggests that the war had its most powerful effects on white southern children. These children became central to the way white South Carolinians remembered the Civil War, creating a legacy of racial hate that persisted well into the Civil Rights Movement.[25] Neither Marten nor Drago, however, isolate poor orphans, the white children who perhaps lost the most over the course of the war. And an urgent question surrounds them: Would the children who lost the most be those *most* politicized by the war – or most embittered?

In exploring these children, this project also contributes to the historiography that explores poor whites in the nineteenth century. Seth Rockman's *Scraping By* and Max Grivno's *Gleanings of Freedom* examine the relationship between employers and laborers in urban and rural Maryland*.* They show that middling and elite whites relied on a mixture of free Black and poor white laborers in addition to enslaved workers (either rented or owned), always in an effort to ensure their own economic prosperity. Employers consistently exploited the laboring class – both free and unfree.[26] But as both scholars also show, laborers developed strategies for survival, including cultivating cross-racial relationships that were fraught with tension.[27] Indeed, scholars like

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[25] Marten, *The Children's Civil War;* and Edmund Drago, *Confederate Phoenix: Rebel Children and their Families in South Carolina* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008) 16. For more work on Southern children during the war, see, Anya Jabour, *Topsy-Turvy: How the Civil War Turned the World Upside Down for Southern Children* (Chicago: Ivan r. Dee, 2010).

[26] Rockman, *Scraping By*; and Max Grivno, *Gleanings of Freedom: Free and Slave Labor along the Mason-Dixon Line, 1790-1860* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2011)*,* 3.

[27] For additional works addressing the social and economic relationships between poor whites and slaves, see Timothy James Lockley, *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia, 1750-1860* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001); Jeff Forret, *Race Relations at the Margins: Slaves and Poor Whites in the Antebellum Countryside* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006); and

Stephanie McCurry show that elite whites emphasized this racial barrier, intentionally

cultivating divisions between slaves and poor whites who would otherwise have much in

common.[28] Discouraging cross-racial unity was especially important in an area where

slaves far outnumbered white nonslaveholders and slaveholders combined, like the

South Carolina low country.

Scholars looking beyond the antebellum era have also explored the ways elite

whites forged white cross-class unity, especially in South Carolina. Richard Zuczek's

State of Rebellion, in particular, focuses on the ways conservatives used political

tampering, violence, and white unity to overturn Republican control and the Black

majority with the "revolution of 1876." In his view, between 1865 and 1877 white

conservatives knew the struggle for white supremacy was far from over so that "in the

end, Reconstruction did not fail; it was defeated."[29] Central to that success was mass

support among the white population. Although this aspect goes beyond the purview of

Zuczek's work, Catherine Jones's *Intimate Reconstructions* suggests the ways in which

children became central to debates surrounding emancipation, Reconstruction, and the

Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[28] Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[29] Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 210. See also, Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988); and Laylan Wayne Jordan, "The New Regime: Race, Politics, and Police in Reconstruction Charleston, 1865-1875," (1994) in *South Carolina in the Civil War and Reconstruction: Essays from the Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association,* edited by Michael Brem Bonner and Fritz Hamer (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2016).

struggle for white supremacy, helping unify a white southern populace that could have

been divided by economic differences. [30]

Scholars have also shown, however, that racial control centered around women.

Historians including Drew Gilpin Faust, Catherine Clinton, Anne Sarah Rubin, Lisa

Cardyn, and Hannah Rosen discuss the ways white women limited transformations in

the gender order, where discussions of "disorderly women" became tools for controlling

the behavior of white women and for terrorizing Black women.[31] During the Civil War,

Stephanie McCurry's *Confederate Reckoning* highlights the Bread Riots in places like

Richmond as evidence of poor Confederate women's political activism and their claims

to the traditional patriarchal order.[32] Yet, the ways poor white women appealed to

public social welfare institutions during the war and embraced – or questioned – the

patriarchal order during the Civil War has not been fully explored.[33]

In that sense, the records of the commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House

offer a rare opportunity to explore the lives of poor whites during the Civil War and

[30] Jones, *Intimate Reconstructions.* See also, Jones, "Reconstructing Social Obligation." For more work on the fight to control the labor of Black children after the Civil War, see, Mitchell, "'Free Ourselves, but Deprived of our Children;'" and Green, ed., *Before the New Deal.*

[31] Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Catherine Clinton, "'Public Women' and Sexual Politics During the American Civil War," in *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War,* ed. by Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (Oxford University Press, 2006): 61-77; Anne Sarah Rubin, "Politics and Petticoats in the Same Pod: Florence Fay, Betsey Bittersweet, and the Reconstruction of Southern Womanhood, 1865-1868," in *Battle Scars,* ed. by Clinton and Silber: 168-188; Lisa Cardyn, "Sexual Terror in the Reconstruction South," in *Battle Scars,* ed. by Clinton and Silber: 140-167; and Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

[32] Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[33] A notable exception to this is Victoria Bynum's *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

Reconstruction. Applications often included specific notes or correspondence detailing orphans and their families' circumstances. Because the commissioners required adults to apply to remove children as well, additional correspondence from mothers, family members, potential apprenticeship masters, and other interested parties offer further windows into the lives of the poor and of poor children, especially their mothers. Sometimes, the orphans themselves penned additional notes or entire letters to the commissioners and staff of the Home, which offer an unusual chance to examine the perspective of poor children, although many of these children were older. Orphan voices also appeared occasionally in anniversary speeches or in public declarations of thanks, which newspapers like the *Charleston Daily News* published. Census records, certificates of death, and occasionally marriage certificates also help flesh out the lives of the poor families in Charleston.

In addition, the board maintained an index, noting the child's name, the year, the adult applicant's name and relationship to the orphan, and the type of application, including rejected applications and the occupation of apprenticeship masters when applicable.[34] Although the information in it is not all-inclusive due to poor documentation during the war, this catalog is crucial in providing quantitative, broad-spectrum views of the Orphan Home.

Equally important are the records of the commissioners and staff themselves. The board's meeting minutes offer one of the clearest views of the many issues the

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[34] *Charleston Orphan House Index, 1796-1929,* Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library, https://www.ccpl.org/charleston-orphan-house-index-1796-1929.

commissioners faced between 1860-1870, including questions about admissions but also problems with staff, debates about evacuating, supply issues, updates about the children's education and behavior, and repairs in the Home. Additional correspondence to and from individual board members provide further and often more in-depth evidence. Unfortunately, the commissioners often did not address events happening more broadly in Charleston or in South Carolina, instead focusing exclusively on governing the institution. There is no question, however, that the broader context of the Civil War, military occupation, and Reconstruction had direct implications on the Home. Filling in these gaps requires an examination of newspapers of the time and of the meeting minutes of the Charleston city council, which funded the Orphan Home. To some extent, the minutes of the commissioners of the Alms House, the Orphan Home's sister institution, are also helpful. In addition, the bound Physicians' Records, which are comprised of weekly reports on the general health of the Home and of some individual serious cases, act as a lens into nineteenth-century disease and medical care, especially when combined with the Home's admission applications.

The nature of these sources, however, ensures that Black families often recede into the background in this study in a way that is not historically accurate. The Charleston Orphan Home projected itself as an institution for white children alone, and it maintained that vision. But, it was also unquestionably reliant on Black labor. Enslaved people and likely Black servants after emancipation worked in and on the property itself, acting as a visual reminder to white orphans of the advantages of their whiteness. Charleston was also home to the second largest and wealthiest community of free Black

families, following only New Orleans, and South Carolina Blacks far outnumbered all white poor, middling, and elites combined. This reality ensured the Black families were an ever-present reality in daily life, and indeed, it was their enslaved labor – and the wealth elite whites procured through it – that ensured the Orphan Home opened and thrived throughout the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the institution was also oriented towards white families. It gave the elites opportunities for genuine or attention-garnering benevolence, the middling sort the chance to establish indenture contracts as masters, and the poor a source of social insurance when job opportunities, health, or social networks fell short. For that reason, this study focuses on those white perspectives but attempts to include Black men and women when possible.[35]

The chapters that follow are mostly thematic, although they are also as chronological as possible within that topical range. Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the perspectives of the commissioners, the elite white men who managed the Home, and their staff. Chapter 1 discusses the Home's daily operations, beginning in 1861, just before the Civil War began to disrupt this pattern. This chapter also includes an examination of the Home's estimable school principal, Agnes K. Irving and problems she faced with other female staff members especially after the war. Chapter 2 zooms in on how the commissioners addressed the war and Reconstruction, focusing more on events outside the Home that disrupted daily life within its walls, including the board's decision to evacuate all orphans and staff from Charleston to a former female seminary

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[35] The lives of those who remained enslaved in the Home in 1860 and at the conclusion of the war have been impossible to track, suggesting they left the Home when the war broke out or when the institution evacuated to Orangeburg in 1863.

in Orangeburg. From there, Chapter 3 offers a bridge between the elite whites who oversaw the Home and the poor mothers and children who relied on that benevolence by focusing on medical care in the Home and poor health in Charleston more generally. Dr. William Harleston Huger, the Home's physician in this period, is a focal point, as are the ailments that plagued the Home between 1860 and 1870, including smallpox, dengue fever, the "itch," and malnourishment, which the Civil War and military occupation exacerbated.

Although Chapter 3 offers one window into the lives of poor children, Chapters 4 and 5 shift entirely to the lives of the poor. Chapter 4 begins by highlighting the poor white women who at least attempted to send some or all of their children to the Orphan Home. It argues that like the elite white women Drew Gilpin Faust describes in *Mothers of Invention,* poor white Charlestonian women were determined to regain the protective embrace of paternalism, even after the war shattered the illusion of that shield. Confederate widows, those whose husbands died as a result of wartime sacrifice, are central to this discussion, but as this chapter also shows, that sacrifice was never the commissioners' primary concern, making non-war-related widows just as important to this study. Finally, Chapter 5 shifts from adults to the orphans themselves, showing the ways these children used the Orphan Home, its resources, and other adults to shape their own lives. Unquestionable dependents, orphans, particularly adolescents, nevertheless had agency, which their words (when available) and especially their actions make clear.

Poor white Charlestonian orphans lived lives influenced and shaped by three parties – a living parent, usually the mother or other relatives; the commissioners and staff of the Orphan Home and other charitable institutions; and the orphans themselves. Mothers, impressing upon the commissioners the expectations of what Stephanie McCurry termed the "soldiers' wife," envisioned the Orphan Home as a refuge but as a form of compensation for their husbands' wartime sacrifice.[36] For the commissioners, faced with a long history of applications from destitute, impoverished widows, singling out Confederate orphans as special was impractical, and it did not help them achieve their overarching goal – white supremacy. Preserving the status and power of white people had always been central to their objectives. Indeed, it and the fight to maintain control over Black southerners led elite white South Carolinians down the path to secession and war in the first place. That fight only transformed after the Civil War. In the Charleston Orphan Home, ostensibly father-like commissioners were engaged in a fight to maintain white unity and privilege, whereby white orphans and their mothers would remain loyal to elites in exchange for some genuine improvement in their daily lives even if it was marginal. In this way, the Orphan Home played a small but effective role in forging white unity, and by default in regaining white supremacy in Charleston, during the tumultuous period when it seemed most threatened.

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[36] McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning.*

CHAPTER 1. BENEVOLENT PATRIARCHS: DAILY OPERATIONS AND THE CHARLESTON

ORPHAN HOUSE COMMISSIONERS

On November 9, 1866, the chairman of the board of commissioners of the

Charleston Orphan House William Trenholm, submitted the annual report on education

in the Home. This lengthy, detailed report was the first in over three years due to the

Civil War and the institution's evacuation to Orangeburg with the start of shelling in

Charleston on August 20, 1863. It reflected the commissioners' anxieties about the war,

the orphans, and especially the institution's reputation. Trenholm pointed to a "striking

illustration of the neglect of education during the war," in which many of the children of

apprenticeship age were illiterate. Rather than place them all on the binding-out list,

however, he recommended the board not add any additional names at all and keep the

orphans at the Home and in school. In a telling explanation, he argued, "the reputation

of the House is clearly involved in the adherence to these limitations." In this anxiety-

laden report, Trenholm acknowledged the war's hand in creating this issue but also

feared that the public would blame the Orphan House staff and the "neglect of the

teachers" for the children's' lack of education and behavioral issues, thereby diminishing

"the public confidence in the value and efficiency" of the House.[37]

Trenholm's 1866 report outlined the anxieties and ambitions that the Orphan

House commissioners had long held. As elite white men of Charleston, with time and

money at their disposal, the commissioners saw themselves as benevolent patriarchs

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[37] W. Trenholm, Report from the Committee in Charge of the Orphan House School, November 9, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

whose job was not only to shelter orphan children but also to prepare them for productive lives beyond institutionalization through education, and they relished in the public's acclaim. As historians Barbara Bellows and John Murray argue regarding these men, of most importance to their reputations was the notion that their benevolence linked poor children and their poor white families to elite whites across class lines. Failure to promote this linkage meant leaving the poor to find solidarity in relationships with slaves or free Black people in Charleston.[38] Both Bellows and Murray end their studies in 1860; however, a close examination of the Orphan House records shows that the board maintained this sentiment throughout the Civil War, emancipation, Union occupation, and Reconstruction more generally, even at times prioritizing success in raising up poor white children above Black children over genuine patriarchal authority in the Home. At all turns, they sought to limit the children's exposure to the outside world, including their own relatives, Union soldiers, and even disobedient children, in order to control the dynamics of race and class. In this way, the commissioners' reputations as patriarchs hinged on their dual success. In ostensibly saving poor white children, in one fell swoop they stymied the number of poor whites needing future public support and helped control the racial dynamics in a state where Black people vastly outnumbered white people.

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[38] Barbara Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders: Assisting the Poor in Charleston, 1670-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993); and John E. Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House: Children's Lives in the First Public Orphanage in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

Back on April 4, 1861, just over one week before the firing on Fort Sumter, the

commissioners had updated the Orphan Home's official bylaws, codifying seventy-one

years of intentional, Charleston-serving benevolence. In the bylaws, they celebrated the

2,340 orphans they had served in that period, all of whom, they claimed, had entered

"useful employment," and provided a model for the remaining 334 children living in the

Orphan Home. They also praised the renovations of 1854 and acknowledged, both in

writing and in approving this document, the need for updated bylaws. The Home's

central aim, they wrote, was in "supporting and educating poor orphan children, and

those of poor distressed and disabled parents who are unable to support and maintain

them." The twelve commissioners, some of them the most prominent men in

Charleston, were elected annually by the city council and headed by a chairman elected

by the board itself. The commissioners had full authority and were responsible for

"maintenance, education, and clothing of the children."[39] Some of them served for

many years, including William C. Bee, Dr. James Moultrie, William H. Gilliland, William H.

Houston, and John H. Honour, who served throughout the duration of the Civil War.

Henry Cobia, who also served as president of the St. John's Lutheran Church vestry, and

James H. Murrell, joined them in 1863, along with several others in the post-war

period.[40]

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[39] Bylaws of the Orphan House of Charleston South Carolina, Revised and Adopted by the Board of Commissioners, April 4, 1861, Approved by the City Council, April 23, 1861, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library, 192.

[40] This list is based on a comparison between the official list noted in the commissioners' meeting minutes January 1861 and March 1866, which also notes the year each commissioner was originally elected. See, Minutes of the Board of Commissioners, January 3, 1861; and Minutes, March 1, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records,

These men took pride in their work with the institution, as it enveloped them in all the vestiges of patriarchal virtue. Their benevolence *publicly* lifted up hapless poor white children. This kind of public service enabled them to reach children otherwise untouchable and to build up their own reputations at the same time. They might all have related to commissioner James Tupper, who later wrote that "the institution is very dear to me; and I esteem it an honor to be associated with such men, in the administration of such a charity."[41] Tupper explicitly pointed to the motivations of men like him – a balance between genuine charity, care for stability in Charleston, and self-serving acclaim. To become a commissioner of the Orphan House was to reach a pinnacle of patriarchal achievement.

The most prominent of the men in this period was Henry Alexander DeSaussure, who until his death in December 9, 1865, maintained his position as chairman of the board. He had begun his tenure in June 1838. A father of six children of his own and member of one of the most prominent South Carolina families, by the time of his death, DeSaussure had served not just as chairman for almost thirty years but as a commissioner for forty years, longer than any other officer. When the Orphan Home temporarily relocated to Orangeburg, he took sole responsibility of admissions and of granting children to leave as apprentices or with a family member. This work made him the most important male leader in the institution during the war, and he left a

Charleston County Public Library. See also, "Proceedings of the City Council: Extra Meeting, *Charleston Daily News,* December 13, 1866.

[41] James Tupper to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, May 30, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

tremendous legacy for his successor William C. Bee to follow. Indeed, one of his most

enduring legacies was that DeSaussure successfully pushed through policies related to

the discipline of children, preferring counseling over corporal punishment, which would

have associated the orphans too closely with the enslaved. In practice, this policy also

differed from the commissioners' views of their northern counterparts, where whistles

and bells regulated daily activities and children were harshly punished.[42]

Tellingly, upon his death, the surviving members of the board concluded

DeSaussure had served, "in the most active, useful, and gracious manner," and they

"paid a tribute to the high character and invaluable service of the lamented deceased . .

. [a] prominent and distinguished citizen."[43] These comments encapsulated the vision

the commissioners held for all leaders in the Orphan Home, and they backed it up in

having the children of the Home attend the funeral in mass and in wearing black crepe

armbands indicative of mourning.[44] This public showing for a funeral was also unique.

When commissioners William Gilliland and Henry Cobia died on March 15, 1868, and

February 17, 1870, respectively, the board acknowledged both men's paternal

contributions to the Orphan Home in the *Charleston Daily News.* Gilliland's "zealous"

work and "earnest" devotion matched Cobia's "unvaried kindness and consideration."[45]

But, where DeSaussure's funeral procession rated the attendance of the entire

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[42] Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders.*

[43] Minutes, December 10, 1865.

[44] For more on DeSaussure and the commissioners more generally before 1860, see Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders.*

[45] "Tribute of Respect," *Charleston Daily News,* March 17, 1868*;* and "Tribute of Respect," *Charleston Daily News,* February 19, 1870*.* For more on Cobia, see, "Tribute by the Vestry of St. John's Lutheran Church, in Honor of the Memory of the Late Henry Cobia, Its President," *Charleston Daily News,* February 21, 1870.

institution, just fifty girls and fifty boys attended Gilliland's procession, while Cobia, who had been with the institution the shortest length of time, had none listed at all.

For most of the war, these men met for regular meetings every Thursday and for additional special meetings as needed. They also dispersed during the week into nine separate committees, each totaling at least three commissioners, which worked in various capacities to govern the Home. The Committee on Improvements and Discipline, for example, was in charge of noting necessary improvements for the building and grounds but also the children themselves. Here, the language describing the committee's role was telling. They were to see to "the comfort and health of the inmates of the house . . . [and] to see that a salutary discipline is enforced, and whenever possible by moral sanctions, gentle means, and affectionate motives . . . to make the institution in all its departments, a scene of cheerful and ready subordination of active and voluntary industry, and of physical, mental, and moral improvement."[46] Like the idealized nineteenth-century patriarch, the commissioners expected "ready subordination," but they actively eschewed any vestige of forced bondage. White orphans in their care were not enslaved; they were surrogate children, whose loyalty and dependence were a reward for paternal affection and a boon for class solidarity.

Other committees focused on retrenchment, monitoring and governing the school and teachers within the institution, examining financial accounts of the various books of the treasurer and steward, governing orphan removal and apprenticeships, purchasing supplies, organizing chapel and burial needs, and operating the institution's

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[46] 1861 Bylaws of the Orphan House of Charleston South Carolina, 195.

library, including a staffed librarian. All commissioners also worked in weekly rotations as the visiting commissioner, who was responsible for visiting applicants and the Home itself, where they actively monitored daily progress and met with all individual orphans when possible. They were invested "fathers." In terms of funding, the city council provided a public endowment fund, amounting $168,489.60 in 1861. The Home also relied on a private fund, that same year totaling $76,775.98, which the commissioners controlled in its entirety and used for the "personal comfort and adornment of the children and to the benefit of other members of the household."[47] When former orphan girls of the institution married, for instance, the commissioners authorized a dowry which they took from this private fund.

A steward, matron, and sewing mistress, along with assistant nurses and hired domestics, totaling thirty-nine individuals in 1861, took charge of daily care in-house. At that time, 360 children were under their care. All staff lived in the Home itself, and the steward even had rooms for his family. The steward, one of the only male staff members in the Home, was officially second only to the commissioners themselves in terms of control. Throughout the Civil War, this job rested on the shoulders of John S. Small, while J. F. Steinmeyer and later Charles A. DeSaussure took on the role in the years afterwards. Among the steward's responsibilities included giving "necessary encouragement to the practice of generosity, gentleness, honesty, health, and

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[47] 1861 Bylaws of the Orphan House Charleston South Carolina.

cleanliness of the inmates of the house," but the commissioners instructed him to limit

corporal punishment to only the most extreme cases.[48]

Typically, the steward's wife acted as the matron, who was the highest ranking

female staff member, responsible for managing all other female staff members and for

watching the children's "moral [education] and conduct." In practice, this work included

ensuring all children were uniformly clad in "washed, mended, and preserved" clothes

and helping select girls to work in the sewing room or to work as assistant teachers. The

nurses, under her supervision, were to "make kindness and gentleness the spirit of

discipline . . . which may go to make their [the children's] orphan home a happy one."[49]

The nurses were to "respect their [the orphans'] feelings," which the commissioners

believed would "prompt [them] to cheerful obedience."[50] Female staff members were

completely barred from using corporal punishment. These bylaws spoke to the

commissioners' expectations about female domesticity. Women in the Home were to be

"gentle." Any harsher discipline was under the purview of a male patriarch. This

language also intentionally dampened any vestiges of forced labor akin to slavery. Even

within the Orphan Home, white children had privileges based on race.

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[48] 1861 Bylaws of the Orphan House of Charleston South Carolina, 200. See also, Minutes, January 3, 1861; Minutes, January 3, 1867; "Proceedings of City Council: Thirty-Second Regular Meeting," *Charleston Daily News,* January 19, 1867; and "Proceedings of City Council: Regular Meeting," *Charleston Daily News,* April 11, 1868.

[49] 1861 Bylaws of the Orphan House of Charleston South Carolina, 201. See also, Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*

[50] 1861 Bylaws of the Orphan House of Charleston South Carolina, 203. See also, Newton B. Jones, "The Charleston Orphan House, 1860-1876," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 62, no. 4 (October 1961): 203-214.

As a powerful reminder of those privileges, the institution also owned and hired enslaved Black people through the outbreak of the war. Unfortunately, the commissioners did not discuss the number of enslaved people they owned or hired in 1860 and 1861 in their records. The reason for this absence, in part, is that the commissioners seem to have delegated much of their day-to-day operations of the Home by the late 1850s and 1860s. As this chapter will address later, the board had already ceded many of their responsibilities for running the Home's school to a new principal. And they entrusted the steward and matron with the enslaved workers and with daily activities in general, which allowed the commissioners to refocus their efforts on the managerial aspects of the Home, including how the institution would address the Civil War.

Slavery played a crucial role that "undergirded the domestic economy of the orphanage."[51] According to Felice Knight's study of the census and Orphan House records in this period, between 1790 and 1860, at least 100 enslaved persons worked as cooks, domestic servants, laundresses, and laborers on the grounds. The majority of these workers were women. In 1850, for example, of the fifteen enslaved workers, eleven were female and just four were male. Although the youngest female was nine years old, most of the women were also between the ages of twenty-two and fifty, prime ages for fulfilling the laborious obligations of cooking for the entire Home and laundering the institution's never-ending line-up of linens, tablecloths, and clothing of

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[51] Felice F. Knight, "Slavery and the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1860," PhD diss. (The Ohio State University, 2013), 105.

both staff and children. Enslaved servants were also responsible for the bulk of the

Home's cleaning needs, which was extensive especially before the 1850 renovations

when the Home lacked proper sewage facilities and left the children to make do in the

corners of rooms and outside in the yard.[52] These men and women performed the most

arduous and time-consuming tasks in the Home, including work that began and ended

while the Home's staff and orphans slept. Slaves were also subject to more frequent and

more violent whippings than the white orphans of the Home. In this way the

commissioners drew a stark, visible line between white workers and the dreary reality of

Black life in bondage that could not have gone unnoticed by the children.

Although some enslaved persons may have remained as domestic servants or

laborers on the grounds, however, by 1860, the commissioners appear to have begun

replacing what had traditionally been Black enslaved cooks and laundrywomen with

white servants. For example, the 1850 slave schedules of the census listed the Orphan

House as owning fifteen enslaved people between the ages of nine and sixty. By 1860,

however, the slave schedules did not note the Orphan House as owning any slaves at all,

although some of the commissioners owned slaves.[53] The commissioners' meeting

minutes in 1860 and 1861 also specifically referred to white women as the Home's

cooks and laundrywomen.[54] Although the board did not explain this switch, they may

have made this transition as a way of maintaining stability. As Felice Knight's work on

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[52] Knight's dissertation discusses the responsibilities in detail. For more, see, "Slavery and the Charleston Orphan House;" and Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*

[53] Chairman H.A. DeSaussure, for example, reported ten enslaved people on the 1860 Census Record. See 1850 and 1860 Charleston Census Records.

[54] See, Minutes, May 24, 1860 – November 20, 1860; and Knight, "Slavery and the Charleston Orphan House."

slavery in the Orphan House explains, many enslaved people in the Home had run away or proved such resistant workers that the antebellum commissioners frequently sold or dismissed them.[55] Life in an urban institution offered opportunities for slaves that rendered the commissioners' illusion of control a façade. This loss of authority, combined with the practical need for reliable cooks and laundrywomen, may have prompted the commissioners to begin hiring poor white women over people in bondage. They did not, however, make this switch as a form of altruism or as a sign that they no longer supported slavery. Nor did they likely stop using enslaved workers altogether until after the Civil War. Dr. William Huger's medical journal for the institution, for example, notes one Black servant who entered the hospital wards in April 6, 1866. Due to the 13th Amendment, this was a free hired worker but potentially one who had been a slave in the Home earlier.[56]

As an additional sign of the switch towards white laborers, by 1860, there was also a white sewing mistress who trained selected girls to use the sewing machine. Those girls, in turn, mended clothing for all children in the Home while gaining an education for their future domestic lives. At the same time, a spinning mistress instructed the girls in spinning yarn for new homespun material for uniforms, blankets, and other material needs. The girls who learned these skills became vital to Orphan House operations. Between June 1866 and June 1867, for instance, they produced 6,748 articles, including 412 dresses, 856 aprons, 838 undergarments, 567 boys' suits, 445

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[55]Knight, "Slavery and the Charleston Orphan House."
[56] Dr. W. H. Huger, *Physicians' Records,* April 6, 1866, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library.

shirts, 374 sheets, 820 pillow cases, fifty-five bed spreads, and twenty table cloths.[57]

Commissioners deemed these necessities crucial, and this education served as a central

way the Home prepared girls for marriage, which was the singular path commissioners

expected. However, the board also stressed the need for orphan girls to receive a formal

education in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

To balance these lessons, they hired women in the community and even older

orphan girls of age for an apprenticeship to supplement and, in the cases of the sewing

mistress and her personal assistant, teach the more complex aspects of sewing,

including cutting and fitting. M. H. Coughlin and Mary O. Dwyer, for instance, received

twelve dollars for work in the sewing room December 1866.[58] In this way, the board

fulfilled its labor needs in the Home and helped knit white Charleston together across

class lines. Poor white adult women could potentially find laundressing, sewing, or

domestic work in the Home, while poor orphan girls could master basic reading skills,

the ability to write their names, and sewing literacy. Ostensibly this knowledge gave

them better options than they had before entering the institution.

Following an expansion and modernization renovation in the 1850s, the

schematics of the Orphan Home came to encapsulate the commissioners' ideals.

Occupying nearly an entire city block on site of the old revolutionary barracks just north

of Calhoun Street and west of King Street, the Home was one of the most conspicuous

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[57] "Articles Made in Sewing Room from 1st of June 1866 to the 1st of June 1867," Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[58] Mr. Steinmeyer to M. H. Coughlin, December 3, 1866; and Mr. Steinmeyer to Mary Dwyer, December 24, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. See also, "Articles Made in Sewing Room."

buildings in Charleston. Builders designed it along the lines of the then-popular Italian

Style, including five stories that rendered it so well-known that local advertisements

used the building as a vantage point for identifying other addresses. "Opposite Orphan

House" became a common descriptor in advertisements.[59]

The layout helped commissioners maintain a well-ordered Home, and it actively

reinforced the gender divisions poor children would have to embrace as adults. The East

and West Wings separated girls and boys, including separate kitchens, dining rooms,

and a washroom with indoor plumbing on the ground floor. The "first" floor (which was

actually the second) included a reception room for visitors on the East side and the

steward's departments on the West, including three private bedrooms for him and his

family, a washroom with indoor plumbing, and a parlor. Such space gave the steward

not just privacy but spoke to his degree of authority in the Orphan Home, where in

terms of day-to-day operations, he was the patriarch of the institutional family.

Conveniently just beyond these rooms was the chamber for "high school" boys,

ensuring the group most inclined to rebellion and in need of correction was within the

steward's closest purview. Only for a short period at the end of 1860 following an influx

of female orphans, did the commissioners reallocate the high school boys' chamber as a

room for advanced girls, violating that traditional East-West gender division.[60] Beyond

this chamber sat a long sleeping dormitory for orphan males, although the youngest

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[59] *Charleston Daily News.* See for examples, December 2, 1865 and December 4, 1868. For more on the architectural design and renovation, see Walter J. Fraser, Jr., *Charleston! Charleston!: The History of a Southern City* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989); and Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders.*

[60] M. Burnett, School Committee Report, December 12, 1860, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

boys, roughly six and under, slept in the female quarters. By age seven, expectations for

nineteenth-century manhood began to apply and meant that dormitories headed by

older girls or young women like in the female quarters were no longer acceptable

lodgings for boys. The father, or in this case father figure, was of central importance to a

boy's journey to becoming a man by providing discipline and guidance in socially

acceptable ways where boys could compete and be aggressive. In what historian E.

Anthony Rotundo terms "boy culture," boys engaged in rough games and mischief,

which made them stronger and helped prepare them for the world. Aggression was

essential. As they aged, like the "high school" boys closest to the steward, they entered

"youth culture," where they began practicing their reasoning skills in debating societies

and clubs.[61] As the hands-on patriarch, the steward would have played an active role in

fostering debate. His proximity also ensured the steward could determine who his

strongest and/or his most intelligent boys were so that he could shape apprenticeships

or paths towards higher education.[62] These insights were crucial to the commissioners'

roles as surrogate fathers in preparing the boys for futures outside of the institution.

On the East side of the "first" floor sat the female sleeping department for "1st"

girls, who were the oldest or most educationally advanced. Within this dormitory and all

other female rooms in the Home, an assistant matron had responsibility for between

thirty-five and forty-five children each, either living in the children's dormitories or in an

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[61] E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). See also, Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

[62] In a similar situation of surrogate fatherhood, see James Marten's discussion of the letters fathers and brothers wrote to children during the war. James Marten, *The Children's Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

adjacent room. A sewing room, sewing mistress's chamber, and a school room for girls

rounded out this section of the Home, marking key aspects of domesticity. Separating

girls from boys in this way actively reinforced the idea that girls and boys were

profoundly different and that they would maintain vastly different responsibilities

outside the Orphan Home. Builders also positioned a nurse's chamber just outside each

sleeping department, ensuring that a woman was always on hand to serve or redirect

the children. These women's presumed "motherly" natures would nurture the youngest

children. However, by separating females and by singling out the most advanced girls,

female staff could also best train the girls in deference and in sewing, cleaning, and care

giving. These lessons were usually taught by a girl's mother, but they were crucial to

preparing girls for adulthood. In practice, they also trained these girls about the bonds

of sisterhood. Nineteenth-century sisterhood was deeply intimate, where bonds formed

between blood sisters but also cousins and even friends.[63] The Orphan House

dormitories were a forging ground for these relationships, while girls simultaneously

maintained the cleaning and sewing requirements in a Home of this magnitude.

Upper floors included apartments for all other staff members, additional

dormitories, a meeting room for the commissioners, and school rooms for boys. The

uppermost fifth floor was relegated to the sick. Sick rooms included a hospital,

apothecary, convalescent dining room, quarantine rooms, ward for the long-term ill,

and private rooms for the hospital matron. Then the outside grounds, safely bound by a

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[63] Amy Murrell Taylor, *The Divided Family in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

fence surrounding the institution, offered space for children to stretch their legs and grow a garden to supplement nutritional needs, although this effort consistently failed to produce vegetables.

As the existence of multiple school rooms suggests, the commissioners saw education as the "great agent of reform and improvement."[64] Between Monday and Friday, orphans assembled for classes between 9 a.m. and noon and again from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., with fifteen minute breaks interspersed depending on age. Lessons included reading, writing, and arithmetic, although boys and even some advanced girls engaged in lessons in history and geography too. To ensure children reached the board's educational goals, sessions also ran virtually uninterrupted, with the exceptions of a fourth of July holiday, two weeks in August, one day in October, Thanksgiving, and roughly one week in December for Christmas. Attendance was mandatory, and commissioners refused to bind out children who had not met their educational metrics, namely reading and writing literacy.[65]

This academic success reflected positively on the Orphan House and raised these poor white children above the conditions of slaves and Black freedpeople, diminishing the distance between elite and poor whites and enabling children to become an asset to the white community. Commissioners also welcomed visitors from the community to observe examinations, highlighting their successes and further knitting together white

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[64] 1861 Bylaws of the Orphan House of Charleston South Carolina, 205. See also, Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders.*

[65] Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*

society.[66] A report on the children's assessments in May 1860 sums this sentiment up well. The board wrote, "the general appearance of health, purity and respectability throughout the establishment, grant us in claiming for it the interest and admiration of all our citizens; and we feel convinced that under the training to which they are here introduced, the Orphans of the City of Charleston will more than repay her, by their moral and intellectual advancement."[67]

Although examinations occurred sporadically during the year, in September, orphans took an annual exam, and children who excelled received special privileges. This strategy of incentives was one way that the board implemented paternal engagement over harsh discipline. As an additional inspiration, boys who succeeded academically could attend the High School of Charleston and even the College of Charleston. Every four years, the board also chose two boys to attend the South Carolina Military School, and they sent one boy to the South Carolina College annually, which they funded from their private fund. To ensure quality education, Orphan House teachers were also expected to continue their own studies and to lead by example, with the expectation that "evidence of self-improvement shall be deemed indispensable to promotion or increase salary."[68] In addition to the scholarships, in order to guarantee

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[66] An 1860 Examination Report even maligned the dearth of visitors in the children's most recent examination. See, Report of the School Committee, Adopted July 19, 1860

[67] James G. Holmes, N. R. Middleton, et al., Report of the Examining Committee, May 15, 1860, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[68] 1861 Bylaws of the Orphan House of Charleston South Carolina, 208. For examples, see, "Miss Yates," who received salary increase from one hundred twenty dollars to two hundred dollars per year in 1860 and "Miss Rians" who received a one hundred dollar dowry as a reward for her scholarly achievements as a student and as an advanced teacher in the Orphan House. See, Report of the School Committee, July 19, 1860.

availability and board control over curriculum, the commissioners purchased books and school supplies from their private fund, eliminating any city council oversight.[69] Their success in raising up poor children would be entirely their own.

The commissioners were not alone in their attempts to educate the poor. In 1811, South Carolina passed the state school law opening free schools to all white children that in practice became indelibly associated with those who could not afford private educations, the poor. Known for cost-cutting, by the 1850s these free schools developed a reputation for high student to teacher ratios (one hundred or more to one), severe punishments, and meager educational prospects, and they were poorly attended. By the 1850s, former Orphan House pupil turned prominent Charlestonian lawyer Christopher Memminger and his friend W. Jefferson Bennett, whose family had directed the original Orphan Home's construction in the 1790s, attempted to revise this system with the opening of the free Charleston High and Normal School and the hiring of nine northern-trained teachers who could implement fresh teaching methods. Yet the free schools' poor reputations were difficult to shirk, and this ensured that the Orphan House maintained its preeminence as a route for educating poor white children, especially after 1854.

The reason for the institution's success as an educational site, however, was the school principal, who Bennett had hand-picked in 1854 as part of his reform efforts. After attempting a series of local reforms that failed to curb disciplinary problems and educational failures in the Home, Bennett resolved to look elsewhere for innovation.

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[69] Jones, "The Charleston Orphan House, 1860-1870," and Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*

With Memminger's support, he successfully convinced the board of commissioners to relinquish to a newly created position of school principal much of the power that was held by them and the "Lady Commissioners," who had run many of the Home's day to day operations.

That new position went to a twenty-three year old *woman* named Agnes K. Irving, which in itself was a direct contrast to the largely male schoolmasters who had run the classrooms in the decades before. During her tenure Irving maintained absolute authority in supervising the children's education, except in the rare event of the commissioners' decisions to override her. Ironically, then, in an effort to bolster their reputations as benevolent patriarchs in successfully educating poor white children, the commissioners made themselves and the institution dependent on a woman, turning the South's benevolent patriarchy on its head. In this way, they anticipated the expansion of white women's public roles, where women increasingly made their way onto the public scene by engaging in political discussions or riots, embracing new employment opportunities, and in organizing memorials and other commemorations. Educational reform became one of the focal points of women's commemorative work. Most scholars have credited these advancements to the Civil War and pointed to their limited lifespan.[70] In this way, Irving's role was not only unprecedented in Charleston, but it differed even further in continuing to expand after the war.

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[70] LeeAnn Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995); Nina Silber, *Gender and the Sectional Conflict* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds., *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Judith Giesberg, *Army at Home: Women and the Civil War on the Northern Home*

This unique position was a credit to Irving herself and to the fact that she reigned over domestic, private aspects of the Home. Beyond the commissioners' own public announcements, she did not enter the public sphere of fundraising and did not engage with newspaper editors or the city council. But Irving's authority also points to the central reality that commissioners were committed to their *images* as successful patriarchs. Unable to successfully run the Orphan House school or many of the private aspects of the Home themselves, they sacrificed some of their real authority so that Irving's success could bolster their reputations locally and even nationally. The image of patriarchy was even more important than its reality, and Irving became a fixture in the Home, ironically both providing vital services to the patriarchy and subverting it by maintaining her authoritative position and by managing the school better than any male before her.

Born in New York City, Irving appears to have had middle class origins herself and was selected for training in that city's most progressive teaching methodologies, which emerged out of the Second Great Awakening.[71] As both a young, single white woman and a Northerner, Irving was energetic and resourceful in pushing through educational reforms from the moment she entered the Home. Having the backing of prominent Charlestonian leaders Memminger and Bennett was also undoubtedly crucial. She revitalized the Home's education system, classifying students into eight classes

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Front (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); and Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[71] For more on educational transformations in the North, see for example, Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge University Press, 1981).

according to their abilities, rather than their ages, and using advanced girls as

"monitors" to help younger students. Some of these girls also became official assistant

teachers when they reached the age for binding out (while older girls who were less

proficient in their schooling spent more time in the sewing room). Not only was Irving's

system more educationally sound and efficient, with children excelling at a much faster

rate, but her new system of in-house student-teachers ensured she drastically reduced

the institution's operating costs. In 1854, for example, annual educational costs per

child had been $24. By 1857, that number was $9.50.[72] Any skepticism the

commissioners had quickly vanished.

Indeed, Irving single-handedly transformed the Home's school and became the

single most important individual in the Orphan House throughout the Civil War and into

the twentieth century, even maintaining her position until her death on June 19, 1910.

Strongly appreciated by the commissioners and orphans, at her death she was interred

in Charleston's Magnolia Cemetery alongside many of the orphans who had died in the

institution.[73] The commissioners also trusted Irving's managerial skills to such an extent

that not only did they instruct her to step into the additional role of matron when the

matron on staff was absent, but the board ultimately collapsed the roles of steward,

matron, and principal into a single post for her after the Civil War. This remarkable level

of female power was a direct credit to Irving's revitalization of the school in the 1850s

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[72] Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders;* Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House;* and Knight, "Slavery and the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1860."

[73] Agnes K. Irving, June 19, 1910, Charleston, SC Death Certificate; Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders*; and Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.* For a detailed discussion of Principal Irving's education innovations in the 1850s, see Knight, "Slavery and the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1860."

and of the commissioners' needs to maintain the Orphan Home's reputation in the community after the war, against student educational delays, student and staff disciplinary problems exacerbated by the war, and postwar financial issues. But, as a discussion of issues between staff members later will show, this consolidation and elevation of female authority often failed to fit seamlessly into a patriarchal institution, and it sometimes led to in-house conflict.

Figure 1.1 Agnes K. Irving, late-nineteenth-century lithographic portrait.
(Courtesy of Charleston County Public Library)

During Irving's tenure, children adhered to a daily schedule of attending classes for five hours and then spending an additional two hours and thirty-five minutes studying. In addition, a fifty-minute period each day was dedicated to daily devotions, while staff members allowed a total of one hour and five minutes for hygienic purposes

of washing and dressing. Girls often had fewer study hours and recreational times, as they also maintained household and sewing duties for up to three hours and fifty minutes a day.[74] Education, however, was central to every child's experience, as the commissioners believed this would increase the orphans' chances of being independent--and not dependent on either white benevolence or relationships with Black slaves.

For this reason, concerns about the children's educational delays became one of the commissioners' biggest postwar issues. Principal Irving's ability to reestablish discipline and educational improvement became vital, especially since the war's death toll ensured an uptick in the number of applications and new admissions into the Orphan Home. Although less than 4% of the orphans were in the "a. b. c." class or the most basic level when the children relocated in 1863, by the end of 1866, this group numbered 35%. The board concluded that "these facts furnish a striking illustration of the neglect of education during the war."[75] Making matters worse, many of these children were of age for binding out. The board could not apprentice illiterate or willful children, however, for those deficiencies, they feared, would "be imparted to the imperfections of the system of education, or to the neglect of the teachers."[76] In a moment of social and economic discord in postwar Charleston, the commissioners preferred to maintain these orphans, even at additional costs, rather than risk losing the public's confidence.

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[74] Jones, *The Charleston Orphan House, 1860-1876.*
[75] Trenholm, Orphan House School Report, November 1866.
[76] Trenholm, Orphan House School Report, November 1866.

To address these concerns, Principal Irving set to work immediately in Charleston. By the end of 1866, the board reported a marked improvement in class attendance and in "docility and diligence," which they attributed to Irving and the assistant matrons. Indeed, they were confident enough to recommend that one or two boys at a time be allowed to attend classes at the Medical College of Charleston, which was a risk they would not take just a year earlier.[77] Although the board continued to report serious illiteracy rates in the children entering the Home, examinations in the Home also showed marked improvements. Of the 107 children who entered the institution in 1867, for example, eighty-one (76%) entered at the most basic a. b. c. level or completely illiterate, but only five of these orphans remained illiterate within a year of entry. The board was so pleased that they attributed this success as a reflection of "God's favor in providing this shelter . . . and that intellectual moral and religious culture upon which all the hopes of earthly usefulness and eternal happiness must forever depend."[78] Literacy, combined with training as apprentices, was the key to making these children "useful" to Charleston, and Irving and her assistants were as successful in implementing that vision as they had been before the war.

Equally important, with the assistance of the free labor of the student-teachers, the teachers were able to educate the children at the relatively low cost of just eight dollars annually per student. To combat city council debates about reducing funding,

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[77] Trenholm, Orphan House School Report, November 1866.
[78] Committee in Charge of the Orphan House School Annual Report, November 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

commissioners emphasized this number, even suggesting that admitting additional

students would bring average educational costs down. To pressure the city council, they

even published about the school's strict economy in Charleston newspapers, and they

invited the mayor and city alderman to the children's examinations.[79] These public

assessments were crucial to cultivating public and municipal support, where visitors

could "witness the proficiency and order of the pupils" and see "the evident kind and

affectionate regard entertained between the Teachers and the taught."[80] Then, within

months of the examination, the board recommended drawing up a new binding-out list

to begin apprenticing their older – literate – students.[81] Education had the triple role of

cultivating communal support and municipal funding and in rendering the children

"useful" to the community and more advantaged than Black children.

By 1868, the Home appeared to have reached a level of stability that echoed its

antebellum days. The Committee on Schools reported that the children's examinations

proved they were at least on par with any other school in the city but likely even more

proficient. And the Committee on Repairs reported extensive work, including new paint

on many of the outbuildings, a new oven, new pipes, repairs of the tin gutters and

"washing machines," and extensive work on the privies.[82] By November the following

year, in an overall report of the condition of the Home, the visiting commissioner

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[79] See for example, "Regular Meeting of City Council," *Charleston Daily News,* December 4, 1867.

[80] Committee of School Report, June 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[81] Committee on Schools Report, August 1, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[82] Committee on the Schools Report, July 16, 1868; and Annual Report of the Committee on Repairs, November 19, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

confidently reported that all was in good order and that "the morale of the Institution is good and the government is careful judicious and kind producing a state of general harmony and cheerfulness."[83] The Charleston Orphan House, and the reputations of if its commissioners, had recovered from the war.

Beyond educational goals, from the Home's genesis, the board also wanted children to understand their place in society. All children wore a simple uniform of homespun cloth entirely spun, sewn, and repaired by the orphan girls themselves by 1860. Girls also made undergarments of white homespun, which offered a visual reminder of their low status. Following an 1845 controversy, the commissioners also agreed, at the behest of a local donor, to issue brightly-colored calico outfits for children to wear on Sundays, with the idea that clothing the children entirely in homespun positioned them too closely to slaves.[84] Again, this system conveyed the idea that all white children were to have advantages, regardless of their station.

Like in most antebellum public institutions, religion was a notable part of the Home, but the commissioners envisioned religious education as less important than literacy. In the twenty-two pages of their bylaws, for example, they spent just over four pages addressing various aspects of the school including a prayer at the opening and closing of the school each day, and they added an additional page on higher educational opportunities for academically successful boys. They spoke of "Sunday School," on the

[83] Stanley F. Trott, Report of Visiting Commissioner, November 25, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[84] Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.* For the 1845 controversy over calico dresses, see Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders.*

other hand, in a single paragraph, using just six lines to discuss religious instruction. Another two paragraphs addressed annual public services in May.[85] Although admissions applications required mothers and guardians more generally to report a child's religious denomination, the board also showed no preference and accepted orphans of any religious background, including Episcopalians, Catholics, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Baptists, and Jews.[86]

In part, this lack of preference was a product of community support. As John Murray's work on the Home's origins shows, all of Charleston's churches had contributed to the initial building fund, and until the institution had a chapel of its own, adults accompanied children to the denomination of their choosing. Then, once the chapel was complete, representatives from all of the denominations delivered Sunday services on a rotating basis. As a result, the board supported interdenominational learning. Commissioners, did however, refuse any additional visits from clergymen who were not leading a weekly Sunday service because they opposed outside interference in the Home's inter-workings. Nevertheless, the commissioners themselves largely came from Protestant Christian backgrounds, and they prioritized its teaching in the children's daily devotions and in a weekly Sunday-school lesson, which the commissioners took turns teaching. Commissioners also required new apprenticeship masters to agree to

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[85] 1861 Bylaws of the Orphan House of Charleston South Carolina.

[86] Applications for Admission, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

continue religious instruction.[87] Religion, then, acted as a way to knit poor white children to the rest of white Charleston.

Complicating regular operations and the commissioners' strong reputations as patriarchs was the unpredictable behaviors of the individuals inside. As will be addressed in the final chapter, children, either inspired by or inclined to take advantage of wartime life in Charleston, became increasingly willful, with higher rates of disobedience and runaways. Equally problematic at times, however, were the staff members in the Home – the adults who worked but were not always cooperative towards one another. Here, the commissioners' decision to stretch the strict boundaries of the patriarchal hierarchy in 1854 came to a head.

One of the primary sources of antagonism was between Miss Irving, the school principal and one of the most powerful females in the institution, and the women who worked beneath her. Some of these staff members seemed to resent the rules in place preventing their autonomy, while some may have resented a young, single Northerner's command over them. An incident between a teacher Lizzie Hayes and Irving is an example. On June 9, 1862, around noon, Hayes approached Irving with a specific request that she be allowed to leave the Orphan Home to see a dentist. Likely due to the sense of urgency in the appeal, Irving agreed, asking that Hayes return to her duties as quickly as possible. Urged on by her success, however, Hayes went further. She told

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[87] Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*

Irving that she needed the entire afternoon off because she wanted to see her grandmother and needed to "attend to some matters for her mother."[88]

Here, Hayes had gone too far in Irving's view. She had been hired to teach – not take care of personal matters. Irving rescinded her approval and promptly exited the conversation in order to return to her duties. This abrasive refusal and exit, however, prompted an angry outburst from Hayes, who clearly believed that she had the right to fulfill her familial obligations – obligations Irving, as an outsider to Charleston with no family in the community, could not understand. Irving's own New York upbringing would have instilled her with the values of Protestant evangelicalism. Self-control, hard work, thriftiness, and an education were key to success. In this model, as historian Mary P. Ryan explains, the family became increasingly "characterized by emotional interchange rather than strict hierarchy."[89] This, in part, enabled Northern women to exert considerable social power within the domestic sphere – including in orphan asylums. Irving's role in the Charleston Orphan House, then, was within normal expectations for someone of her background—but it was novel in the South. In this sense, the two women staunchly differed in their visions of not only womanhood but of the boundary between public and private domestic spheres. In the South, strict hierarchy, where a male patriarchal "master" headed a family of dependent wives, children, and when financially possible, slaves, was central. Disrupting that authority in any way was a

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[88] Orphan House Testimony, Mrs. Hayes Charge, June 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.
[89] Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class,* 232.

threat to the institution of slavery itself.[90] For Hayes, fulfilling her familial obligations to her mother was more than an emotional call. It was her duty, arguably more important even than her responsibilities in the Orphan House, especially during a war.

On that day in June 1862, when the U.S. Army was preparing to attack Charleston from its position on James Island, Hayes was likely concerned about her Charlestonian family. Enraged at Irving's response, she followed the principal into the schoolroom, where a group of teachers and students were waiting, and "in a passion . . . [and] insolently" told Irving that she would go even if she had to go to Mr. DeSaussure, the chairman of the board.[91] Then, when Irving called the steward John Small to remove "this woman," Hayes tellingly screamed out, "Miss Irving I am as good a woman as you are!" admitting precisely the resentment her behavior had suggested from the beginning.[92]

In response, the board had to address Hayes's "insolent" behavior. They launched a full investigation, interviewed all of the witnesses, the steward, Hayes, and Irving before issuing their ruling. In it, they backed Irving's authority in refusing Hayes's request for time away, but they also showed the same gentle paternalistic handling that they used towards the children in the Home. Rather than fire Hayes or approve a harsher punishment, they required Hayes to write a formal report acknowledging her

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[90] For an excellent discussion of patriarchy within the nonslaveholding Southern household, see, Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, & the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). For a discussion of who these contrasting ideologies shaped how Northerners and Southerners saw the war, see Silber, *Gender and the Sectional Conflict.*
[91] Testimony, Mrs. Hayes Charge.
[92] Testimony, Mrs. Hayes Charge.

wrong and her regret for her behavior, and they were confident her sorrow would close the door on this incident.[93]

Although this decision did end this initial outburst from Hayes, the commissioners underestimated the degree to which the tensions of the war would exhaust staff members' self-control. Hayes appeared in the commissioners' correspondence again during the institution's time in Orangeburg. On September 20, 1864, likely due to the uptick in willfulness and disobedience exhibited by the children, Hayes resigned without notice. Having stifled what appeared to be her resentment of Irving for over two years, Hayes no longer found the financial security of a job in the Orphan Home reason enough to stay. For his part, the practiced patriarch DeSaussure swiftly and quietly wrote a letter to the steward Mr. Small instructing him to pay Hayes her final salary and to help Margaret Jenkins, a former institutionalized orphan and mother of one of the Home's children in 1864, take over as a teacher.[94]

Indeed, by September, DeSaussure must have become accustomed to replacing seasoned staff members. The year before, the city council had increased staff salaries to help address rising rampant inflation, but as a position invented by Irving, this decision did not include the institution's teachers. In response, the commissioners voted to allocate part of their private fund to increasing teacher salaries.[95] Nevertheless,

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[93] Special Committee to Investigate the Charge Against Mrs. Hay's, Report, July 24, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[94] H.A. DeSaussure to J. S. Small, October 1, 1864, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[95] Minutes, August 13, 1864. See also, the teachers' thank you letter to the commissioners. Eliza Griffith, L.W. Muire, Ise Henderson, et. al to H. A. DeSassure, February 26, 1863, Records of the

maintaining teachers and staff became a serious problem, especially after the move to

Orangeburg and growing Confederate needs for soldiers. In the spring and summer of

1864, DeSaussure corresponded with the steward about staffing issues, including the

resignation of at least two teachers and Mrs. Small, the matron's, inexplicable decision

to confine herself to her chamber, refusing to work. He also discussed successful efforts

to have a male servant discharged from conscription orders, which indicated the ways

the Confederate Army itself competed with the Home for personnel.

To combat this struggle, in an unprecedented move, DeSaussure authorized

these women's replacements to bring their children, without requiring them to submit

formal applications. One woman had three children formally bound to the institution in

this way.[96] Yet, in a time of war and with little alternative, DeSaussure smoothly made

the approvals and tried to minimize the problems of having a short-staffed and

unseasoned workforce. Principal Irving's confident, well-practiced managerial hand

likely bolstered his confidence, especially when she joined DeSaussure in this struggle by

asking that her salary be reduced that summer in order to increase pay to other

teachers.[97] This degree of control, made possible by Irving's leadership, reflected highly

on DeSaussure's reputation as a strong patriarch, and it offered a shield for poor white

children in the midst of the war, linking white society.

Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[96] H.A. DeSaussure to Mr. .J. Small, April 4, 1864; H. A. DeSaussure to John S. Small, July 6, 1864; and H. A. DeSaussure to John S. Small, August 8, 1864, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[97] For more on Irving's request, see, Jones, "The Charleston Orphan House, 1860-1870."

Tension between staff members, however, was high throughout 1864. In June, one of the nurses, Miss McIndro, refused a direct order from Mr. Small. In his report to the board, Small told the commissioners that one of the girls in McIndro's dormitory had been instructed by her teacher to leave the classroom due to a sore on her head, which should have been treated before she entered the room. McIndro had refused to treat the sore, explaining to Small that "the girl was large enough to do it herself." When confronted with the fact that the sore was on the top of the head and therefore impossible for the girl to treat herself, McIndro flatly responded she "would not do it" and that Small could report her to the board. Her one concession was that she instructed one of the other girls to treat the injury, staunchly refusing her duties as nurse. The board convened a special meeting to address this controversy, demonstrating a commitment to their bylaws regarding disobedience to a direct order from the steward or the matron even during the war. Indeed, given the uptick in behavioral issues in Orangeburg, this emphasis on leadership and order was all the more important. Yet the commissioners had a crisis on their hands in maintaining consistent staff. Perhaps in light of this reality, then, they gave McIndro a slap on the wrist and ordered her to write a letter of explanation, hardly a punishment likely to prevent further disobedience yet staunchly paternalistic in its fatherly instruction.[98]

Staffing issues did not disappear with the cessation of the war. One of the biggest controversies in this period occurred between the matron Mrs. Steinmeyer and Principal Irving in September 1867. On the evening of the 11th, one of the girls entered

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[98] Minutes, June 15, 1864.

Irving's office to deliver tea and bread, but upon inspection, Irving discovered not only

that the bread was stale but that it was the same bread that had been served to the

children stale, three days earlier. Wholly unfit for consumption, she asked the girl to

report the issue to the matron so that she might send something else to eat. When

Steinmeyer received the report, she shot back that the cook did not have the time.

What began as a disagreement about the quality of bread quickly brewed into a

much bigger controversy. Steinmeyer returned that there was no other option, to which

Irving pointed out that the cook often prepared special dishes for the steward's family.

Then, Steinmeyer hotly sent back, "they [the Steinmeyer family], are very different from

her [Miss Irving]," and in a targeted insult she added, Irving "was no lady." Afterwards,

she loudly ordered the girl "not to bring any more of <u>her</u> [Irving's] messages." Making

matters worse, this last order, according to the girls who witnessed the exchange, had

been used more than once in recent days.[99]

As the two most powerful women in the institution, undoubtably this incident

had been simmering at the surface for many years, especially given the fatigue both

women likely experienced in the midst of increased post-war admissions. Like Mrs.

Hayes's self-aggrandizement years earlier, pride and jealousy appeared at the heart of

the altercation. In her report, Steinmeyer asserted that her family was "well known in

this community and elsewhere," while Miss Irving was, "no lady."[100] In this way, the

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[99] Mary L. Le Quenx and C. Arnold's Testimony, November 1867 Investigation, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.
[100] Steinmeyer, Statement of facts.

matron pushed against the unusual level of power Irving, an unmarried woman and an outsider to Charleston, possessed in the Orphan Home. She concluded by pointing to her own place in the hierarchy, as in the incident "her feelings had been considerably wounded and the respect due her in the House lessened."[101]

Where before 1854 primary authority over the orphans and institutional staff had been in the hands of the commissioners and a male schoolmaster, Irving had gradually become the most important authority figure in the Home's daily routine, especially after the Civil War. In so doing, she actively displaced the traditional patriarchal order and became a focal point for men and women around her to come to terms with what some historians have called a "crisis in gender" after the war.[102] As historian Catherine Clinton explains, "disorderly women," who undermined the antebellum status quo, often became synonymous with "public women" or prostitutes.[103] Steinmeyer's pointed denial that Irving was no "lady" implied that by actively disrupting the patriarchal hierarchy, Irving was no better than any other "public woman." In fact, Steinmeyer implied, she was even worse as an outsider without any familial ties or allegiance to the community. Steinmeyer, on the other hand, was married to the steward, a man actively engaged as a patriarchal father not only to his own children but to hundreds of others. He was a fixture in the community and a credit to traditional Southern values. In turn, the matron – his wife – was safely within the

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[101] Special Committee of Three, October 31, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[102] See especially Anne Sarah Rubin, "Politics and Petticoats in the Same Pod: Florence Fay, Betsey Bittersweet, and the Reconstruction of Southern Womanhood, 1865-1868," in *Battle Scars.*

[103] Catherine Clinton, "'Public Women' and Sexual Politics during the American Civil War," in *Battle Scars.*

bounds of that strict hierarchy, making her respectable and loyal to Charleston. This vision and support for patriarchy may have even been stronger after the Civil War, as Steinmeyer must have been aware of the children's heightened willfulness and disobedience during their time in Orangeburg.[104] In that view, reestablishing patriarchy and even ousting an "unladylike" Northern transplant was vital.

Yet ironically, by displaying a pattern of angry outbursts against Irving's messages, Matron Steinmeyer was undeniably disrupting order in the House. Irving claimed, she "could only have [been] disturbed [if she was] seeking offense and aggression."[105] Tellingly in her response, Irving purportedly shouted that Steinmeyer's family, who often received special meals from the cook, "are too poor for me or any of mine to have any thing to do with . . . and you yourself too low."[106] Irving, in other words, had definitively carved out a space for herself in the middle class, starting with her own New York education. Indeed, this Northern vision of middle class womanhood had enabled her to take the position at the Orphan Home in the first place. Steinmeyer and her family, in contrast, were reliant on the bounty of the institution. Without it and, most importantly, Mr. Steinmeyer's strong patriarchal leadership, they would be as destitute as the families of their charges.

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[104] Drew Gilpin Faust's *Mothers of Inventions* argues elite white women eventually saw the war as a violation of men's obligations to protect and support women and children. Yet, after the war they nevertheless receded into the protective promises of paternalism. Steinmeyer's story shows a similar pattern for a poor white woman. See, Faust, *Mothers of Invention*. See also, Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender.*

[105] Agnes K. Irving, Report on the September 11, 1867 Accusation, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[106] M. Steinmeyer, Matron, Statement of facts upon which the charge against the Principal are based, November 11, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Forced into becoming mediators, the board members fell back on their time-tested traditions. They created a special committee of three to investigate. Then, a larger, established committee, the Committee on Improvements and Discipline, met "to hear and determine all questions of difference among Officers of the House."[107] As self-proclaimed fathers of the House, they, in other words, wanted to maintain a fair and open mind before passing judgement. But as patriarchs, they were also in position to correct these women's behavior. They worked quickly, given these women's importance in maintaining institutional order, and they questioned both women individually, requiring both to write a formal report. They also spoke with all of the children who had supposedly witnessed the event.

Unfortunately for the matron, however, none of the children admitted to hearing any negative words directed towards her. Because she alone had argued there were witnesses, the board found no justification in the complaint. Irving herself added that "from first to last, the same painful discrepancy occurs with every word and fact" in the matron's tale, suggesting instead that it was not the matron but *she* who had been rudely mistreated. In this light, the commissioners had little concrete evidence of the conversation except the opposing opinions of the women in question, and most importantly the episode had not undermined the matron's authority, in contrast to her claims. Because the children remained unaffected, the incident was a personal matter

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[107] Special Committee of Three, October 31, 1867.

between two women, therefore outside the realm of the commissioners' territory.[108] As "fathers," the board had an obligation to guide and protect the orphans, but with responsibilities not just in the Home but within their own families and in the community at large, they also did not have the time or resources to arbitrate every controversy between staff members. Indeed, this inability to govern all day-to-day aspects had forced them to relinquish much of their daily authority to Irving in the first place, choosing instead to focus on their reputations more broadly. Irving and Steinmeyer would have to resolve their issues alone.

With such a light-handed take on resolving tension between Irving and Steinmeyer, however, the ladies' disdain for one another must have grown. By March 1868, Steinmeyer's frustration seems to have spread to her husband the steward J.F. Steinmeyer, so that they resigned in tandem to seek better occupational prospects. The board's immediate solution was to temporarily elect Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. DeSaussure, the brother and sister-in-law of former long-term chairman Henry A. DeSaussure, but ironically Steinmeyer's resignation left open the door for Agnes K. Irving herself to assume the roles of steward and matron as well as principal the following year.[109] Likely tired of the underlying tension in their reliance on two female authorities in a patriarchal institution, the commissioners decided to stick with the leader they knew. For that matter, as prominent patriarchs themselves, the

[108] W.C. Bee, G. A. Trenholm, W. H. Gilliland, John H. Honour, and Charles H. Simonton, Report on the Matron's Allegations, November 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[109] "Proceedings of City Council: Regular Meeting," April 11, 1868, *Charleston Daily News;* Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House;* and Charles Alfred DeSaussure, Charleston, SC Census Records.

commissioners had also relied on their own wives to manage their own private lives.

Likely building on this logic, on a much grander scale, the Orphan Home was primarily a

home, albeit a public one. In that light, the right single woman could run all aspects of

domestic life on her own. Separating the roles of matron and principal/educator

became superfluous. Irving had proven her skills as a manager and leader in

transforming the Orphan House school, managing the Home in Orangeburg during the

evacuation, and in reestablishing control after the Civil War. The board was confident

she could absorb all of the extra duties as matron.

As the commissioners' handling of the conflict between the matron and principal

suggests, the men preferred subtlety to heavy-handedness in their management of

white staff members-- just as they eschewed corporal punishment of the orphans. Faced

with an inefficient and costly engineer in 1869, for example, rather than dismiss the man

or even elect a new one in his stead, commissioner Alva Gage recommended the board

simply "omit the election of an engineer . . . it would be a hint to him that would spur

him up to a more efficient discharge of his duty."[110] Subtle "hints," and gentle

counseling helped the commissioners project themselves as altruistic fathers to the

white poor, defending their image even if it did not always resolve larger issues. These

children, they made clear, were not Black slaves or even freedmen. Of course, not all

issues the commissioners faced were from internal sources. As the next chapters will

show, how they addressed diseases and the war, their decision to relocate in 1863, the

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[110] Alva Gage to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Confederacy's surrender, and Reconstruction policies were of central importance to

internal control and to that image.

CHAPTER 2. THE ORPHAN HOUSE AND WHITE UNITY DURING THE CIVIL WAR AND EARLY

YEARS OF RECONSTRUCTION

In November 1866, South Carolina Governor James L. Orr articulated a sentiment

common among the state's white elites. He pointed to the state's recent financial

embarrassments and the "intolerance of our conquerors," and argued for the need to

control the white population. As he explained, economic devastation, combined with

serious crop failures in 1865 and 1866, had led to high rates of outmigration, on the part

of both whites and Blacks. Rather than promote immigration, however, Orr focused on

white native-born Carolinians. He declared, "we must keep our population here – we

must provide for their present necessities – we must stimulate our white population to

go earnestly to work, and let them see that labor is honorable and idleness

reprehensible." Orr's goals, then, reflected the hopes of the commissioners in the

Orphan House, where "stimulating" poor whites ensured a strong economic future.

Equally important after the war, however, those same poor whites were also the key to

preserving political power and maintaining white supremacy. Although it went unstated,

orphans were central members of that group of white people.[111]

At its core the Charleston Orphan House was an institution devoted to

maintaining not only Charleston's reputation in the nation but also the social hierarchy

within the city. Because it was entirely devoted to poor white children and their

families, the Home offered elite white men a chance to display patriarchal control and

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[111] "Message of Governor James L. Orr to the Senate and House of Representatives of South Carolina," Delivered November 27, 1866, *Charleston Mercury,* Printed November 28, 1866.

the impression that they were uniting all whites. Before the Civil War and emancipation, the Home played a vital role in improving the lives of impoverished orphans so that they could provide economic security (through their labor) while helping stymie outmigration rates (by staying). For a city in decline by the second-half of the century, and a state where white people were vastly outnumbered by Black people, white orphan children – and the paths they would take as adults – became vital. For these reasons and potentially out of a genuine sense of patriarchal duty, protecting these children during the war became central to the commissioners, and it shaped their decisions regarding the Orphan Home throughout the war, particularly their ultimate decision to evacuate the city. And after the war, white orphans became even more important to white Charlestonians. Faced with the realities of the postwar emancipated South and Reconstruction, white South Carolinians became increasingly desperate to combat the realities of a Black Republican majority in the state. For that reason, white orphans became not just a boon to economic life, or to Charleston's ranking in the hierarchy of cities, but were critical to overturning the Republican Party in South Carolina as voters and as agents of nefarious and violent actions. As elite white Charlestonians, the commissioners envisioned recovering control over the Orphan Home first and then recovering control of their city.

On April 12, 1861, as Confederates fired on Fort Sumter, the Civil War began just four miles from the coast of Charleston. Rather than frighten the city's civilians, however, Charlestonians were confident that the harbor – and the Confederates'

capture of Fort Sumter, combined with the protective barrier the sea islands provided

off the coast of South Carolina – ensured they were safe from bombardment or invasion

by land or sea. For that reason, the Orphan House commissioners had little impulse to

evacuate in the early years of the war. Rather, their focus was on maintaining

educational standards, discouraging runaways, and providing for the children's dietary

needs in the midst of a blockade and rising prices in goods. Indeed, Confederate success

in repulsing the attacks on Fort Sumter, Fort Moultrie, and Charleston itself only

affirmed their confidence in the children's safety. Nevertheless, the board watched the

conflict's progression with vigilance and began planning the Home's eventual relocation

should the need arise.

Unsurprisingly, their earliest and primary objective was to find a place with the

capacity to house the institution's staff and orphans. The board organized a committee

that would work closely with the Charleston mayor for this purpose and began making

inquiries all over the state about suitable sites. By November 1862, commissioner James

Tupper visited several possibilities. Options included the Methodist Female College, the

Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Columbia, Winnsboro College, the Charlotte

Military School, the Spartanburg Female College, and Furman University at Greenville,

but none were suitable. The primary issues, as he explained were two-fold. First, the

location needed to be large enough to safely house over two hundred children.

Secondly, it needed to be out of operation to avoid competing for space with other

residents. Ideally, the commissioners also wanted to avoid leaving South Carolina due to

the distance from Charleston, and they had to ensure the site included outbuildings for

cooking. The initial sites commissioners visited had either too few rooms or were still in operation.[112]

By the end of the year, however, the board found a site owned by Reverend Isaac Stockton Keith Legare at Orangeburg. Last used as a seminary for girls, the site had the advantage of being just seventy-seven miles north-west of Charleston, roughly forty miles closer than Columbia. It was also directly on the railroad line, promising a journey of just five hours. In a similar design to the Orphan House itself, the Orangeburg property boasted of a central three-story building with two large wings including large basements suitable for classrooms, a pantry, chapel, parlor, and nine separate sleeping apartments. Eighteen dormitories or large rooms comprised the second floor, while a large attic offered additional space for sleeping or even medical dormitories. As a bonus, the property also included five other buildings - a house with eight rooms, a kitchen, and three buildings reserved for servants' apartments. Additional assets included gas lighting, a water pump for the main building, which forced water all the way to third floor, and six acres of land for playgrounds and a garden.

For unclear reasons but likely related to an attempt to offload unnecessary property expenses during the war, the estate was only available for purchase and not for rent. However, the commissioners who visited the site quickly concluded, "when all the advantages connected with these establishments are duly estimated, the price [nineteen thousand dollars] at which they can be obtained is, in the opinion of your

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[112] James Tupper to William H. Gilliland, November 1, 1862, Columbia, SC; and James N. Boyce to Commissioners, November 10, 1862, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Committee moderate." In words that indicated their supreme confidence in the U.S.

Navy and Army's inability to take or even shell Charleston, they ended by

recommending the purchase due to the "bare possibility of being compelled to abandon

our present home" but for its assurances "should the apprehended exigency arise,

provision had been timely made for it."[113] Rather than dip into the Board's private fund

for such a large acquisition, however, a single board member and one of the wealthiest

men in the South, George A. Trenholm, purchased the property, possibly as a financial

investment or as a way to bolster his own reputation in Charleston. Indeed, two years

later on July 18, 1864, Trenholm became the Confederate Secretary of Treasury,

following former Orphan House ward Christopher Memminger's resignation.

After the Federals' success with the Swamp Angel on Saturday, August 22, 1863

Trenholm must have felt vindicated by his purchase. The Swamp Angel, a 200-pound

Parrot gun that began shelling from Morris Island, quickly dashed Charlestonian ideas

about the safety of the city. That very day, as chairman of the board, Henry A.

DeSaussure called an emergency meeting to confirm the purchase of the property in

Orangeburg. Unsurprisingly, the board determined, "it expedient at this moment to

remove the children of the Institution and their officers to a place of safety in

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[113] William E. Bee and William H. Houston, Committee's Report on the Property at Orangeburg, 1862. This sentiment, which many Charlestonians likely shared, about the Federals' inability to capture Charleston may have inadvertently played a role in prompting the city's bombardment. Indeed, historian Christopher Mekow argues Charleston's shelling, unlike that of places like Vicksburg and Petersburg, was a blatant attack on the civilian populace and an element of retaliatory "total war" without objective military value. See, Christopher A. Mekow, "The Bombardment of Charleston, 1863-1865: Union General Quincy Gillmore, the Targeting of Civilians, and the Ethics of Modern War," (2004) in *South Carolina in the Civil War and Reconstruction: Essays from the Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association*, edited by Michael Brem Bonner and Fritz Hamer (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2016): 67-78.

consequence of the bombardment of the City."[114] Trenholm's savvy purchase

emboldened him in a time when Confederate service was the penultimate example of

patriotism, perhaps even helping position him for his eventual role on the Confederate

Cabinet. Despite not joining the Confederate army, Trenholm was to be thanked "for his

patriotic and timely offer in furnishing so desirable a place for their [the orphans'] safety

and removal."[115] He was a patriarch but also a southern "patriot." As an added bonus,

Trenholm's request in February 1864 to have a child outside of Charleston admitted into

the Home met with approval, solely because of his newfound standing.[116] Trenholm was

not alone. In fact, bombardment offered the commissioners opportunities to

demonstrate their patriarchal authority as elite whites. In tandem with the evacuation,

they voted to admit twenty-two children of the Church Home of Charleston, who had

already evacuated their Home near the waterfront and were living in the Alms House.

No less important, however, were other acts that projected the commissioners

as patriots. As they were preparing to leave, for example, they discussed relocating a

statue of George Washington from the Orphan House lawn, where the bombardment

might lead to damage.[117] This last concern reflected Confederate claims that they were

preserving the ideals of the Founding Fathers, especially George Washington. Historian

Anne Sarah Rubin explains, "appropriating the instantly familiar to make the war

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[114] Charleston Orphan House Commissioners Minutes, August 22, 1863, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library.
[115] Orphan House Minutes, August 24, 1863.
[116] Orphan House Minutes, February 4, 1864. See also, H.A. DeSaussure to G. A. Trenholm, February 5, 1864; and, H. A. DeSaussure to Mr. John S. Small, Steward of the Orphan House, February 6, 1864, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library.
[117] Orphan House Minutes, August 24 - September 21, 1863.

comprehensible was a sure strategy for securing loyalty, for it meant that the new

nation was not so different from the old."[118] In this light, Confederates believed they

were protecting the republic of the Early National period from a North that had

undergone radical changes including rapid urbanization. Thomas R. R. Cobb of the

Georgia delegation to the Montgomery Convention for drafting the Confederate

constitution even suggested naming the new nation the Republic of Washington.[119]

Many Confederates called their struggle a continuation of the Revolution or even the

"Second American Revolution," citing it as one reason for enlistment. Reminders of that

earlier struggle were rampant in Confederate popular culture, but as Rubin explains,

George Washington was central. Confederates, for example, often compared both

Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee to him by dubbing them "second Washingtons." For

this reason, images of Washington were common in the Confederacy, even gracing

Confederate postage stamps and the Great Seal of the Confederacy.[120] In the Charleston

Orphan House, this symbolism played out in the commissioners' priorities to protect

George Washington's statue.

For the move, in addition to the children and a skeleton staff to care for them,

the commissioners sent almost all of the furniture of the House to Orangeburg. The only

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[118] Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 19.

[119] William C. Davis, *"Government of Our Own"*: *The Making of the Confederacy* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

[120] Rubin, *A Shattered Nation.* See also, James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997)*;* James M. McPherson, "Antebellum Southern Exceptionalism: A New Look at an Old Question": A New Look at an Old Question," *Civil War History* 29, no. 3 (1983): 230-244; and Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

exceptions were some of the books in the library and the furniture in the Board room and library, which the Home's staff locked away. With the commissioners' unanimous vote of approval and as another act of the board's patriotic duty, the Confederate Army turned the institution into a Military Hospital until their own evacuation in 1865. The board's only conditions were that the commissioners who stayed in Charleston be allowed to visit the premises for meetings and that the library remain closed.[121] Tellingly, this last condition revealed both the high level of trust the commissioners placed in the Confederate officers and their confidence, despite bombardment, that Charleston would not fall. They were wrong, which led to the raiding of those books and furniture by Union soldiers upon U.S. occupation of the city and the institution itself.[122]

Despite carrying furniture and the most important books with them, the facilities in Orangeburg, unlike the Charleston Orphan House, simply did not have Charlestonian resources. Indeed, even Dr. William Harleston Huger, the Home's esteemed doctor, did not leave Charleston with the children but stayed in the city, and the board had to rely on a local doctor in Orangeburg instead. Even more alarming, on the morning of November 17, 1864, this reality almost had dire consequences. The main buildings that housed the refugee orphans caught fire, endangering the lives of the children but especially threatening to render them "homeless and comparatively destitute." Praising

[121] Orphan House Minutes, September 22, 1863.
[122] "Annual Report of Committee on Library," November 8, 1866, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library. See also, Justus Clement French and Edward Cary, *The Trip of the Steamer Oceanus to Fort Sumter and Charleston, SC* (Brooklyn, NY: Union Steam Printing House, 1865), 120. At least some of the furniture made its way back to the Orphan Home. See, Josiah F. Day, Surgeon 29th Maine & Chief Medical Office Military District to the Directors of the Orphan Asylum, undated, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library.

the "prompt, energetic, and persistent efforts of the citizens of Orangeburg," the

commissioners recognized the new property's vulnerability.[123] In Charleston, they had

long-relied on the city's fire department companies. In Orangeburg, all they could hope

to find was the benevolence of the citizens in the area. Unsurprisingly but as an added

bid towards forging connections in Orangeburg, they asked that their gratitude be

published in Charleston's daily news and that a copy of the article be delivered by the

chairman to the citizens of Orangeburg. Similarly, the board expressed their thanks to

Dr. Elliott of Orangeburg, who treated the refugee orphans while they were sick.[124]

Refugees dependent on charity, the board leaned on the one card they still had – their

ability to connect white interests across class lines and how that could bring public

acclaim to men like Dr. Elliott.

As this reliance suggests, however, during the institution's time in Orangeburg,

the commissioners sought to maintain normal operations, although they were only able

to convene on two occasions in Charleston after the completed move and before the

war's conclusion. Meeting minutes followed the standard organization of years past,

including notation of all the attendant commissioners, notes on decisions regarding

applications to admit or release orphans, and important correspondence with city,

state, or military officials. However, in daily operations the board consolidated power so

that the chairman, DeSaussure, took over most of the decision making, including all

correspondence and assessments regarding children's entries and exits. As elite whites,

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[123] Orphan House Minutes, December 5, 1864.
[124] Orphan House Minutes, December 5, 1864.

the commissioners had other obligations to maintain. For some this included attempting

to run plantations in the midst of Confederate calls to arms, U.S. Army threats to the

land, and enslaved peoples' own attempts to reach the U.S. Army, rendering themselves

free. Other men had businesses and investments struggling under a failed Confederate

economy, while still others faced pressing familial concerns about the safety of the city

and state. Commissioners like Trenholm also had responsibilities to the Confederate

government, which took precedence over their commitments to the Orphan House. As

the most senior member of the board, DeSaussure was well-placed to take charge.

Likely as a testament to wartime staffing issues and food shortages, DeSaussure

generally approved most parental requests to retrieve orphans, with little investigation

into their circumstances and in stark contrast to antebellum standards. In the Home's

early years, although the number of surviving-parent retrievals had grown exponentially

by 1860, compared to apprenticeships, retrievals had been rare. Indeed, the binding-out

committee never approved such a high degree of releases before the war. John Murray

estimates that in 1850, for example, when family restorations were at a peak, of the

children who left, just over 40% returned to a family member.[125] By 1860, that

percentage increased to 62%, perhaps due to increased political tension with the

Presidential election of 1860. This approximate percentage held for the next two years.

Then, in direct correlation to the board's decision to evacuate to Orangeburg, the

percentage of children who left and were released to a family member jumped to 79%

in both 1863 and 1864. Making these numbers even more striking, with the cessation of

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[125] For the changing rates of retrievals before the war, see Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*

the war the following year, that percentage dropped to a prewar level of 42% (See

Figure 2.1). Undoubtably, as Chapter 4 discusses, one reason was simply that wartime

mothers asked to retrieve children at a much higher rate. But DeSaussure also had a

vested interest in keeping the number of institutionalized children lower. Each child was

an additional mouth to feed in a time of increased scarcity.

Figure 2.1 Percentage of Exiting Children Restored to Family, 1860-1865
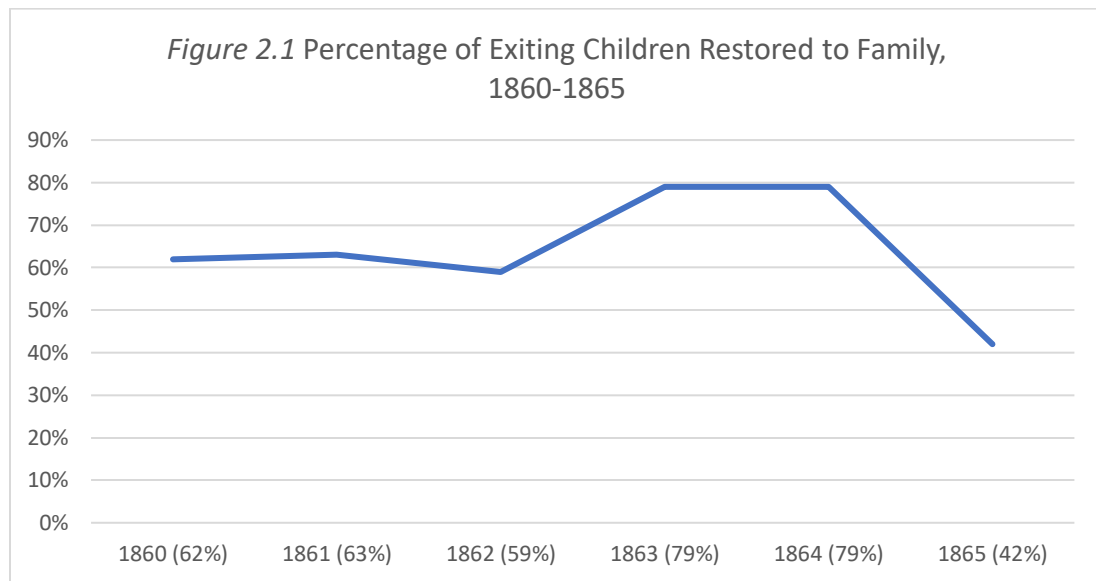
Even the number of children who entered the institution declined sharply. The

Orphan Home Index only reported three applications in 1864, all of whom entered the

institution. Other 1864 entries included the children of new staff members, Trenholm's

recommended boy, and potentially others left off of the index, but that number could

not have been high. In 1865, of the twenty-three applications reported, only ten

children reportedly entered the Home, and all of these were between November and

December – after the Confederate surrender and around the time the orphans returned

to Charleston. This year was also the only year where rejected applications

outnumbered accepted applications, suggesting the applications submitted during the

war or just after it were quickly dismissed. In the end, although these numbers are likely

underestimated, even they are also significantly below the admission rates of the years

in Charleston (See Figure 2.2). Conversely, a spike in 1866 and 1867 indicates not just

the return to Charleston and the end to the blockade (and limited access to resources)

but the board's heightened interest in assisting white orphans in the wake of

emancipation, Reconstruction and, as will be discussed later, shifting politics.

Figure 2.2 Number of Applications Accepted and Rejected, 1860-1870
*Note: These numbers only reflect applications reported on the Charleston Orphan House Index.
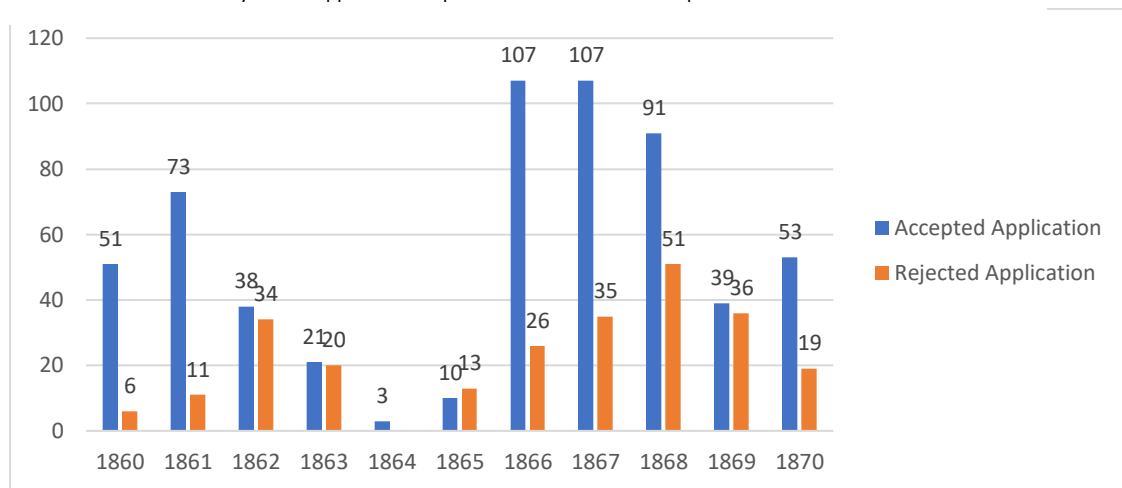
A close examination of the three boys reported as entering in 1864 – during the

wartime sojourn in Orangeburg – suggests these were the children in the direst

circumstances. Due to the scarcity of records in this period, although none of their

actual applications or correspondence regarding the boys survived, two of the boys

disappeared completely after their entry. This reality suggests that they had no surviving

family members to retrieve them (and to be documented doing so), and, if they

survived, they must have left as apprentices. The third boy, Inglis Egan, was a full

orphan, aged no more than eight years old when he entered. Years later in January

1872, he wrote to his sister Caroline in Boston begging to live with her, as he was too old to remain in the institution. She quickly obliged.[126] As these three entries suggest, although he appears to have received far fewer applications in this period, chairman DeSaussure raised the standard of entry, limiting new admissions to the children of staff or to Charlestonian children in the most desperate need. This reality ensured that 304 orphans made the original journey to Orangeburg, with an additional sixteen children who joined them from the Church Home, totaling 320 institutionalized children in 1863. By the time the refugee orphans returned to Charleston in 1865, only a record low 209 children remained institutionalized.[127] These reduced numbers spoke to the issues that plagued the staff, facilities in Orangeburg, children's families, and the orphans themselves in the latter years of the war.

Indeed, that tension reached an ultimate high just after the fall of Savannah on December 21, 1864. Sherman's march would continue north into South Carolina, although Confederates could not be sure if his goal would be the capital at Columbia or Charleston. With its position directly between the two major cities, U.S. soldiers would likely pass through Orangeburg, especially given its position just forty-six miles east of Columbia. As a result, many able-bodied and panicked refugees began fleeing into the northern reaches of the state, and the Orphan House steward Mr. Small suggested moving some of the young teachers and the older orphan girls from Orangeburg to

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[126] Caroline E. Egan to Miss Irving, January 11, 1872, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[127] G. A. Trenholm, Committee in Charge of the Orphan House School Report, November 9, 1866, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Camden, thirty-four miles northeast of Columbia. Experienced chairman DeSaussure,

however, preferred to keep all of the Home's children and staff together, which showed

an understanding of Sherman's broad threat but also ensured greater control in a time

of rampant change. Acknowledging that Sherman would have free reign over virtually all

of South Carolina due to his superior force, he wrote that "to face his [Sherman's]

veterans would require great courage" and that only "Providence" could save the state.

He concluded, "no part of the state is more secure than another" and ordered that

Small and the orphans ensconced in Orangeburg stay put.[128]

Ultimately, bypassing Charleston, Sherman's troops did pass through

Orangeburg on their way to Columbia, but in a report months later, the editors of the

Charleston Daily News reported "the orphans were treated with a great deal of –

courtesy and kindness."[129] Despite Sherman's "hard war" strategy, aimed at destroying

all resources the Confederacy could use and at diminishing the civilian morale, the

orphans at Orangeburg were an exception. Orphans and their diminished foodstuffs

were not viable resources for waging war, and as poor whites at the margins, Sherman

likely had little to gain in targeting them in an attack against South Carolinian morale.

Indeed, inflicting further suffering on vulnerable orphan children may have even created

ideological martyrs for the Confederate cause, thereby boosting resolve, rather than

crushing it. Instead, U.S. troops could portray themselves as orphan redeemers, aiding

children when the Confederacy had so clearly failed. For example, two years later,

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[128] H. A. DeSaussure to J. S. Small, December 30, 1864, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[129] "The Orphan Children," *The Charleston Daily News,* September 20, 1865.

arguing for the need to increase teacher's salaries after their experiences in the war, the board of commissioners reported that the U.S. Commanding Officer at Orangeburg had given all of the teachers three months' pay. For most of these women, this had been almost the only pay they had received through the entirety of 1864.[130] The children and staff had nothing to fear from the Army. Rather, in a statement that underestimated the children's fear, grief over family members, and wartime food rations, newspaper editors concluded the orphans' primary trouble was that they had left "the only happy home they had ever known" in Charleston.[131] That grief would give way to "joy" on November 10, 1865, with their return to the Orphan Home.

The return to Charleston was not seamless. The commissioners immediately faced problems reentering the damaged Orphan Home, and they faced what they saw as an increasingly bleak political landscape, slipping outside of their control. Indeed, over the course of this process, by 1870 raising up poor white orphans became even more politically important than during the antebellum period. As historian Richard Zuczek explains, of all the states South Carolina experienced the longest period of Reconstruction and was home to the largest federal presence. The end of the war, then, ushered in the "beginning of a new phase in a continuing struggle by white South Carolinians to protect their state – and preserve their society – from what they

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[130] Orphan House Minutes, March 8, 1866.
[131] "The Orphan Children," *The Charleston Daily News,* September 20, 1865.

perceived as the encroaching designs of a hostile Northern population."[132] They wanted

what had prompted secession in the first place: Southern white control. As the state

was also home to an overwhelming Black majority, however, white supremacy would

require violence, poll tampering, and absolute white unity. And it would take over a

decade before the federal government finally abandoned the state – and Black South

Carolinians – with the "revolution of 1876." That violence, the Democratic perversion of

the voting process, and the Republican party's own corruption in this period has been

well-documented by scholars.[133] However, the complicated and day-to-day ways in

which conservatives – like the elite white board of commissioners of the Charleston

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[132] Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 1.

[133] Zuczek, *State of Rebellion;* Michael Brem Bonner and Fritz Hamer, eds., *South Carolina in the Civil War and Reconstruction: Essays from the Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2016); Thomas D. Morris, "Military Justice in the South, 1865-1868: South Carolina as a Test Case," *Cleveland State Law Review* 54, no. 4 (2006): 511-557; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1988); Michael Perman, *Reunion without Compromise: The South and Reconstruction 1865-1868* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Michael Perman, "Counter-Reconstruction: The Role of Violence in Southern Redemption," in *The Facts of Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of John Hope Franklin,* ed. Eric Anderson and Alfred A. Moss (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991): 139; Michael Perman, *Pursuit of Unity: A Political History of the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Joel Williamson, *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina during Reconstruction, 1861-1877* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965); Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971); Otto H. Olsen, ed., *Reconstruction and Redemption in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980); Mark W. Summers, *The Press Gang: Newspapers and Politics, 1865-878* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Mark W. Summers, *A Dangerous Stir: Fear, Paranoia, and the Making of Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984); Melinda Meeks Hennessey, "Racial Violence during Reconstruction: The 1876 Riots in Charleston and Cainhoy," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 86 (April 1985): 100-112; Orville Vernon Burton, "Race and Reconstruction in Edgefield County, South Carolina," *Journal of Social History* 12 (Fall 1978): 31-56; Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father's House Are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); and Mark M. Smith, "All is Not Quiet in Our Hellish County': Facts, Fiction, Politics, and Race – The Ellenton Riot of 1876," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 95 (April 1994): 142-155.

Orphan House – forged a united white front has not been fully explored. Poor white

children, or at least the boys, were future voters. The commissioners had a vested

interest in these children even beyond how the poor helped sustain the economy.

Orphans could play one small but vital role in helping win back the state in

reestablishing white supremacy.

By late 1865, however, the commissioners could not know of the Congressional

Acts to come or of the way this would reshape the importance of poor whites to

Charleston's future. Rather, they first had to bring their charges back to the city, where

the property surrounding the Home had been turned into military campsites and the

institution into a Confederate and then a U.S. Army hospital. The building was in need of

repairs. The Committee on Annual repairs reported serious leaks in and around the

cupola and the rest of the roof, damage on the outer structure from Federal shells, and

holes in the boiler caused by overuse on the part of "the Federal authorities."[134]

That the commissioners ignored Confederate use of the property and placed the

damages squarely on the shoulders of the U.S. Army is unsurprising. One of the main

forces preventing a return to the prewar social order was the Federal Army. Martial law

in Charleston had already been imposed by the time of the children's return to the city.

U.S. soldiers were supposed to provide order, administer oaths of allegiance as part of

President Johnson's Reconstruction plan, and introduce new legal norms including new

contractual relationships between freedmen and white employers (often their former

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[134] William H. Gilliland, W. H. Houston, and Henry Cobia, Annual Report of the Committee on Repairs, December 8, 1866, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library. See also, Orphan House Minutes, January 9, 1865.

owners). Until 1867 when they turned over policing responsibilities to the civil

authorities, U.S. soldiers acted as the city's police.[135] Bitter over defeat, this continued

policing, and of the army's use of Orphan House property in 1865, the Federals were an

easy scapegoat that avoided ruffling any feathers on the Charleston city council.

In turn, the city council quickly authorized the commissioners to hire a mechanic

to complete the work, including repairing the boiler engine and replacing the boiler

itself. Workers also replaced over 200 panes of glass that had shattered during the city's

shelling. Painfully aware of the "present financial embarrassment of the City," however,

the commissioners focused on just the repairs necessary to prevent "serious injury or

inconvenience" for a cost of $6,608 by the end of 1866. This cost was still too high for

the postwar Charleston city council to finance, which delayed completion for more than

two years. In 1866, they repaired just the boiler, which powered "laundry, the heating of

the house, and the conveying of water up to the dormitories."[136]

In addition to the repairs, commissioners had to contend not only with

transporting supplies back to the institution from Orangeburg but also with removing

items that had been left by U.S. and Confederate officials. One Confederate, for

example, wrote to the board asking that they send him a letter press, red bookshelf, and

some pigeon holes that he had left in one of the rooms when he fled.[137] Then, too,

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[135] For the mayor's discussion of this relationship between civil authorities and military police, see Charleston City Council Meeting Minutes, November 7, 1866, Charleston County Public Library.

[136] "Proceedings of Council," *The Charleston Daily News,* April 25, 1866; Gilliland, et. al., Annual Report of the Committee on Repairs, 1866; Orphan House Minutes, April 30, 1868-September 3, 1868; and City Council Minutes, January 16, 1866-February 27, 1866.

[137] N. Alsten Prinjh to R. C. Gilchrist, August 26, 1867, Charleston Orphan House, Charleston County Public Library.

although some of these articles were recovered, many of the furniture items and books the commissioners had attempted to lock in the library were missing. Loyal South Carolinians, they quickly attributed these "thefts" to the U.S. Army.[138]

While placing the aftereffects of the war squarely on U.S. soldiers, the commissioners were also quick to wash away signs that the war had diminished the institution in any way. As their first act, they reestablished religious worship and instruction, and they did it in symbolic fashion. In October 1866, Reverend John Bachman of St. John's English Lutheran Church conducted services to a crowded congregation including institutionalized orphans and people of the public. Significantly, Bachman told the crowd that he had preached his first sermon in Charleston in the Orphan Home fifty-one years earlier, and he had offered its first two anniversary orations.[139] Indeed, Bachman was the only living man who had been affiliated with the early years of the institution. To an anxious public, this oration powerfully connected prewar institutional success to the Orphan Home. Thriving as a symbol of antebellum Charlestonian benevolence, that beacon would rise like a phoenix from the ashes of Confederate defeat. So too, could the Confederacy or at least – and more importantly – the Confederacy's goals of maintaining elite white control and racial supremacy. Changes in the city made that image increasingly important for former Confederates.

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[138] For discussions of missing items, see for examples, Josiah F. Day to the directors of the Orphan Asylum, June 13 ___; and Annual Report of Com't on Library, November 8, 1866, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[139] Annual Report of the Committee on the Chapel and Anniversary of the Orphan House of Charleston, November 1, 1866, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library; and "Seventy-Sixth Anniversary of the Orphan House of Charleston," *Charleston Courier,* October 18 and 19, 1866.

Whereas the presence of Federal forces incensed former Confederates,

unsurprisingly, Black Charlestonians and the freedmen who quickly flocked to the city in

the postwar years welcomed the U.S. military forces with zeal. The U.S. Army supported

what was increasingly a Black majority and even appointed a fiery abolitionist named

James Redpath as the school superintendent. In March 1865, Redpath opened the

Morris Street school, which served Charlestonians of both races in segregated classes,

although students were predominantly Black (1000 Black to 200 white in its first year).

Several additional schools followed.[140] The U.S. Army also helped organize the first full-

time health department in the United States, as a response to the influx of hundreds of

people languishing in poverty and susceptible to disease and starvation, including

smallpox and dengue fever epidemics that swept the city in 1865. This city council-

funded health department would treat both Black and white poor people in the city, and

just three months after its establishment had already recorded 1,821 cases, of which

1,235 involved Black people.[141]

The Charleston Orphan House and the Medical College of South Carolina became

crucial to white goals of racial unity and white superiority. They catered only to whites,

and in the case of the Orphan House, poor white children had not only the opportunity

for a better education but also better positioning for work opportunities. With the aid of

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[140] Nita Katharine Pyburn, "The Public School System of Charleston Before 1860," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 61, no. 2 (April 1960): 88-98; Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!;* and John E. Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House: Children's Lives in the First Public Orphanage in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[141] The Charleston city council reported "219 cases of which 102 were white" in the City Hospital, "408 cases, of which six were white" in the Small Pox Hospital, and "1094 cases, of which 478 were white" in the six districts in Charleston. See City Council Minutes, March 27, 1866. See also, City Council Minutes 1865-1866; and Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*

the state governments under President Johnson's Reconstruction, South Carolinians were also reconstructing their own political vision of the new state apart from federal oversight. By October 1865, General W. T. Bennet, Brigadier General in command at Charleston, had relinquished almost all control, including tax collection, to the pre-war city mayor Charles Macbeth.[142] The city council was so confident in this restoration of order and of the city's return to glory that they sent a personal invitation to President Andrew Johnson to visit, although Johnson replied he did not have time. His presence, they argued, would "tend to promote harmony, to inspire confidence, and to confirm and assure the minds of our people of his liberal and magnanimous policy."[143] They wanted assurances that elite white Charlestonians would remain in control.

Encouraging their hopes, Peter Charles Gaillard, a former Confederate officer, won the mayoral election at the end of the year, and then James L. Orr, a former Unionist and Confederate senator, became the first elected post-war governor. With Orr's backing, by December 1865, the state had begun passing laws ("Black Codes") designed to render Blacks people unequal to white people in the eyes of the law. Strict economic and social restrictions including banning Black people from owning weapons, restricting freedmen's movements and job opportunities to farm work or domestic service without an expensive license, and stringent employment contracts that favored

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[142] City Council Minutes, October 3, 1865; and City Council Minutes, October 17, 1865.
[143] City Council Minutes, October 10, 1865, October 17, 1865, and October 30, 1865.

employers (typically former masters). White patrols, the vestiges of antebellum slave

patrols, also emerged to terrorize Black people.[144]

Whites-only-institutions, like the Orphan House, were also a powerful reminder

of the world before and of, potentially, the future to come. As an 1866 report indicates,

this and their dependency on the white community for financial support ensured that

the Home's commissioners frequently invited the white public to events, for general

visits, and weekly religious services. In reference to those services, for example,

commissioners praised the steward and matron's "correct deportment and

praiseworthy example . . . which so universally attracts the attention and elicits the

approval of the friends and benefactors of the Institution worshipping with us."[145] By

May 1866, guests even included Mayor Gaillard.[146] In like manner, in October 1866,

although the board opted for a restrained, private anniversary dinner in lieu of their

prewar tradition of a public celebration, they invited their "friends" and donors to join

the children in their special meal to witness the "joyous" scene.[147] These white orphan

children acted as a symbol of hope and of white unity in a defeated city.

By mid-1866, President Andrew Johnson's policies of minimal federal

interference also bolstered elite white hopes, and they used this freedom to rebuild

their cities as they saw fit. In Charleston, one priority was the effort to rebuild the

"burnt districts," sections of the city that had been devastated by fire in December

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[144] Zuczek, *State of Rebellion;* Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction;* Rable, *But There Was No Peace;* and Trelease, *White Terror.*
[145] 1866 Annual Report, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library.
[146] "A Distinguished Visitor," *The Charleston Courier,* May 14, 1866; and 1866 Annual Report.
[147] "Seventy-Sixth Anniversary of the Orphan House of Charleston," *Charleston Courier,* October 18 and 19, 1866; and Annual Report of the Committee on the Chapel and Anniversary, November 1866.

1861.[148] With Johnson's lame duck policy, checks on violence against Blacks were also virtually nonexistent, while official charges of crime consistently blamed Black men.[149] In Charleston, for example, in July 1866, following a series of violent altercations, indeed even riots, between Blacks U.S. soldiers, former slaves, and white Charlestonians, the city council penned a list of outrages to send to the U.S. Army commander in the city. And they blamed the Army by claiming that "but for the example & leadership of the colored soldiers, our colored population would be peaceably & orderly . . . subject to the jurisdiction of the civil courts."[150] As courts with white judges and juries comprised of twelve white men, not to mention the clearly biased assessment of violence in the city, the Army did not even respond to the city council's claim. But these civil leaders made their goals for the city clear. They wanted the military to leave, so that they could reestablish white dominance.

Within the Home, that dominance was more easily obtained, and it began with the commissioners establishing new rules within the Home. Boys were required to use the stairs near the steward's apartments so that they could be "more immediately under his supervision."[151] Similarly, the board corrected a certain "objectionable" pattern whereby the assistant matron had begun passing out a slice of bread to each child in the dormitories every evening in Orangeburg. The bread had been a response to

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[148] City Council Minutes, 1866, especially August 21, 1866.
[149] For examples of the Charleston city council praising Johnson's policies, see City Council Minutes 1865-1866 but especially February 27, 1866. See also, the *Charleston Mercury* 1865-1866.
[150] City Council Minutes, "Special Meeting," July 10, 1866; and City Council Minutes, July 19, 1866. For more on racial violence in Charleston, see, Zuczek, *State of Rebellion;* and Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*
[151] Orphan House Minutes, April 5, 1866.

the steward's decision to consolidate the children's daily meals from three to two per day, as a result of poor supplies. However, with the resumption of a traditional three meals per day schedule, the board demanded a clear barrier between the dormitories and the dining rooms. These new barriers established strict boundaries curbing the disciplinary problems of the war years.[152]

Orphan House staff also began reshaping the orphans' reading content. In recognition of the "thefts" of much of the institution's library, immediate acquisitions included two hundred Bibles, reinforcing the institution's religious, non-denominational aims for children.[153] By July 1868, another one hundred and twenty publications from the "American Tract Society" also entered the Home, following a thorough examination by the ever-vigilant Agnes K. Irving.[154] But whereas the most common library acquisitions before the war had been novels like *Holiday House* by Catherine Sinclair, nineteenth-century bestseller *The Wide, Wide World* by Susan Warner, and Jane Austen's *Emma,* post-war books were primarily historical in nature. Titles included *King Phillip, Scottish Chiefs, Mary of Scots, Julius Caesar, Marie Antoinette, History of Cleopatra,* and *History of Texas.* As these titles suggest, often the focus was on figures whose stories featured questions about power and injustice, issues that confronted former Confederates supposedly beleaguered by Radical Republicans, scalawags, and carpetbaggers. Fictional titles like *Robin Hood* and *Robinson Crusoe* offered visions of

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[152] Orphan House Minutes, April 12, 1866.
[153] Orphan House Minutes, December 28, 1865.
[154] Orphan House Minutes, July 2, 1868. See also, Library Committee Annual Report, November 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

hope in the face of that injustice and adversity.[155] In short, the tales of quiet submission, self-control, and contentment were gone, while daily boundaries were central to the children's lives, especially when the world outside the Home's walls was increasingly outside of the commissioners' control.

Making this high degree of control even more important, between the collapse of the Confederate economy and high Civil War death tolls, applications for admission also began rolling into the institution, totaling at least 133 in 1866. The board quickly began admitting new orphans so that the years from 1866 to 1868 accounted for the highest numbers of new admissions in the Home between 1860 and 1870 (see Figure 2.2). Admittances included forty-one children of Confederate soldiers in 1866 – a peak for children in this category. Despite the outflow of children who were either retrieved or apprenticed, by 1867, this ensured a jump from 208 institutionalized children in 1865 to 294. By 1869, there were a peak high 321. The board clearly recognized the need for institutional assistance in the postwar period, and they reacted quickly. Likely, this accelerated acceptance rate was a credit to the board members' dual commitment to recognizing Confederate service, as indicated by the number of Confederate children who entered in 1866 *and* to their own anxieties about the changing political and racial landscape. In order to combat freedmen's overwhelming majority in South Carolina, white unity was becoming central to any hopes of white control.

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[155] Charleston Orphan House Library Records, 1860-1870, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library.

In fact, this aim appears to have been even more important than Confederate service. As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, a father's Confederate service did not guarantee a child's admission, especially as time passed. It only warranted some leniency and a willingness to admit an uncommonly high number of children. The fact that the board rejected almost as many applications as it accepted in 1869 (thirty-nine admitted to thirty-six rejected), points to both the high number of children already in the Home and the waning weight Confederate sacrifice had in influencing the board members. This year was the only one in the postwar period where more children of Confederate soldiers were rejected than admitted (see Figure 2.3). A father's Confederate service mattered and certainly transformed admission rates, but the commissioners were also facing a new, more pressing battle for political control.

Figure 2.3 Number of Confederate Children's Applications Accepted and Rejected
*Note: These numbers only reflect applications reported on the Charleston Orphan House Index.

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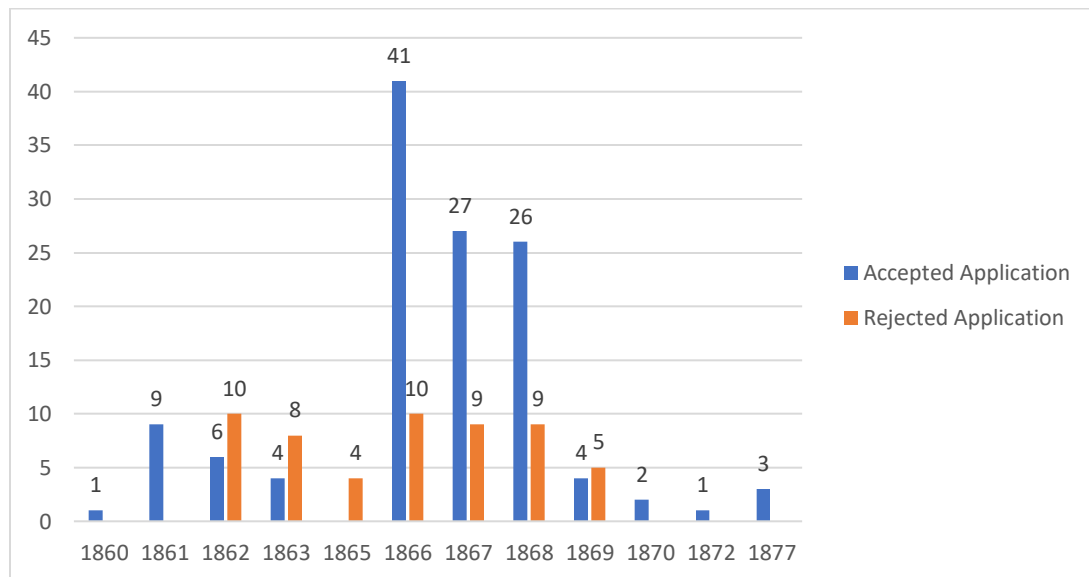
Indeed, the elections of 1866 had marked the next stage of Reconstruction, when a Republican Congress took control. Passed over Johnson's veto on March 2, 1867, the "Reconstruction Acts" divided the South into five military districts, which made Charleston a part of the Second Military District under first Major General Daniel Sickles and then Major General E. R. S. Canby's commands. South Carolina was once again under military control and would remain so until it organized a new constitutional convention, formally recognized *full* male suffrage, and ratified the 14th Amendment. In Charleston, this meant that by March 1867, the first of three military officers acted as the appointed mayor, while U.S. soldiers began actively enfranchising Black males and establishing equality before the law. Sickles even based his headquarters in the city. Then, at the Federal level, while Radical Republicans actively worked towards enfranchising Blacks, white Charlestonians felt the threat of a revolution from above that would eliminate any element of control they had in the city.

Equally important, a powerful group of African American leaders also began to rise in Charleston, threatening revolution from below. Centered around Black churches, these men originally mobilized to contest the Black Codes and fight for their rights to vote and testify in court. As historian Laylon Wayne Jordan explains, white outrage ensured that the "air crackled with tension and sporadic violence born of the fevers of war, race, and novel circumstances."[156] So tense was this reality, on August 16, 1867, for

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[156] Laylon Wayne Jordan, "The New Regime: Race, Politics, and Police in Reconstruction Charleston, 1865-1875," (1994) in *South Carolina in the Civil War and Reconstruction: Essays from the Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association* edited by Michael Brem Bonner and Fritz Hamer (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2016): 174.

example, even a peaceful torchlight procession of around 300 Black people turned violent when someone fired a revolver into the air, sparking panic and an attack with bricks on a nearby building.[157]

For elite whites like the commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, Radical Reconstruction was a devastating blow, and from the start, Major General Daniel Sickles disgusted them. Chosen for his combined military, political, and diplomatic experience, Sickles arrived in Charleston with 7,000 troops under his command. In his order assuming command, he promised to "maintain the security of the inhabitants in their persons and property, to suppress insurrection, disorder, and violence, and to punish or cause to be punished all disturbers of the public peace and criminals."[158] He intended to end white coercion of freedmen. As a military commander even before he became leader of the Second Military District, for example, the *Charleston Mercury* lambasted Sickles for suppressing corporal punishment, which the editor argued bred theft, "license," violence, and bloodshed.[159] Then as one of his acts in 1867, he banned racial discrimination on railroads, horse carts, and steamboats.[160] As historian James Hessler explains, however, Sickles was not temperamentally suited for the position. Rather, as he had displayed when he publicly murdered his wife's lover Philip Barton Key (the son of Francis Scott Key who penned "The Star Spangled Banner") in 1859, Sickles was emotional under stress. And he developed a strong reputation for being excessively

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[157] Jordan, "The New Regime."
[158] *Daily Missouri Republican,* "General Sickles Assumes Command-Civil Authorities to be Obeyed-Officers and Citizens Invoked to Preserve Order," March 25, 1867.
[159] *Charleston Mercury,* "Military Law in Time of Peace," December 20, 1866.
[160] *Daily Missouri Republican,* June 13, 1867.

strict towards white Carolinians. Just five months after his posting, after refusing to

dismiss the charges on four North Carolinian men convicted of murdering his soldiers,

President Johnson dismissed Sickles.[161]

His successor, General R. S. Canby, however, outraged white Carolinians even

further, although at least one biographer, Max L. Heyman, argues he was more

successful than most other the district commanders. Canby genuinely believed in the

Reconstruction Acts, and he wanted to suppress all instances of violence and

insurrection. In Charleston, his actions included removing the mayor of Charleston, his

successor, and thirteen members of the board of aldermen in 1867. His replacements

included six white alderman and seven Black aldermen, and that balance remained

relatively the same until 1877.[162] That same council was able to modernize the

Charleston police force into a paramilitary unit operating full time day and night, and by

1868, it was integrated. Historian Laylon Wayne Jordan estimates that by 1869 half of

the police officers were Black, and that reality would not change until after the

"Revolution of 1876" when white Democrats were able to reestablish control and white

supremacy.[163] The city council ranked this force so highly in helping ease violence that it

became the most expensive item in the city budget.

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[161] James A. Hessler, *Sickles at Gettysburg: The Controversial Civil War General Who Committed Murder, Abandoned Little Round Top, and Declared Himself the Hero of Gettysburg* (New York: Savas Beatie, 2009). See also newspaper articles covering the Sickles controversy, for examples, *Daily Missouri Republican,* "Sickles Order Revoked," August 16, 1867 – August 24, 1867; and *Daily Missouri Republican,* September 7, 1867.

[162] Max L. Heyman, Jr., *A Prudent Soldier: A Biography of Major General E. R. S. Canby, 1817-1873* (Glendale, CA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1959). See also, Morris, "Military Justice in the South;" and Jordan, "The New Regime."

[163] Jordan, "The New Regime," and Zuczek, *State of Rebellion.*

In the midst of Canby's leadership, Charleston was also home to the state's new

constitutional convention. Columbia, as the state capital, would have been the official

site, but the Capital building there was without a roof. Instead, a mixed delegation of

legitimately elected white *and* Black Republicans made their way to the Holy City, while

white Charlestonians watched. In June 1868, South Carolina officially reentered the

Union, and Charleston began to see a recession of the Union troops so that by October,

there remained just 881 soldiers in the entire state, although a large portion of those

were in the post in Charleston.[164]

Despite the promises of an integrated delegation of Republicans, an integrated

police force, Black male suffrage, and of the improvements in social freedoms for

former slaves, elite white Southerners had not given up the fight for white supremacy

through political control. Indeed, just weeks before the Reconstruction Acts passed,

Governor Orr urged Black residents to be "patient" and not to "disturb ourselves too

much about politics, but turn your half hours to some more useful purpose than loafing

at the street corners talking politics."[165] He wanted them to ignore and even resist the

franchise. Equally important for white Democratic leaders, as historian Richard Zuczek

explains, although Blacks vastly outnumbered whites in the state, white Carolinians also

held the upper hand in economic power. This inequality enabled white Democrats to

use economic coercion through bribery or as a means of placing political pressure on

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[164] Zuczek, *State of Rebellion;* Rable, *But There was No Fear;* and Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*
[165] "Mass Meeting of the Freedmen - Address by Governor Orr and General Scott," *Charleston Mercury,* February 15, 1867.

Black voters to vote Democrat. If they did not cooperate, the threat maintained, Black men would lose their jobs.[166]

Secondly, as the U.S. Army receded into the background of civil and state affairs, organized physical force expanded, including the arrival of the Ku Klux Klan in South Carolina by 1868. Klan activity, including organized strikes against Blacks and Republican whites, escalated just prior to election seasons. Then, when these two methods failed, white Democrats also committed voter fraud, including manipulating ballots or ballot boxes and using underage voters to cast additional ballots. They, in sum, refused to relinquish control to a Republican government, even when they continued to lose elections.[167] The elections of 1868, 1870, 1872, and 1874 were failures, but they were also testing grounds, which ultimately culminated in the Democratic victories of 1876.

Key to these methods, however, was also the unity of the white voting populace. Speaking of economic depression but also acknowledging the practical realities of the population in South Carolina, the editors of the *Charleston Mercury* explained, "Our City by the Sea, is very much depressed. South Carolina having more slave property, than any other State in the South, lost more by emancipation . . . [and] more of her people, it is believed, fell in battle than of any other state."[168] South Carolina's "people," in this view, were white, and they were economically devastated and vastly outnumbered by former slaves. Only, as the editors continued, the *white* populace's "calm and steady

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[166] Zuczek, *State of Rebellion.*
[167] For a detailed discussion of Klan activity in this period, and the government's response to it, see Zuczek, *State of Rebellion.* See also, Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction;* Rable, *But There Was No Peace;* Perman, "Counter-Reconstruction," and Trelease, *White Terror.*
[168] "Our City by the Sea," *Charleston Mercury,* December 8, 1866.

earnestness" could overcome the obstacles they faced. One year later, in response to

the Military Reconstruction Acts, the editors articulated even further. They wrote that

Radicals were "intervening in the most hostile spirit towards the white race [in the

South] . . . Hired emissaries, white and black, are penetrating every part of the South, to

organize and control the votes of the blacks against the whites . . . whereby the black

population may be used, to command the white." The editors drew a clear dividing line

between whites and Blacks, whereby true *white* South Carolinians were united in their

fight to resist, as the editors continued, "negro rule."[169] Rather than advocate for a

voting bloc, however, they urged white voters to boycott the ballots, biding their time

until they could rise up together to overturn the radicals and regain power. Regardless

of the plan, however, as Michael Perman explains in his *Pursuit of Unity, "*unity" was the

central goal throughout South Carolina and the South more broadly.[170]

In addition to unity, white Democrats also recognized the need to rebuild the

white population by stopping outmigration, as Orr articulated in the opening quotes of

this chapter, and by encouraging immigration. This, combined with economic realities,

made rebuilding the railroads vital. As a port in decline, Charleston, in particular, looked

to the railroads as a way to remain central to the economy, and from the moment they

reconvened in 1865, the city council discussed progress on this front in almost every

regular meeting. Their first priority was to repair the Charleston and Savannah Rail lines,

which connected these port cities but were damaged during General Sherman's "March

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[169] "The Present Policy of the Southern States," *Charleston Mercury,* July 26, 1867.
[170] Perman, *Pursuit of Unity.*

to the Sea." But establishing new lines that could connect Charleston to cities in the

west was also deeply appealing. Although they did not come to fruition, such lines

would have given Charleston access to new markets, boosting trade, driving down the

costs of goods in the city, and reestablishing the Holy City as one of the great cities in

the country.[171]

In response to the influx of refugees after the war, the city council had and was

also continuing to put in place policies and institutions for policing this populace –

without ousting them from the city. In 1865, U.S. Military officials had even facilitated

this process by creating a "House of Industry," which helped find work for some of the

"over two thousand (2000) destitute white persons" who had been collecting rations

from the army.[172] By May 1866, the Alms House also resumed issuing rations to the

city's indigent populace.[173] A House of Corrections and official policies directed towards

transient salesmen and other nonresidents helped police these individuals. These non-

Charlestonians were not tax payers, but they also could not sell without the city getting

its due in the form licenses and bonds. As a symbol of modernization for would-be

immigrants, the city council also successfully funded the Charleston City Railway

Company, which created eighteen miles of street railways for public transit through the

city.[174] Likewise, in addition to rebuilding the burnt district, the city council allocated a

significant portion of the budget not already accounted for in debt payment to the city's

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[171] Zuczek, *State of Rebellion.*
[172] General Bennett to Hon. P. Gaillard Mayor of Charleston, November 15, 1865 in Charleston City Council Records, November 1865.
[173] Charleston City Council Records, May 10, 1866.
[174] City Council Minutes, October 3, 1865-December 1870.

streets and pavements and to the city police (see Figure 2.4). Each of these needs, both

of which served to encourage immigration and control the city's poor, rated $70,000 in

1870.[175] Charleston actively pushed against the tides painting it as a backwater among

the nation's cities.

As the figures on the 1870 budget also show, however, the city council also

prioritized the city orphan house above all other institutions (see Figure 2.5), and it

allocated additional funds as necessary for repairs. The Orphan House's preeminence as

a model antebellum institution in the eyes of Charleston's leaders has already been

discussed, but it symbolized the city's wealth and elite white privilege in the hierarchy of

cities. This, in part, explains its position in the city budget. Equally important, however,

was the fact that Charlestonians recognized these children as keys to the future.

Without intervention, they might become dregs of society, at best dependent drains on

the economy or at worst allies of former slaves, although undoubtably not all members

of the integrated city council saw the threat in this way. In contrast, however, as the

commissioners of the Orphan House explained to the city's mayor and aldermen in

December 1867, the Home's school provided "proper discipline" and prepared the

children "for usefulness in life."[176] That "usefulness" referred to the city's laboring class,

but, although it went unsaid, as an institution for white children only, it also included

these children's future significance as *white* citizens in a state with a much larger Black

population. With the enfranchisement of Black men looming over their heads, the

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[175] City Council Minutes, February 24, 1870. See also, City Council Minutes, March 27, 1870.
[176] H.W. DeSaussure to the Honorable the Mayor and Aldermen of Charleston, December 2, 1867 in City Council Minutes, December 3, 1867.

Orphan House commissioners and other white elites doubtless also recognized the role

poor whites could play in simple numbers and, ultimately, as male voters.

Figure 2.4 Amounts Paid out of the City Treasury, February 1870
*Note: These numbers do not include $377,000 appropriated for debt payments

Figure 2.5 Amounts Paid out of the City Treasury to Institutions
February 1870
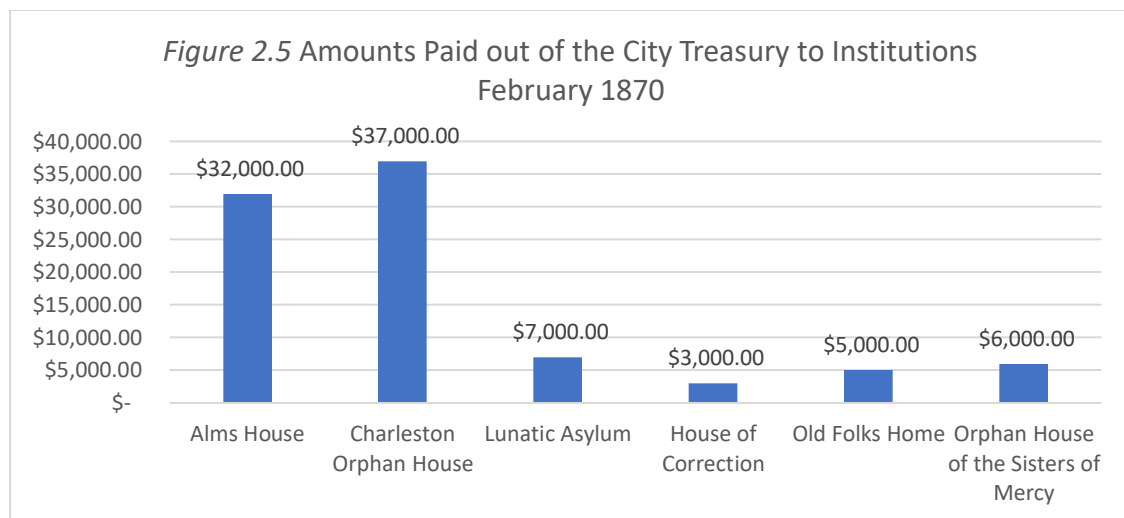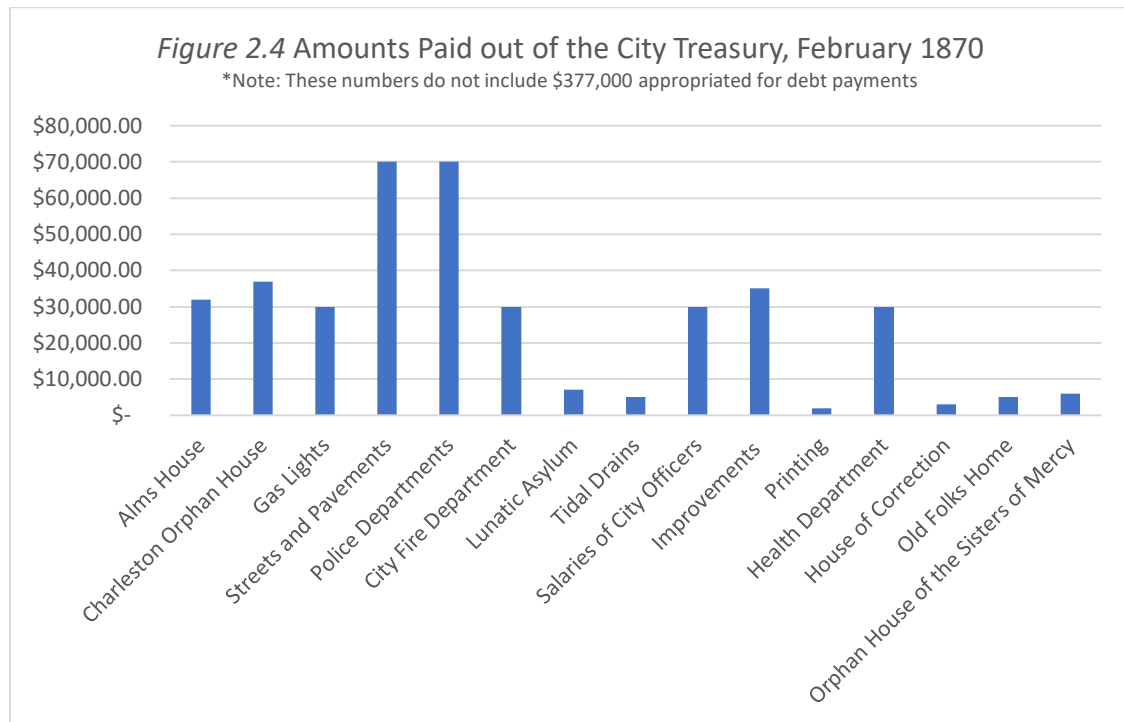
Within the Orphan Home, however, the politics of the city and of the nation at

large receded into the background. In their official records, Orphan House

commissioners focused exclusively on daily operations within the Home and did not

muse on the issues former Confederates faced outside of those walls. Their quest, in

some ways, was the same as it had ever been – an investment into the lives of poor

white orphans to ensure future economic stability and white unity in the future.

Reconstruction and Black male suffrage only intensified this goal slightly, and within the

Home, these factors had little bearing on day to day life. Rather, the commissioners

completed major repairs, reestablished order (through Principal Agnes K. Irving), and

reached a point of relative normalcy within the early years of Reconstruction.

Normalcy by no means ensured smooth operations, but a fire on March 18,

1867, demonstrates the advantages of facing problems ensconced in Charleston. Just

after 1 a.m., one of the Orphan Home's two watchmen noticed smoke coming from the

chimney connected to Dining Room Number 1. At first he brushed the smoke off as

evidence of someone starting a fire in the fireplace, but the smoke thickened at an

alarming rate. In response, he quickly raised the alarm by running through the Orphan

Home yelling, "fire" and sounding the bell twelve times to call the fire department.

Unlike the fire in Orangeburg, however, response to this fire operated liked a well-oiled

machine. Principal Irving woke the assistant matrons, who assisted her in evacuating all

of the dormitories, while she gathered three of the oldest boys to begin pouring water

on the fire. Likewise, the hospital matron on duty Miss O'haire wrapped the forty-nine

children in her care in blankets and then moved them outside for safety. The steward

and matron Mr. and Mrs. Steinmeyer dressed and then confirmed all of the dormitories

were empty before exiting the building. At one point, the fire was so serious that

witnesses reported flames "coming out of the lawn windows of the House," but the

House's engineers, oldest orphan boys, and even a neighbor from across the street who climbed over the fence to help were able to keep the fire at bay until the firemen arrived.[177] This response, combined with the "skill and energy" of the firemen, prevented any serious repercussions.[178]

In the aftermath, the board of commissioners promptly organized a committee to investigate the institution's response to the fire and the fire's origins. In this inquiry, they revealed much about the interworking of the Home and of the unpredictable nature of institutional life. As part of their daily duties, Lizzy Murray and Johanna Blake, two of the oldest and most trusted girls, were responsible for cleaning up the dining rooms. This ensured that each night they were the last people in those rooms. Lizzy, for example, reported needing at least two hours after everyone finished their meals so that she could clean up and set the tables for breakfast the next morning. Before finishing, both girls were responsible for confirming the gas lights and fire places were out and for locking each of the two dining rooms. They delivered the keys nightly to the steward. On the night of the 18th, Johanna Blake had sole charge of the dining room where the fire initially began. However, she was a trusted worker who confirmed the fire and gas lights were out, and the commissioners had no reason to doubt her

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[177] Committee of Investigation into the Origin of the late Fire, Testimonies and Reports, May 1867; Testimony taken by Committee of Investigation as cause of Fire etc., March 23, 1867, Orphan House Minutes, March 1867, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library. See also, "Fire," *Charleston Daily News,* March 19, 1867; "Special Notices: Extract from the Minutes of the Board of Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, *Charleston Daily News,* March 23, 1867; and Committee on the Origin of the Fire, June 13, 1867, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[178] "Proceedings of City Council: Forty-First Regular Meeting," *Charleston Daily News,* May 25, 1867.

statement. After the girls were in their dormitories, the steward Mr. Steinmeyer

returned from a church meeting in Charleston around 9:30pm. By looking into the

windows, he confirmed all fires appeared out but checked them again as part of his

nightly walk through the grounds and lower stories of the Home. Again, nothing

appeared amiss until the fire spontaneously burst hours later.[179] Thus, just as older

orphan boys began the process of putting the fire out, older girls played a key role in

cleaning and in ensuring safety in the institution. Then, staff members like the

watchmen, engineers, the steward, and eventually city firemen intervened as necessary.

Key to this smooth process, however, was the children's obedience and dependability

and, in the case of the fire, a well-organized response team in the Charleston fire

companies. Both of these aspects were suspect during the war but not in

Reconstruction-era Charleston, where civil and military authorities agreed over the

institution's value to the city.

As the 1867 fire shows, however, after the war and especially by 1868 the

Charleston Orphan House had resumed optimal functioning. Safely ensconced in the

home built for its charges and managed by the institution's Principal Agnes K. Irving, the

Orphan House was at its best in countering disciplinary problems, in-house staff

controversies, educating its charges, and in admitting hapless orphans both unaffiliated

and affiliated with the Confederacy. As proud patriarchal leaders in Charleston, this

stability helped the board of commissioners cultivate precisely the image they

envisioned for themselves and helped them envision a future with white unity intact.

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[179] Committee of Investigation Testimonies and Reports, May 1867.

Nevertheless, however, this fight for stability in the institution was just the private face of institutional leadership, and it did not happen in a vacuum. Indeed, it was one cog in a much larger machine driven towards promoting white supremacy and Democratic control of the state, although it appears to have legitimately assisted poor orphans even if by happenstance. Indeed, as the next chapter will show, perhaps its greatest achievement was in improving the medical and health prospects of its charges in a period of intense disruption and poor health.

CHAPTER 3. THE SCOURGE OF THE SOUTH: SICKNESS AND THE CHARLESTON ORPHAN

HOME, WHEN ORPHANS BECAME PATIENTS

Capping off a series of tragedies that began when their Confederate father died just "three days before the end of the war," and ended with their mother's death in early 1867, four-and-a-half-year-old Georgianna and twelve-year-old Joseph Robert Jones entered the Orphan Home in poor health. Georgiana was a confirmed "Dirt-Eater," an indicator of low iron and the cause of severe dysentery. And it resulted in her death on December 8, 1867, just nine months after she arrived.[180] Joseph Robert entered the sick ward one week later with dropsy, a disease characterized by swelling of the soft tissues, often affecting the heart or kidneys.[181] One of the causes of dropsy is the consumption of bad water or malnutrition. While Joseph Robert's fate beyond this is unclear, he, like many orphan children with poor diets and a weakened immune system, likely died.[182] But before their demise, children like Joseph Robert and Georgianna Jones were patients in the Charleston Orphan House, where the commissioners and staff fought to combat nineteenth-century diseases, both endemic and epidemic, and childhood ailments like broken bones, parasites, and malnutrition. The Civil War, however, with its penchant for creating food scarcity and for setting massive groups of

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[180] Application for Admission for Georgianna Jones, February 21, 1867; and Application for Admission for Joseph Robert Jones, May 20, 1867; John L Dawson to the Chairman & Commissioners of the Orphan House, February 21, 1867; and William Harleston Huger, *Physician's Records,* December 12, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[181] Huger, *Records,* December 19, 1867.

[182] While Huger, who was a meticulous record-keeper in documenting child deaths, did not note his death, the 1870 Census Record for the House does not list Joseph Robert. There is also no record he was indentured. 1870 Charleston Census Record.

people in motion, threatened the Home's delicate system for maintaining health in the Home and, for a time, rendered it virtually useless.

As elite, learned men concerned with Charleston's position in the national hierarchy of cities, the city's leaders prioritized the Home's reputation for the most up to date medical care. As Charlestonians, they were also aware of the region's reputation for poor health, which the Civil War only compounded. Between 1670 and 1860, the lowcountry was simultaneously the wealthiest and unhealthiest region in the colonies and nascent United States. The area's stifling heat and high humidity ensured it was a haven for tropical diseases, especially after planters converted land to rice plantations. This stagnant, fresh water acted as a breeding ground for malaria, yellow fever, and dengue fever-bearing mosquitoes. As a port city, the influx of immigrants and traders also ensured diseases like smallpox, tuberculosis, measles, and whooping cough remained in flux, providing a constant threat to local health and commerce.[183] Reputations of poor health and life expectancy following a move to or even a short visit to Charleston at times deterred immigration and occasionally shut down seaborne trade. As such, members of Charleston's city council and other elites, like those on the board of commissioners at the Orphan House, had a vested interest in minimizing that reputation. Rather than provide additional fodder for northern newspaper editors proclaiming the dangers of the city, then, malnourished and sick poor white orphans who entered the Orphan House but left it healthy and better fed were a boon. As an

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[183] Peter McCandless, *Slavery, Disease, and Suffering in the Southern Lowcountry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

added bonus, healthy children could later enter the adult work force, helping prevent

outmigration and low rates of immigration to Charleston, both of which the region's

reputation for disease helped shape.[184]

Central to this quest for proficient medical care was the city council's selection of

the Home's physician, who throughout the period under study was Dr. William

Harleston Huger. Huger graduated in 1849 from the Medical College of the State of

South Carolina. Afterwards, he practiced in both Paris and Dublin before becoming one

of the most prominent physicians in Charleston. This training ensured he was one of the

most educated doctors in the South, where many doctors prior to the late-nineteenth

century were self-taught or had only attended medical school for one or two years. As

historians Melanie Wiggins and Marli F. Wiener explain, however, the field was

becoming increasingly professionalized, with medical schools emerging throughout the

antebellum United States and a growing number of physicians who had trained abroad.

Through its wealth and high rates of disease, Charleston was one of the first cities to

begin this process, and it boasted one of the earliest marine hospitals and the Medical

Society of South Carolina which originated in the late eighteenth century. It was one of

the centers of medical learning in the South before the war. By the mid-nineteenth

century, this education and culture of medical research led many southern doctors,

especially during the Civil War, to advocate for a distinctly "Southern" medical system,

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[184] Peter McCandless's work on Charleston concludes that Charleston's population declined to such a degree that it went from being the fourth largest city in 1790 to the twenty-second largest by 1860. By 1900, it was only the sixty-eighth largest municipality. See, McCandless, *Slavery, Disease, and Suffering.*

which would have catered to the region's unique disorders.[185] Both in training and in his

position in Charleston, Huger was a prime example of this well-educated, ideal

"Southern" physician.

Huger served the Orphan House from 1854 until 1906, making him one of the

longest-serving staff members.[186] His considerable responsibilities included managing

the hospital and quarantine wards on the fifth floor and directing all nurses, without

ever charging for his services. The board also required him to maintain a weekly journal,

noting the cases admitted into the hospital, general health of the children, and

recommendations for improving sanitary conditions and the general health of the

House. This work kept him busy and gave him access to a steady stream of some of the

most vulnerable white citizens in one of the unhealthiest regions of the country. In April

1862, for example, he averaged twenty-four children a week as patients in the hospital

wards, and then, in December 1867, during a relative time of wellness in the Home, he

still averaged fourteen patients a week.[187] Huger's treatment methods for these

patients reflected nineteenth-century medical knowledge more generally.

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[185] Marlie F. Wiener with Mazie Hough, *Sex, Sickness, and Slavery: Illness in the Antebellum South* (Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012); and Melanie Wiggins, "Combatting Yellow Fever in Galveston, 1839-1905," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (January 2016): 234-252. See also, John E. Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House: Children's Lives in the Public Orphanage in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Margaret Humphreys, *Marrow of Tragedy: The Health Crisis of the American Civil War* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Charles Bernard Rodning, "Patient Isolation, City Pest-House, Mobile, Alabama, 1836-1910," *The Alabama Review* 71, no. 3 (July 2018): 179-199; and Jeanne Susan Kisacky, "Restructuring Isolation: Hospital Architecture, Medicine, and Disease Prevention," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 79, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 1-49.

[186] Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*

[187] Huger, *Records.*

Much of medical debate in this period centered around the origins of diseases. Since germ theory did not exist even in Europe until the 1870s, it was not widely discussed in the U.S. until the 1880s and 1890s.[188] Singular causations, instead, hinged on either miasmatic theories (environmental) or contagionist models (person to person). In attempting to understand yellow fever and its virtual restriction to Charleston, for example, many people blamed the environment and the terrain, rather than its true culprit, the mosquito. Smallpox, in contrast, was long-understood within a contagionist framework, where someone infected poisoned the air, thereby passing the disease. In both models, a person's susceptibility hinged on some combination of the environment, age, gender, and race or ethnicity. As historian Marli Wiener explains, in the South, this conceptualization assisted doctors in building up their clientele. By claiming that there were divisions in physical and mental health based on race and gender, they actively supported the Southern hierarchy, where white men were considered to be the healthiest and Black women were seen to be the unhealthiest, solely on the basis of race and gender. Black men and white women were somewhere in between.[189]

With little understanding of the infections themselves, actual cures were all too often beyond medical means. Doctors relied on a variety of methods, including homeopathy, botanicals, bloodletting, cupping, sweating, and vomiting to treat patients.

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[188] Humphreys, *Marrow of Tragedy;* and Charles Allen McCoy, "The Railway Switches of History: The Development of Disease Control in Britain and the United States in the 19th and early 20th Century," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 30, no. 3 (September 2017): 650-673.

[189] Wiener, *Sex, Sickness, and Slavery.*

But often the best care was simply the ability to provide comfort and occasionally to

perform surgery. Many doctors and city leaders, then, focused instead on the two

leading preventative measures – sanitation and quarantine. Sanitation, including

cleaning streets and draining low lots, was theoretically designed to combat diseases

with a miasmatic (environmental) origin. Quarantine was supposed to stop the spread

of contagious diseases linked to immigration or the movement of armies, or in other

words, people. In practice, quarantine's cheapness meant that it was often prioritized in

city decisions, but debates over the efficacy of sanitation over quarantine and vice versa

raged hotly in both the United States and Europe until the 1880s.[190]

The Orphan House's Dr. Huger undoubtably understood both sides of this

debate, and he embraced a dual method of quarantine and sanitation, ordering

quarantines most frequently for their affordability.[191] As methods of quarantine, for

example, admission hinged on the health of an applicant; then, newly admitted children

began their stint in the institution by sleeping in quarantine rooms for several days in

order to observe any latent symptoms.[192] At Huger's behest, the commissioners also

sometimes closed the Home during city-wide epidemics by refusing to admit visitors,

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[190] McCoy, "The Railway Switches of History;" Kisacky, "Restructuring Isolation;" Wiener, *Sex, Sickness, and Slavery;* and Humphreys, *Marrow of Tragedy.*

[191] 1861 Bylaws of the Orphan House of Charleston South Carolina. For nineteenth-century debates about the efficacy of quarantine versus sanitation see, McCandless, *Slavery, Disease, and Suffering;* Humphreys, *Marrow of Tragedy*; Kisacky, "Restructuring Isolation;" Rodning, "Patient Isolation, City Pest-House, Mobile, Alabama;" McCoy, "The Railway Switches of History;" James Schwartz, "A Melancholy and Trying Season": Cholera and the Conflict over Cultural Boundaries in Early Michigan," *Journal of the Early Republic* 26 (Spring 2006): 95-116; and Wiggins, "Combatting Yellow Fever in Galveston."

[192] In August 1869, in the midst of a measles epidemic, Dr. Huger even recommended closing admissions simply because he had no open quarantine rooms due to the number of sick children. See, Huger, *Records,* August 5, 1869.

entertain admission applications, or allow the children outside of the enclosure surrounding the Home.[193] As proof of his acceptance of the sanitation model, however, when faced with serious outbreaks within the Home, the doctor often recommended baths for the children and white washing of the walls in the dormitories.

Although Huger rarely named specific children in his weekly journal, unless the child's predicament was dire, he kept a detailed record of the diseases as they moved through the Orphan House's halls. Huger reported many common childhood diseases like whooping cough, measles, and scarlet fever, as well as epidemical illnesses like smallpox, tuberculosis, and mosquito-borne "Broken Bone" fever. Signs of malnutrition, parasitic worms, and poor drinking water were also common, including chronic diarrhea, vomiting, dysentery, and marasmus (malnourishment).[194] In an interesting twist, some of the nineteenth-century's most feared diseases, however, were consistently absent. Although malaria plagued the lowcountry at large, as a "country" disease caused by mosquitoes on the rice plantations, malaria was virtually nonexistent in the Home. Likewise, cholera, which historian James Z. Schwartz calls the "scourge of the nineteenth century," was no worse in Charleston than in the rest of the country, and it only made its way (at least according to Huger's diagnoses) into the Orphan Home on rare occasions. The commissioners must have been able to maintain an uninfected water source.[195] The disease most associated with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century

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[193] See, for example, Minutes, March 1, 1866; and Minutes, August 16, 1866. By the time of the Civil War, this pattern of closures due to disease in the city was customary. See, Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*
[194] Huger, *Records.*
[195] Schwartz, "A Melancholy and Trying Season," 95. See also, Huger, *Records.*

Charleston, yellow fever, also did not make its official way into the Orphan House between the 1860s and 1870s. The fact that orphans in the home were locals helps explain this, as by 1800 this disease generally infected newcomers who did not carry immunities from having contracted yellow fever when they were young. The children in the Home, in contrast, likely faced the disease before they ever entered and could not contract it again, although there is some possibility that Huger confused its symptoms and misdiagnosed its victims. The fact that some of the children's admission's records noted parents who had died of yellow fever, however, lends credence to the theory that they had already had the disease.[196]

Unsurprisingly, the Civil War exacerbated the numbers of sick children, with the number of reported contagious diseases increasing with each influx of Confederate or U.S. soldiers. By March 1862, for example, Confederate troops flooded into Charleston in anticipation of an attack. By April 15, Dr. Huger reported his first case of typhoid fever. This disease was common in both armies because it typically spread through the passage of bodily waste - and the typhoid micro-organism - into water supplies. Particularly dangerous to children, the micro-organism attacked the intestinal tract, leading to symptoms including vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, seizures, coma, and fever as high as 106. Before the arrival of the army, however, historian Peter

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[196] For more on yellow fever, its spread, and how it affected immigration and the economy, see McCandless, *Slavery, Disease, and Suffering.* See also, Wiggins, "Combatting Yellow Fever in Galveston, 1839-1905." For children with parents who died of yellow fever, see for examples Application for Admission for John, Thomas, and William McAsey, 1861; Application for Admission for Frances Ann Martin, 1861; Application for Admission for John Morrisy, 1861; and Application for Admission for Christina Losser, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

McCandless finds that this disease was no more prevalent in Charleston than in other areas of the antebellum country.[197] The arrival of infected soldiers, then, exposed the children to high rates of the disease, with severe consequences. Typhoid fever quickly spread throughout the institution, with one final case reported August 15, although smaller bursts of the disease continued to infect children in the Home through 1863. At least four children died from typhoid in this period.[198]

Then, in 1865, the influx of the U.S. Army, Black refugees from well beyond Charleston, and returning Confederate soldiers to Charleston prompted smallpox and dengue fever epidemics. Smallpox or "variola" had long-been one of the most dreaded epidemical diseases. In 1738, this fear had even prompted Charleston to become one of the first places in the west to inoculate in mass, where material from an infected pustule was cut into the skin of someone healthy. By the 1790s, vaccination, a process promoted by British doctor Edward Jenner using the milder cowpox strain, gained preeminence, although it did not become common practice in rural areas especially in the South and Midwest until after the Civil War. With mortality rates of up to 25 percent and life-long scarring and even blinding for others, smallpox produced high fever, the tell-tale sloughing and scarring of the skin, and the eruption of both external and internal pustules or "the pox."[199] Simple saliva emitted through spitting, coughing, or talking was enough to pass the infection, making it highly contagious especially in places

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[197] Michael P. McCarthy, *Typhoid and the Politics of Public Health in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1987); McCandless, *Slavery, Disease, and Suffering;* and Humphreys, *Marrow of Tragedy.*

[198] For the entire duration of the initial disease, see, Huger, *Records,* April 16, 1862 - August 15, 1862. See also, Huger, *Records,* February 12, 1863 - July 12, 1866.

[199] McCandless, *Slavery, Disease, and Suffering*; and Humphreys, *Marrow of Tragedy.*

of crowding. Unsurprisingly, the result was that smallpox flourished in Civil War armies and eventually prompted the U.S. government to impose vaccination by the winter of 1863-1864. Often poorly done, these vaccinations were not always successful, and they did not include Confederates. In Charleston, by 1865, this disease, in combination with dengue, became so serious that the city council, in cooperation with the Freedmen's Bureau, created the first full time health department in the United States, designed to treat both Black and white poor people in the city.[200]

Nevertheless, by January 1866, smallpox struck the Orphan House. Dr. Huger swiftly isolated the first patient, John Davis, and confirmed all admitted children had been vaccinated. Vaccination had been an admissions policy since 1825, and in general, it had protected the Orphan House from serious rates of infection.[201] However, likely due to the need for vaccination material, Huger implemented the procedure in batches, rather than in response to singular admissions. This practice left the newest institutionalized orphans vulnerable, especially after the institution's sojourn to Orangeburg. As a result, despite his attempt at isolation, between January and April 7, 1866, Huger began reporting generally "mild" but some serious cases of the disease. This included at least forty-six cases, three deaths of children (7%), and one case of a Black female servant who he transferred to the Smallpox Hospital, run by the U.S. government and serving primarily Black refugees. Of the 522 cases in that hospital, 119

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[200] Walter J. Fraser, Jr., *Charleston! Charleston!: The History of a Southern City* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).
[201] For early vaccination in the Orphan Home, see Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*

reportedly died (23%).[202] This comparison suggests the success of earlier vaccinations and the level of care and nutrition Orphan House children received, especially compared to the poor conditions that characterized Black refugees' lives. As a representative of the most up to date medical science, Huger also implemented quarantine measures by instructing the commissioners to shut down admissions and close the institution's doors for visits. They maintained that closure until May 10 – over a full month since the last case of infection.

With the reopening of the Orphan Home in May, however, at least ninety cases of "Broken-Bone" or dengue fever made its way through the Orphan Home between August and October 1866. Unlike smallpox, this infection spread through the bite of dengue-bearing mosquitoes, but it, too, fell most heavily on people who had no prior exposure to the virus. In this way, the Union Army's occupation of Charleston brought fresh bodies for infection and prompted a city-wide outbreak in 1866 in tandem with the smallpox epidemic. When the institution reopened, thereby welcoming new dengue fever victims into the Home, this mosquito-borne disease found a new crop of young, un-exposed children. Whereas vaccinations had prevented high volumes of smallpox, however, dengue fever spread rampantly, including at least sixty cases in a single week in September.

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[202] The location of this hospital, what was once the Charleston Rifle Club Schuetzenplatz, had been first a Confederate and then Union hospital and was conveniently located on the outskirts of the city, allowing seamless isolation of approximately 522 cases between January 1 and May 1, 1866. See, "The Small Pox Hospital, *Charleston Daily News,* May 18, 1866.

One nineteenth-century Alms House physician described the disease as generally

setting "in with pain in the head, back & limbs, accompanied by a decidedly febrile

condition; in severe cases the fever soon running very high, and the pain especially in

the head and back becoming severe."[203] Sometimes vomiting and extreme thirst also

appeared, and Dr. Huger noted that a "tendency to congestion" often developed in

infected children. The Alms House doctor recommended rest for most patients and

small doses of morphine, mustard poultices, and cupping in order to create blisters for

those men and women most afflicted. Although Huger did not specify his treatment

process, in the case of the Orphan House, dengue fever ended in just one 1866 death,

Elizabeth Myers.[204]

As Dr. Huger's handling of the epidemics suggests, however, his care gave poor

families access to the most advanced nineteenth-century standards. Within financial

reason, he appears to have used all of the medical knowledge and resources at his

disposal. For example, in his work on the Orphan House up to 1860, John Murray argues

that venesection (bloodletting) was more common in the Orphan House than elsewhere

in the South through 1854, when Huger's predecessor Dr. George Logan was the house

physician. Logan also experimented with new ideas for treating disease, including the

use of belladonna to treat scarlet fever. This form of research, where orphan children

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[203] Belin Flagg, M.D., "Break Bone Fever," September 25, 1852, *Alms House Hospital Register,* Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[204] Huger, *Records,* August 30, 1866 – November 1, 1866. For more on dengue-fever and the link between it and "Broken-Bone" or "Break-Bone" fever, see Randall M. Packard, "'Break-Bone' Fever in Philadelphia, 1780: Reflections on the History of Disease," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 90, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 193-221; and McCandless, *Slavery, Disease, and Suffering.*

acted as Logan's test subjects, helped bolster his reputation in the medical community.[205] In keeping with the decline of invasive treatment methods in the second half of the nineteenth-century, however, Dr. Huger never recorded using venesection or other purging methods to treat children. In this way, Huger developed his own medical standing, by basing his methods on his experiences in Europe and on the new medical journals emerging throughout the United States.

His focus was on rest, nutritious food, and preventative measures like sterilization and quarantine. This view reflected Florence Nightingale's approach and the emergence of professional nursing. Believing that disease spread through the environment and bad air, Nightingale attempted to banish filth and increase light and air flow. Proper rest and clean air were of central importance.[206] Reflecting this growth in professionalized nursing, in August 1867, at Huger's behest, the board of commissioners codified a new position, the "hospital nurse." Under the physician's direct supervision, the nurse was to provide "constant and particular attention to the administering of such medicines, food, and other attentions to the sick children sent to the hospital."[207] She, in her focus on "constant" attention, then, was to be the Nightingale archetype. Huger's treatment methods also reflected this vision. Frequently, for example, he recommended isolating patients or offering a "change of air" for children, where mothers could remove orphans temporarily. In the Home itself, he also occasionally recommended children be

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[205] Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House,* 123.
[206] Humphreys, *Marrow of Tragedy;* and Kisacky, "Restructuring Isolation."
[207] Charleston City Council Meeting Minutes, August 12, 1867, Charleston City Council Records, Charleston County Public Library; and Charleston Orphan House Meeting Minutes, August 9, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

removed from specific dormitories to sterilize or "whitewash" and presumably clear the air. On July 2, 1863, for example, he suggested that Elizabeth Hays and Mary Croghan be moved to a new room, as their dormitory's "proximity to the Privy will be likely to produce Typhoid disease."[208] In reality, typhoid primarily infected patients only after they ingested contaminated food or water, but Huger attributed it to the air.

Huger's methods also reflected his advanced training. On a higher scale than Charleston at large, Huger implemented full-scale vaccination for smallpox, including roughly two hundred children in March 1863, and another seventy-eight in 1871, focusing on any children whose arms did not have "vaccine marks."[209] He took equal care in treating individual ailments, and the physician occasionally operated on children. For example, when five-year-old Susan Ballantine entered the institution in 1867, Dr. Huger noted that she had a congenital club foot which "made her very lame, involving the Dorsum of the foot received the weight of the body."[210] Huger operated on the foot, and within just three months of the surgery, Susan was able to walk with a small limp that the doctor believed would disappear completely.[211] Similarly, in July 1867, Dr. Huger noted that Jane Ingham, John Brown, Thomas O'Conner, and James Conroy suffered from a "disease of the hip joints" and that "if the lameness is not rectified, curvature of the spinal column is apt to occur, which would increase the deformity & impair their usefulness."[212] He fitted each child with a special shoe, which prevented

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[208] Huger, *Records,* July 2, 1863.
[209] Huger, *Records,* March 5, 1863 and January 19, 1871. See also, Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House* for the Orphan Home's original decisions to implement full-scale smallpox vaccinations.
[210] Huger, *Records,* October 25, 1867.
[211] Huger, *Records,* October 25, 1867 – January 23, 1868.
[212] Huger, *Records,* July 11, 1867.

further debilitation. Years later, when Thomas O'Connor came of age to leave the institution, his mother was able to write with confidence that she wanted to give the young man an opportunity to "do something for himsalfe."[213]

In more serious cases, Dr. Huger could make no guarantees as to his ability to cure children entering the Home. In a city plagued with a valid reputation for poor health, death was common.[214] For example, the Charleston Health Department published an official report on the city's health in 1866, one of the peak years of disease. It reported it had treated 9,095 cases of disease, 4,141 of which were white (46%). In comparison, in 1860, the census of Charleston reported 29,136 white Charlestonians (42%), 3,622 free Black natives of the city (5%), and 37,290 slaves (53%).[215] Due to the high numbers of white civilians and freedmen displaced after the Civil War and often poor reporting of poor white families prior to it, these numbers offer a rough comparison but suggest that diseases affected white and Black Charlestonians at roughly equal degrees. Death rates, however, favored white citizens, who were often better nourished. Throughout 1866 Charleston, reported deaths were 607 whites (34%) and 1164 Blacks (66%). In comparison to the Orphan House, of those whites 202 (33%)

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[213] Huger, *Records,* April 21, 1870*;* and Mrs. B. O'Connor to the Most Honorable Sirs, March 4, 1875, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[214] Due to its hot, humid climate, from its earliest days Charles Town, or what would eventually become Charleston, developed a reputation for being the most disease-ridden city in the British colonies. Wealthy white elites often left the city in the summers to escape peak seasons of disease, but epidemics struck down people of all classes year-round, making disease one of the most consistent troubles Charlestonians faced throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. As a result, Charleston, and by default the Charleston Orphan House, also became a leader in medical experimentations and advancements. See, Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!* For the Charleston Orphan House's fight against disease through 1860, see, Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*

[215] 1860 South Carolina Census Record.

were aged five years or younger.[216] That same year, Dr. Huger reported the deaths of four orphans.[217] Even more dire for the Orphan Home, in July 1869, a city-wide measles epidemic struck the institution, so that by the end of the month Huger reported, "there are under treatment eighty-nine children with the measles; twenty-nine have been discharged, making the total number of cases so far 118."[218] At least sixty-four cases followed before the disease relented by the end of August. Three children were dead.[219]

Like any period, other diseases simply had no cure. In May 1870, for instance, Elizabeth Vingeum entered the institution along with her older brothers Pinckney and George, but she appears to have had leukemia. Upon entering the Home, Dr. Huger described her as exhibiting leucocythemia, or an abundance of white blood cells, and by late 1871, she was fading quickly. Aged thirteen years old, she struggled for five brutal weeks, including a stint in the City Hospital where the most acute Orphan House patients went for treatment before returning to the institution for comfort. She died December 30 and was buried in an institutional lot behind the Orphan House.[220] Some patients, plagued by incurable diseases or too weak to win the battle against infection were beyond Huger's power to help.

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[216] "The Health Department," *Charleston Daily News,* April 8, 1867; and "Annual Report of the Health Department," *Charleston Daily News,* April 8, 1867. For the City Council's establishment of the Health Department, see, Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*

[217] Huger, *Records..* Dr. Huger's records book starts on March 20, 1862, which is why 1860 and 1861 are not included in that number.

[218] Huger, *Records,* July 28, 1869.

[219] Huger, *Records,* June 10, 1869 – August 26, 1869; and Committee on Chapel and Anniversary Report, November 18, 1869.

[220] See, Huger, *Records,* December 7, 1871 - January 4, 1872*;* and The Chapel and Anniversary Committee Annual Report, November 21, 1872, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Nevertheless, Huger, despite not fully understanding the causes of many of his

patients' ailments, helped stem the tide of disease and helped many children recover.

Despite wartime increases in disease and malnutrition, between 1862, the date of the

first entry in the journal, and 1870 Huger reported just thirty-three deaths, although

these numbers did not include a two year gap in the journal during the institution's

relocation to Orangeburg. Most of these children were interred in the Orphan House

plots in Charleston's Magnolia Cemetery, although some relatives collected remains.

How they received that tragic news, however, is unclear, and many families may not

have discovered the deaths until too late to arrange private burials.[221]

Beyond epidemical diseases, children experienced the broken bones, congestion,

and even accidental deaths common in nineteenth-century childhood and were also

especially susceptible to diseases typical in crowded conditions. "Ophthalmia," which

was likely modern day conjunctivitis otherwise known as pink eye, was so common that

historian John Murray argues that almost every child contracted the disease upon

entering the Home in the 1820s.[222] Likewise, between 1862 and 1874, Dr. Huger

reported this disease more frequently than any other single disease or complaint. On

July 26, 1866, for instance, he noted "some thirty cases of grandula ophthalmia," and

then on December 5, 1867, he wrote, "there are 14 children in Hospital, most of them

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[221] In November 1869, for example, the commissioners reported six deaths for the year. All but two children were interred in Magnolia Cemetery. James Kelly's mother and Andrew Neil's uncle retrieved their bodies. See, Committee on Chapel and Anniversary Report, November 18, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[222] Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House,* 120.

have ophthalmia."[223] Evidence of intestinal worms or "congestion of the abdominal viscera," also appeared frequently in the physician's notes. Difficult to diagnose but easily spread through infected water and even close contact with the eggs from someone infected, parasitic worms were common to Charleston and frequently led to abdominal pain and diarrhea.[224] Perhaps most contagious in this period, however, was what Huger labeled "the Itch," which was likely scabies, a disease prevalent in crowded child-care facilities, prisons, and other public institutions. Indeed, it was so pervasive, at least one early New York public hospital banned patients with "itch" symptoms from entering.[225]

The Orphan House combatted the "itch" as soon as February 15, 1866, when Huger reported almost twenty cases. As he acknowledged when he called the affliction "camp Itch," this infection must have spread from U.S. soldiers in Charleston, who, along with their Confederate counterparts, were frequently infected. Itching, lesions, and skin inflammation were the most apparent symptoms.[226] On March 14, 1867, Huger wrote,

> All of the Boys have been thoroughly examined & any case of Itch, however slight, is taken to the Hospital & will be kept there under treatment until cured, at present there are 36 cases, they are improving under treatment & the majority of them will probably be well in a few days. The Physician would suggest that <u>all</u> of the woolen clothing & Blankets used by the Boys be

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[223] Huger, *Records,* July 26, 1866.

[224] See for example, Huger, *Records,* March 27, 1862. For more one nineteenth-century parasitic worms, see McCandless, *Slavery, Disease, and Suffering.*

[225] Kisacky, "Restructuring Isolation."

[226] For more on "camp itch" or "army itch," see Thomas G. Cropley, "The 'army itch:' A dermatological mystery of the American Civil War," *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* 55, no. 2 (August 2006): 302-308.

thoroughly boiled, so that when the children return to their Dormitories, they
may be not again diseased, by using infected clothing.[227]

As a sanitizing measure, he also recommended medicated baths twice a week and
continued to report cases through the end of May that year as the "itch" spread into all
of the dormitories. Battles against crowd-based diseases were ongoing.[228]

The "itch" also affected children in apprenticeships. In March 1866, sixteen-year-
old Johanna Blake was indentured as a domestic servant for a private Charleston school
for young ladies. In exchange for her services, her mistress Miss A. T. Logan promised
Johanna could even participate as a student. This promising arrangement quickly
soured, however, when Miss Logan's brother Dr. Samuel Logan noticed a small mark on
the girl's hand, which he recognized as a sign of the "itch." Tellingly, the Logans had
been pleased with Johanna's work, but this disease was so highly communicable, they
concluded they had no choice but to dismiss her. Dr. Logan told the commissioners, it
was "evident that she must have contracted the disease in the orphan house, where it is
represented to be prevalent."[229] The board could not deny the assertion. In fact, not
long after they readmitted Johanna, another girl Lizzy Murry returned from her failed
apprenticeship with symptoms of the "itch," and both girls went to work informally for

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[227] Huger, *Records,* March 14, 1867.

[228] Huger, *Records,* March 7, 1867 – May 23, 1867; and Minutes, March 7, 1867, Records of the
Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston
County Public Library.

[229] Samuel Logan M.D. to the Board of Commissioners of the Orphan House, April 4, 1865,
Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records,
Charleston County Public Library. See also, Miss A. T. Logan to Gentlemen of the Board, March 1, 1866;
Miss A. T. Logan to Gentlemen of the Board, undated; and Board of Commissioner's Meeting Minutes,
January 4, 1866 and April 5, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-
1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

the Orphan House matron Mrs. Steinmeyer.[230] Contagious diseases thus could prevent

children from entering homes in the community and kept them more closely confined to

the Orphan House.

At the same time the Orphan House commissioners could not keep young people

indefinitely, especially children with infirmities. In March 1867, after repeated failed

attempts to treat Emma Rettman's eye disorder, Dr. Huger recommended that the girl

be transferred to the Asylum for the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind in Cedar Springs, but it was

at capacity. Rather than transfer the girl to the Alms House, the board of commissioners

kept Emma in the Orphan Home another two years, but by December 1869, eighteen-

year-old Emma was simply too old to stay any longer. This time, the commissioners

went through both the Charleston mayor Gilbert Pillsbury and South Carolina Governor

Robert Kingston Scott in an effort to transfer the girl to an asylum for the blind in

Columbia. This too failed due to crowding issues, but Emma could only have felt

increasingly vulnerable and desperate with this continued rejection and a growing

realization she could no longer stay in the Orphan Home. Had her sister and brother-in-

law not finally intervened in February 1871, promising Emma she would "be so happy"

and would "never be a burden," Emma Rettman would have entered the Alms House.[231]

The board had already kept her longer than was normal.

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[230] A. K. Irving to Mrs. Steinmeyer, April 5, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[231] Edwin Kluger to Dear Sister Emma, February 13, 1871, Boston, MA; Edwin Kluger and Mary Kluger to My Darling Sister Emma, February 13, 1871, Boston MA; Huger, *Records,* November 30, 1865*;* Newton F. Walker to the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind, March 25, 1867, Cedar Spring, SC; Wm C. Bee to Gilbert Pillsbury, December 2, 1869; G. Pillsbury to W. C. Bee, December 7, 1869; Wm C. Bee to J. K. Gillison, December 9, 1869, Columbia, SC; Minutes, March 7, 1867; and Minutes, March 21,

Thomas Corley was less fortunate in both his ailment and his final home. By December 2, 1864, he was an unsustainable burden for an institution ill-equipped to care for long-term disabilities. He seems to have been paralyzed, which could have happened in an injury or as a repercussion of what would be called polio today. Commissioner Wilmot DeSaussure wrote, "Thomas Corley having attained the age when we usually apprentice boys out of the Institution, but his infirmities being such as to interfere with that course & his weighted bother of being carried about in the tasks of other boys of the Institution very heavy on them. We have resolved that he must be removed from the Orphan House."[232] When Thomas's mother echoed her own inability to support him, DeSaussure transferred him to the Alms House. Having become a burden on the Orphan House and with no hopes of recovery, Thomas entered the poor white adult world in its most bleak state, even in the midst of a siege and Union bombardment.

Nineteenth-century institutionalized care for adults was vastly underfunded, especially in the South. In part because of the belief diseases were attributable to characteristics like age, gender, and race, hospital care generally focused on specific groups. This included marine hospitals for merchant and naval sailors, hospitals for white widows and orphans, and (following emancipation) Freedmen's Hospitals for

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1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[232] W. DeSaussure to Wm. J. S. Small, Steward of the Orphan House, May 14, 1864; and W. DeSaussure to Board of Orphan House, May 18, 1864, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Black people. Charleston's Orphan House hospital matched this model, while hospitals specific to epidemical diseases, like smallpox, were also common.

Generic public hospitals for people of all classes were scarce, and those that existed, like one in New York, were vastly overcrowded, leading many potential patients to see them as breeding grounds for gangrene, erysipelas, and other hospital diseases that could be just as deadly as the ailments that forced men and women to seek initial treatment. During the Civil War, Confederate hospitals specific to soldier care were largely ineffective due to food and medicinal shortages, personnel shortages, poor shelter, and limited opportunities for rest. After the war, financial issues continued to plague southern efforts to improve medical care. In Charleston, for example, in 1867 the city council's attempts to establish a general hospital were quickly stymied when its physicians deemed its initial building on Mazyck street too small – just four months after opening. Likewise, they predicted alternative accommodations for forty-five white patients would quickly fill so that a third, costly hospital would become necessary. In this way, the costs of spacious buildings and patient overcrowding were an untenable reality, which prompted at least one physician to conclude the best option was to transfer white patients into Charleston's much larger Roper Hospital supported by the Freedmen's Bureau to serve Blacks, thereby mixing Black and white patients. In desperate need, the city council quickly agreed. However, by using both the main building (for white patients) and what was formerly a smaller building for lunatics

towards the rear of the property (for Black patients), they proudly boasted of their

success in preventing "the intermixture of races in the same building."[233]

Even before the war, although they maintained prominent physicians on staff,

institutions for the poor like the Charleston Alms House combatted the same issues as

the hospitals – underfunding, supply issues, poor nutrition, and overcrowding. Many

patients entered such poor houses only in an emergency or to live out their final days.

Between the scarcity of suitable treatment centers, the high price of private medical

care, and the reputation for poor health and "hospital diseases," most people

attempted to treat themselves in their own homes. Some planters even tried to treat

slave ailments and injuries without consulting a physician. In tandem, and often in direct

opposition, slaves also developed their own healing practices based on African

traditions and their own experiences in the South.[234] In this way, orphans in Charleston

had one advantage in the potential for professional, free medical care.

Of course, underlying all of the Orphan Home's diseases was malnourishment.

Especially during the war, with increased shortages and rising prices in wartime

Charleston, many children entered the Orphan Home exhibiting symptoms of prolonged

hunger, and funding issues insured the commissioners were always hard-pressed to

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[233] *Charleston Daily News,* January 19, 1867; and J. J. Chisolm, M.D. to His Honor the Mayor and Gentlemen of the City Council, City Council Meeting Minutes, June 4, 1867. For more on Roper Hospital, its connection to the Freedmen's Bureau, and the City Council's struggle to find suitable buildings for hospital care, see also, Charleston City Council Meeting Minutes, October 10, 1865 – December 1866.

[234] Rodning, "Patient Isolation;" Kisacky, "Restructuring Isolation;" Humphreys, *Marrow of Tragedy;* Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders;* Wiener, *Sex, Sickness, and Slavery;* McCandless, *Slavery, Disease, and Suffering;* Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); and Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

balance nutrition in the Home itself. Before the Civil War, as historian John Murray's

work shows, an established daily precedent included approximately five ounces of grits,

five ounces of rice, two fluid ounces of molasses, and a third of an ounce of butter and

of milk per child. In addition, each child received at most a half pound each of bread and

beef, while adult staff received one pound of beef daily. Sick children also received a

larger portion of sugar and milk. Then, on Sundays, a slightly larger portion of pork often

replaced the beef. However, most of this meat was of poor quality, consisting of bone,

gristle, fat, and offal.[235]

The war made providing nutritional diets even harder. Abraham Lincoln's April

19, 1861 order ensured the blockade of all Southern ports, especially the strategically-

situated Charleston. Food and personal goods quickly skyrocketed in price or

disappeared completely.[236] To help its staff afford these expenses, by August 1863, due

to the inflated "currency and circumstances," the city council increased city workers'

salaries, including the mayor and all staff members of the Charleston Orphan House. The

porter and gardener, for example, went from an annual salary of one hundred twenty

dollars to six hundred dollars, while the engineer's annual salary reached twelve

hundred dollars, due to his coveted, war-enabling skills.[237] But these increases did not

help the Orphan Home itself.

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[235] Murray, *The Charleston Orphan Home,* 47-48.
[236] Douglas W. Bostick, *Charleston Under Siege: The Impregnable City* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2010).
[237] Minutes, August 13, 1863; and Report of the Special Committee on Salaries, August 13, 1863, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Public institutions like the Charleston Orphan House, with tight budgets even before the war, were hit hard. By January 1862, the commissioners had to dispense with all rations of butter, cocoa, and bacon. Instead of bacon, they could only offer beef soup or stew, which was "less palatable to the children from the fact that it constitutes almost an every day dish; probably less nutritious, and open to the additional objection that it does not afford the change of diet which the Board deemed an essential to health."[238] Commissioner W. H. Bennett posited these poor diets, "may account in part for the number of ailing, tho' scarcely sick ones, to be found so constantly in our Hospital," but the board was hard-pressed to resolve the issue.[239] The federal blockade of Charleston ensured some supplies, especially medicines, were nonexistent, while the scarcity of others gauged up the prices. Without access to supplies or better funding, the commissioners opted to increase the children's daily allowance of milk (to just three tablespoons) and molasses and to offer bread "in sufficient quantity to satisfy the appetites of the children," and they eventually agreed to Dr. Huger's suggestion to send the children outside more frequently for fresh air and exercise.[240] Without sufficient protein and vegetables, in other words, the commissioners could offer just enough to make the children feel less hungry and could distract them with additional fresh air and leisure time, but they could not prevent or resolve nutritional issues.

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[238] Committee on Purveyance Report, January 21, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[239] W. H. Bennett to H. A. DeSaussure, January 16, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[240] Committee on Purveyance Report, January 21, 1862; and Dr. William H. Huger, Report on Recent Deaths, April 1, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

The board's suggestion about a link to sickness in the Home seems likely, and

nutritional issues certainly made children exposed to typhoid fever in the summer of

1862 more vulnerable. At least sixteen children died over the course of 1862, as many as

two of whom appeared to have had some connection to nutritional problems. Following

a series of deaths associated with disease in the Home, on February 27, 1862, thirteen-

year-old Michael Mullins entered the hospital with neck pain and vomiting of bile, which

was a sign of an empty stomach. That night, a "nurse heard him groan, went to him,

found him speechless, Died before the Physician arrived."[241] That same day Dr. Huger

reported that nine-year-old Annie Fleming, after "ailing" in her dormitory for three days

entered the hospital and by night fall began "vomiting bile." Like Michael Mullins, Annie

died within hours of vomiting on an empty stomach.[242] The doctor described Annie's

condition using the same term as commissioner Bennet's letter earlier that year. She

had been "ailing," likely due to poor nutrition.

Tragically, the shortages of 1862 were only the beginning. Recognizing these

issues, as the commissioners vetted options for an alternative location for the institution

in the event of an evacuation, one of their primary concerns was the need for a garden.

Indeed, one of the selling points of the location they ultimately selected in Orangeburg

was its large acreage, with room for a playground and a "large garden."[243] Nevertheless,

a garden, even at its best did not resolve the children's need for protein and dairy

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[241] Huger, Report on Recent Deaths, April 1, 1862.
[242] Huger, Report on Recent Deaths, April 1, 1862.
[243] William E. Bee and William H. Houston, Committee's Report on the Property at Orangeburg, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

products. And at no time did the largely unproductive gardens resolve all needs for vegetables either. By December 1864, the institution, safely shielded from bombardment in its new home in Orangeburg, was in dire straits provisionally. The board recognized the "rapidly advancing price of all articles of provisions," and immediately advised the city council that they would need $40,000 to order a full year's worth of food for the Orphan House.[244] In this way, they were able to restock before prices increased even further but could not guarantee quality meat for the children, let alone increase rations. Although Dr. Huger's Medical journal includes a gap between August 26, 1863 and November 30, 1865, when the children were in Orangeburg, symptoms of malnutrition and higher rates of disease must have been prevalent.[245]

The realities of wartime malnutrition in the Home were dire in part because they started long before many children even entered the institution. Diarrhea, vomiting, marasmus (malnourishment), dysentery, fatigue, stunted growth, and even weakened immune symptoms were signs of nutritional issues. Two-year-old Richard Cronan, for instance, transferred into the Orphan House from the Alms House in June 1866 after his mother abandoned him, and by September 1867, he entered the sick ward, still suffering from the effects of this neglect. September 26, Dr. Huger noted him as a "feeble child suffering from Marasmus," which indicated severe nutritional deficiencies, although a genetic issue or undiagnosed infection like parasitical worms was also possible. Symptoms of marasmus included severe weight loss, stunted growth, diarrhea,

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[244] Minutes, December 5, 1864.
[245] Huger, *Records.*

fatigue, and brittle hair, and victims often died. The very absence of Cronan from any institutional records beyond Huger's September 26 entry suggests this dire outcome. If he had left as an apprentice or with a family member, his exit would have been in the index.[246] The doctor documented marasmus as one of the most common causes of child death in the Orphan Home, especially when it combined with an infection.[247]

When medical care fell short, as was sometimes the case with nutritional issues, however, Orphan House commissioners minimized their roles in the deaths. For example, because the 1862 losses were a peak compared to the number of children who died yearly in the hospital wards between 1862 and 1870, the commissioners opened an investigation.[248] Commissioner Dr. James Moultrie began by contemplating the sanitary conditions and possible causes of the early 1862 deaths (seven within a single month). But he strikingly concluded that the culprit was not an underlying disease or sanitation issue in the Home or Charleston. Instead, the children were of various ages and genders and had died of a variety of causes. Death, Moultrie wrote, "although common to all, yet infinitely modified by accidental circumstances, never takes place in exactly the same manner . . . some accordingly die suddenly; whilst others linger out for indefinite

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[246] J.H. Munitt, Visiting Commissioner, June 14, 1866, "Report on the Visit to see Robert Cavanaugh, William McDonald, and Richard Cronan;" John L Dawson to the Chairman & Commissioners of the Orphan House, June 7, 1866; and W. H. Huger, M.D., *Physician's Records,,* September 26, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[247] Huger, *Records,* April 15, 1869.

[248] These numbers are based on Dr. Huger's Medical Journal, which reported sixteen deaths in 1862 and two in 1863, although he did not make any entries in 1864 or 1865 when the children were in Orangeburg. He reported four deaths in 1866, two in 1867, none in 1868, seven in 1869 (in part due to the measles epidemic), and two in 1870. See, Huger, *Records,* February 17, 1862 – December 29, 1870; and Huger, Report on Recent Deaths, April 1, 1862.

periods of time."[249] Moultrie, in other words, absolved the commissioners and Dr. Huger

of any fault. In this way, just as the commissioners strove to set the Orphan House apart

from other orphan institutions, poor houses, and public institutions through their

educational model, they attempted to maintain a reputation for quality medical care,

lifting white poor children up through literacy and healthcare. As the next chapters will

show, however, commissioners and staff of the Orphan Home could never maintain sole

control over children's bodies. Just as diseases sometimes went beyond their control,

orphans' mothers and the orphans themselves had their own ideas about the future and

did not always fall in line.

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[249] James Moultrie, Report of Comm. Upon the Sanitary Conditions of the Institution, & the causes of the Recent deaths in the House, April 3, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

CHAPTER 4. SACRIFICE IN A 'COLD, UNFEELING WORLD:' POOR WHITE WOMEN AND THE

CHARLESTON ORPHAN HOME

By 1868, Confederate widow Sarah Stevens was deeply familiar with her own

vulnerability. Sarah's first husband, the father of both of her daughters, had enlisted in

the 20th South Carolina Infantry Regiment at its genesis in January 1862. Originally

assigned to defending the harbor and islands near Charleston, this regiment joined the

Army of Northern Virginia and participated in such renowned battles as the Battle of

Cold Harbor and the Siege of Petersburg, but like so many of his brothers in arms, Mr.

Wingard died in the army. Devastated and constrained as a widowed mother in a

patriarchal society, young Sarah responded decisively by marrying again just months

later. But she made a tragic mistake. Her second husband Mr. Stevens, another

Confederate soldier, quickly found himself captured and imprisoned in a U.S. Prisoner of

War Camp. Sarah never saw him again.

Destitute, Sarah turned to menial domestic jobs and the charity of family and

neighbors, but survival required constant work. She was always on the verge of collapse.

By June 1868, Sarah, along with her daughters, seven-year-old Johanna Wingard and

five-year-old Dolly Adrian Wingard, was sleeping on the floor of an off-shoot room of a

boarding house kitchen when she finally turned to the Charleston Orphan House,

begging for the "privilege. . . of explaining my condition & the grounds upon which I

press my claim for your consideration.[250] Convincingly, she leaned on her losses in the

Civil War to persuade the commissioners to admit her daughters.

When the commissioners agreed, Sarah signed formal indentures renouncing all

of her parental rights, but she saw the institution as a temporary waystation to use until

she regained the support of a patriarch.[251] By March 1870, Sarah's brother promised to

assist her in Columbia, while a man named Mr. Farmer had proposed marriage. Both

options promised security, and Sarah quickly applied to retrieve both Johanna and Dolly

in two separate applications.[252] The commissioners refused, but by August, newly

minted Sarah Wingard Stevens Farmer hatched an inspired idea involving her sister,

Fanny R. Lamb, who, she claimed, was "very well off."[253] Grounded in her marriage to a

successful hotel owner in Tallahassee, Florida, Fanny boasted two white servants and

her own successful millinery shop. Her confident promise to adopt both Johanna and

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[250] Application for Admission for Johanna and Dolly A. Wingard, June 24, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For her first husband's service record, see also, J. Wingard, *U.S. Confederate Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865.*

[251] John E. Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House: Children's Lives in the First Public Orphanage in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[252] Sarah Ann Stevens to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, March 29, 1870: Sarah Stevens to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, April 14, 1870, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. Sarah married sometime between her April letter and August the following year, when she signed her letter "Sarah Farmer." See, Sarah Farmer to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, August 23, 1871, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[253] Farmer to the Commissioners, August 23, 1871; F. R. Lamb to Mrs. Orain, Teacher of the assilum, August 9, 1871, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library; 1880 Tallahassee Census Record; and 1885 Tallahassee Census Record.

Dolly offered financial security for the girls and a proven prosperous patriarch in George

Lamb. The binding-out committee finally released the girls.[254]

Sarah's experience was just one among hundreds of women in the laboring

classes.[255] Like their elite white counterparts, so ably discussed in Drew Gilpin Faust's

Mothers of Invention, poor white women grappled with the war's breakdown of

patriarchy.[256] Faust argues that before the war elite women had embraced dependency

in exchange for men's protection and support, yet in light of wartime failure, these

women came to view their sacrifice as contingent on men's protection, opening the

door for significant change. Nevertheless, by war's end rather than seek to overturn that

dependency, fears about their own frailty and the promises of class and racial

superiority made these women "unwilling and perhaps unable to articulate their

frustrations in a manner designed to bring about significant change."[257] They re-

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[254] Strikingly, Dr. Huger's journal entry around this time supports Sarah Farmer's argument. As the institution's physician, Dr. Huger kept a weekly journal documenting serious injuries and diseases, as well as the overall health of the children in the home. March 30, 1871, he mentioned a scarlet fever case in the institution which worried him so much that he quarantined the sick child Mary Neil. See, Dr. W. H. Huger, *Physician's Records,* March 30, 1871-April 20, 1871, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. This was likely the same disease sweeping the city of Charleston.

[255] Sarah Wingard Stevens Farmer was a member of the urban working class, which Seth Rockman's groundbreaking study of antebellum Baltimore describes in detail. See, Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

[256] Victoria Bynum's *Unruly Women* argues that as a method of social control, the South's slave society inflicted a rigid code of conduct on all women that was grounded in patriarchy, but through divorce attempts and sexual behavior that violated that code of conduct and by resisting the Confederate government, women of both classes sometimes challenged that design even before the Civil War. See, Victoria Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

[257] Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 232. For more on southern white patriarchy, see, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1876); James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982); Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress:*

established the promises of a patriarchal society. Bound even more tightly by the restraints of patriarchy, poor white Charlestonian women were equally resolved in regaining the protective promises of the city's patriarchs, embracing the Confederacy's assurances of a cause that promised not just the institution of slavery's security but also the protection of white families.

While the Civil War itself compounded but did not end in a profound shift in the lives of poor white laborers, Confederate widows pressured the Charleston Orphan House to see their worthiness for assistance based on wartime sacrifice. They had few other options, as they did not qualify for the Federal Pensions that the U.S. Government approved for Union veterans and their widows. Between 1860 and 1870, the Orphan House became a crucial resource for these women, and continued to be so until 1887, when South Carolina finally approved a Confederate pension.[258] Given little choice in supporting the war, poor white women incorporated the conflict into the protective promises of paternalism. In this quest, they revealed neither loyalty to the Confederacy or to the Union and only committed to notions of white unity or hegemony when it suited their needs. But in a crucial moment of shifting racial relations after the Civil War,

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Woman's World in the Old South (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982); Christine Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Nina Silber, *Gender and the Sectional Conflict* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations & the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[258] For more on South Carolina's Confederate pension and Confederate pensions more generally, see, Shari Eli and Laura Salisbury, "Patronage Politics and the Development of the Welfare State: Confederate Pensions in the American South," *Journal of Economic History* 76 (4): 1078-1112.

this made the Orphan Home, with its singular commitment to white children, a crucial

cog in forging cross-class white racial solidarity.

By 1860, Charleston was one of the largest cities in the South, ensuring poor

whites lived lives akin to those of northern urban workers, with the crucial addition of

slavery in their midst. The South's cultural commitment to white patriarchy and

economic investment in slavery limited any chances for most members of this group to

better their lives. Indeed, patriarchy – the idea that all women and children were the

dependents of a male "master," either a husband, father, or even brother -- placed

white women's poverty securely on the shoulders of men and kept women's wages well

below a "living wage." It assumed that men were always available as a resource and that

they could improve their lives through the advantages of a free labor market. In the

South, every white man was on the verge of becoming a slave master himself, while

every northern man was on his way to becoming an independent worker, perhaps even

hiring his own wage laborers.[259]

Reality fell far short. Scholars including Edward Baptist and Walter Johnson have

shown that the price of slaves rapidly increased over the course of the antebellum era,

making investing in slavery impossible for most white men and fostering tension

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[259]Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia;* Silber, *Gender and the Sectional Conflict*; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*; Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York 1789-1860* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage;* John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Edmund Drago, *Confederate Phoenix: Rebel Children and their Families in South Carolina* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008); and Bynum, *Unruly Women.*

between slaveholding and nonslaveholding southerners.[260] Urban workers were no

better off, since laborers could scarcely scrape together the funds for a single day's basic

needs. Most daily work offered men between 75¢ and $1, guaranteeing little more than

a basic meal, clothing, and cheap lodgings. Work was also intermittent, seasonal, and

dangerous, and poor white laborers were prone to disease and malnutrition. Seth

Rockman shows that this ensured most men could only scrape together the same work

over a two-to-three-day period. He explains, "working households teetered on the brink

of disaster when one prolonged illness, one spell of unemployment, one brush with the

law, one encounter with a slave trader, one particularly cold week, one accidental fire

could mean the difference between staying afloat and dissolution."[261]

In an urban setting, white women supplemented this income, but they were

constrained by what historian Nancy Cott describes as the "cult of domesticity," which

limited them to the types of duties that they were responsible for in the home.[262] Scarce

and poorly compensated, most women who applied to the Orphan House cited work as

seamstresses, but they also engaged in laundry, millinery, teaching, nursing, domestic

service, sex work, selling items they owned, found, or stole, and in the best

[260] Edward Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); and Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013). Economists Samuel Williamson and Louis Cain, calculated that by 1860, purchasing a single slave required approximately $184,000 in modern-day capital. See, Samuel H. Williamson and Louis P. Cain, "Measuring Slavery in 2020 Dollars," MeasuringWorth, 2022, www.measuringworth.com/slavery.php. For more works on the connection between capitalism and slavery, see, Robert William Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989); and Joshua Rothman, *Flush Times and Fever Dreams: A Story of Capitalism and Slavery in the Age of Jackson* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

[261] Rockman, *Scraping By,* 172.

[262] Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Women's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

circumstances, running a boarding house.[263] In all cases, these jobs reinforced women's

dependency on men, especially when young children diminished a woman's ability to

work. Seth Rockman, for instance, estimates that the average seamstress earned

roughly 6 ¼¢ a day and that at best, a domestic servant might earn as much as $10 a

month with room and board included. Women did not even come close to the financial

means of even the poorest white man.[264] Yet the presumed cultural advantages of

patriarchy took for granted the idea that even healthy men would take responsibility for

their dependents. This ensured women carried the larger burden of poverty, making

them dependent on institutions like the Orphan House.

The women who applied to the institution provide a unique window into this

reality. In November 1865, for example, the commissioners found Charles Andrew,

Florence Octavia, Mary Jane, and Sara Olivia Johnson "scantily clad and . . . often

without food."[265] Similarly, years earlier in the spring 1863, they found twice-widowed

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[263] For more on these occupations see, Stansell, *City of Women;* and Rockman, *Scraping By.*

[264] Rockman, "The Living Wage," *Scraping By,* 140. Recent scholarship on the effects of patriarchy and the emergence of capitalism in the antebellum era on poor whites includes, Rockman, *Scraping By;* Jeff Forret, *Race Relations at the Margins: Slaves and Poor Whites in the Antebellum Countryside* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006); Timothy James Lockley, *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia, 1750-1860* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001); Bradley G. Bond, *Political Culture in the Nineteenth-Century South: Mississippi, 1830-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995); Charles C. Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South: Tenants and Laborers in Central North Carolina and Northeast Mississippi* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994); Keri Leigh Merritt, *Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Stansell, *City of Women*; and Richard B. Stott, *Workers in the Metropolis: Class, Ethnicity, and Youth in Antebellum New York City* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990).

[265] Application for Admission for Mary Jane, Sarah Olivia, Florence Octavia, and Charles Andrew Johnson, November 25, 1865, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. The Johnson siblings were indeed the youngest of their family. In 1860, when both parents were alive, there were seven children. This included the three girls who were institutionalized but not Charles Andrew, as he had not been born yet. The father, Charles Johnson, was a seaman, which combined with his age could certainly have led to his infirmed state by 1865. See, 1860 Charleston Census Record.

mother Margaret Jenkins "worn by hardship and . . . a good deal sick of late . . . [because she] forces herself to earn by dragging out a miserable existence in drudgery."[266] Without a male provider, women like Margaret were not just financially poor but physically unhealthy, unable to secure safe housing and proper nutrition. The Orphan House was a refuge.

As discussed in Chapter 1, from its genesis, the Home also boasted about the educational prospects of its students, and orphan caregivers recognized this opportunity to prepare children for their futures. For example, full orphan Delia Flaherty's aunt and uncle told the commissioners, "proper training in Institution is desirable for her future usefulness and welfare."[267] Mothers had especially high expectations for their sons. Intellectually-inclined boys could win scholarships for college. Historian John Murray's work shows that the very brightest could hope for a change of fortune like that of Christopher Memminger, who entered the institution as a full orphan but eventually became a successful lawyer and the Confederate States Secretary of Treasury.[268] Unlike Memminger, of course, most orphans faced lives of destitution when they left, but hope for basic literacy and an opportunity for a better life made education a strong pull for admission. This education also enabled the commissioners to arrange advantageous

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[266] Margaret Jenkins to the Honorable Board of the Orphan Asylum, May 16, 1861; Minutes of the Board of Commissioners, January 19, 1860; and Application for Admission for Georgianna Jenkins, March 26, 1863, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[267] Application for Admission for Delia Flaherty, June 26, 1860, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For a similar sentiment, see, Patrick Farr's entry, Francis Lance to the Commissioner of the Orphan House, October 20, 1868; Francis Lance to the Commissioner of the Orphan House, October 22, 1868; and Application for Admission for Patrick Farr, October 14, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[268] Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House;* and Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders.*

apprenticeships, preferring skilled apprenticeships to farm work or other unskilled positions. For instance, Frederick Olkhein became an engineer, and by 1930, he was even able to support his mother.[269]

Children could enter the Orphan House at the behest of a parent, relative, neighbor, or city official, but women's unique vulnerability made mothers by far the highest number of applicants (See Figure 4.1). John Murray's work on the institution through 1860 shows that this trend existed from the Home's genesis, with mothers accounting for 56 percent of applicants.[270] Between 1860 and 1870, however, this percentage increased, with mothers sponsoring 68 percent of requests, suggesting additional pressure on women during the Civil War. Aside from applications submitted by the Alms House or by neighbors, mothers were also most likely to receive approval to send their children to the institution (See Figures 4.2 and 4.3), which meant that over half of children who entered during the Civil War arrived at the behest of a destitute mother. Neighbors and Alms House commissioners were only more likely to receive a positive response because these conditions indicated the absence or infirmity of *both* parents.

Men's vulnerability ensured that sometimes even fathers submitted admissions applications but, in an ironic twist of nineteenth-century patriarchy, their independence denied them access to this charity, except in the direst circumstances. For example, desperate for help three months after his wife's death, on May 14, 1866 Stephen

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[269] Frederick Ohlkers, *Charleston City Directory,* 1930-1931*.*
[270] Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*

Denaro submitted an admission application for his three children. Plagued by asthma,

he had already placed a fourteen-year-old step-daughter, the child of his wife's first

union, with the Sisters of Mercy, who charged $8 a month, but he could not afford to

pay for additional childcare. The board sympathized, but it feared admitting his children

would "open a wide door that would not be easily closed."[271] With their ability to bring

in a steady income, fathers were ineligible for assistance from the Orphan House,

leaving them completely reliant on family members or neighbors if that revenue fell

short. In this distortion of patriarchy, they showed signs of their dependency on their

wives, whose labor within the household and ability to stretch a meagre income was

vital. Not surprisingly, of the applications sponsored by fathers, only 28 percent received

a stamp of approval (See Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.1 Petitioner Relationship to All Orphan Applicants, 1860-1870

Figure 4.2 Petitioner Relationship to Accepted Orphans, 1860-1870

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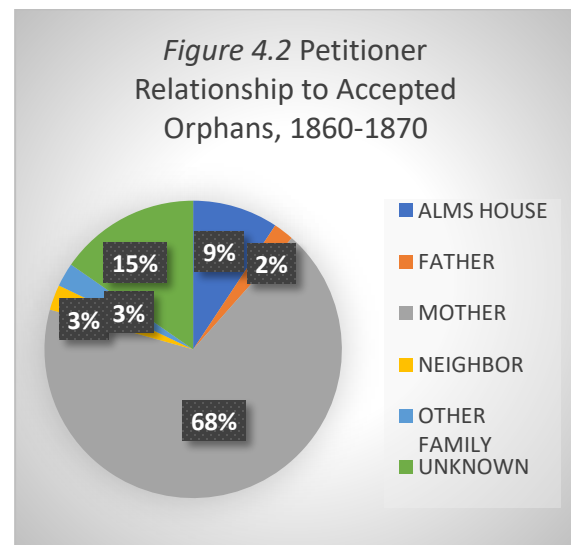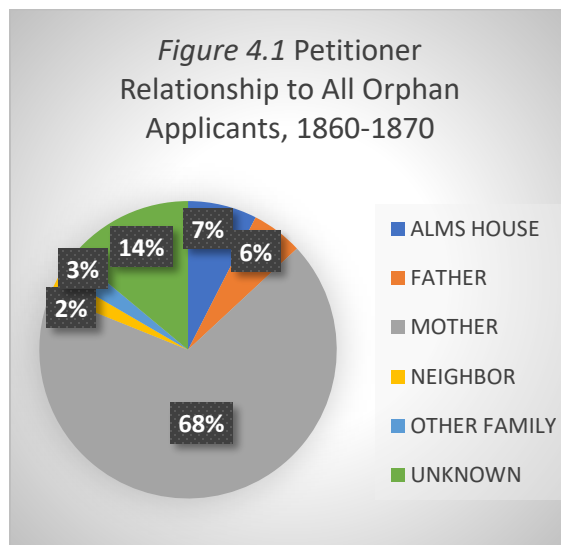
[271] Application for Admission for Stephen, Moses, and John Denaro, May 14, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For other examples, see Application for Admission for Kate Hartly, May 17, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library; and Application for Admission for Edward and Patrick Kennedy, February 18, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Figure 4.3 Comparison of Applications Accepted and Rejected, 1860-1870
AA= Accepted Application RAA= Rejected Application
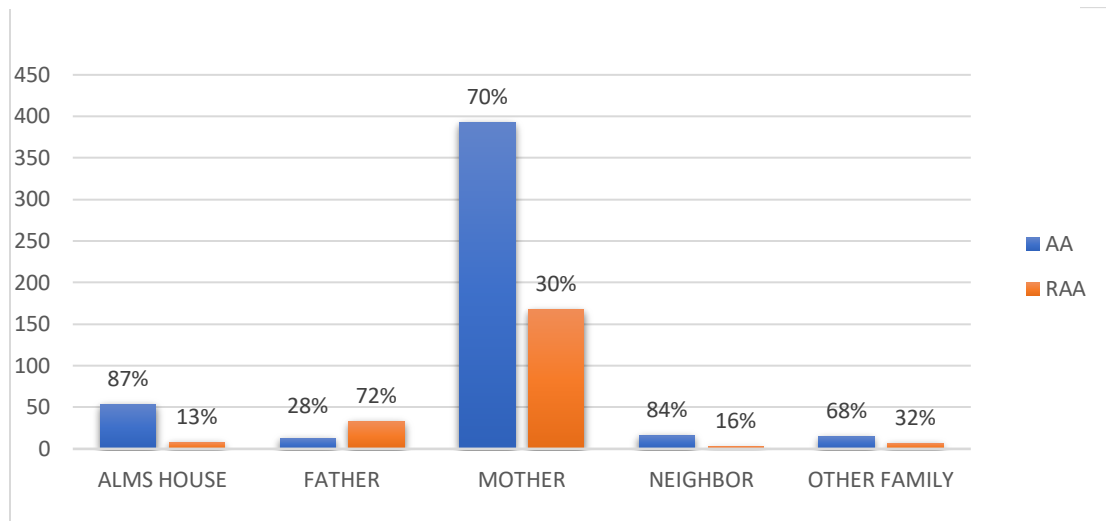
Forced by their circumstances to find some form of patriarchal protection,

women who applied to the Orphan House tested every argument at their disposal to

convince commissioners they were worthy. They were intentionally specific to avoid any

dismissal for being too vague, and they almost always included hallmarks addressing the

child's father, their destitution, and their residency, including any disruptive incidents

related to the Civil War. Significantly, however, at every point, Civil War-specific

applicants were a minority comprising just 21 percent of the 842 applications between

1860 and 1870 (See Figure 4.4). Even in 1866, the year of the highest number of Civil

War applications, they remained the minority, with eighty-two applicants indirectly

associated and fifty-one with direct connections, meaning at its peak, Civil War-specific

applications accounted for just 38 percent. This is not to say, of course, that other

applicants in this period did not experience the effects of war. All Charlestonians felt or

saw ruination. For that matter, the reality of veterans was not new, as Charlestonians

had referred to both the War of 1812 and the Mexican War in their admission requests

decades earlier.[272] Rather, the Civil War added new ways in which the balance between

survival and despair might collapse, but in other ways poor whites faced a devastating

sense of continuity, where they appealed to the same flimsy safeguards of paternalism.

Figure 4.4 Confederate Children Compared to Others, Applications 1860-1870
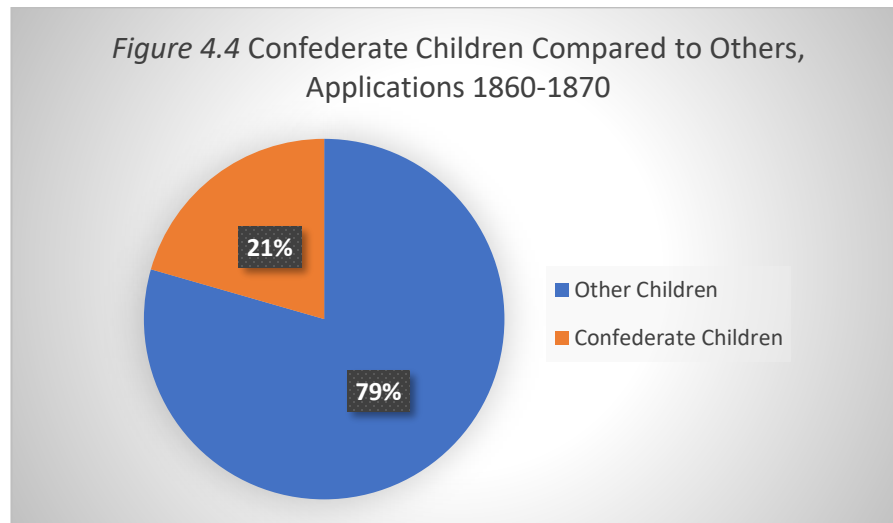
Applications always addressed the child's father, actively bringing to light the

devastating loss of a patriarch. For some women, simply defining themselves as widows

sufficed, but many others were more specific. In an urban culture increasingly

committed to a split between the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor, laziness and

intemperance were presumed precursors to poverty and dependency.[273] Being specific

about the circumstances surrounding the loss of a patriarch helped women prove they

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[272] Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House,* 79.

[273] For more on nineteenth century ideas surrounding the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor, see Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1986); Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992); Timothy Hacsi, *Second Home: Orphan Asylums and Poor Families in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Robert H. Bremner, *The Public Good: Philanthropy and Welfare in the Civil War Era* (New York: Knopf, 1980); Matthew A. Crenson, *Building the Invisible Orphanage: A Prehistory of the American Welfare System* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Bruce Dorsey, "Immigration" in *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006): 195-240; Elna Green, ed., *Before the New Deal: Social Welfare in the South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999); Rockman, *Scraping By;* and Susan Marie Sterett, *Public Pensions: Gender and Civic Service in the States, 1850-1937* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

were not responsible for their destitution. The 1858 yellow fever epidemic, throat disease, consumption, workplace accidents, and death in the Civil War were all reasons women cited to explain the death of a husband. These were often effective, as the yellow fever epidemic of Charleston and losses during the Civil War were dark stains that affected men of every class and were not indicative of laziness and intemperance.

Furthermore, women identified their husband's death in the Confederate Army – in service to Charleston - as sufficient cause for placing children in the Orphan Home. When Mrs. Barth asked to send her six and three-year-old daughters Irene and Katie to the institution, she pleaded with the commissioners, "misfortune visiting me, and the late war depriving me of my husband, and only support, who served in the Confederate Army and sacrificed his life in the glorious Southern cause."[274] Because Mr. Barth had died in service to Charleston, Mrs. Barth demanded reciprocal protection of her children from a local institution. A mix of soldiers' wives and poor women more generally, other Confederate mothers and wives also petitioned the commissioners in such political arguments. In this way, they mirrored the soldiers' wives who mobilized to protest food rations in places like Richmond.[275] In losing their husbands in service to the Confederacy or even in service to the city's brutal labor market, Charlestonian women petitioned elite white men to support their starving children.

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[274] Irene Barth to the Commissioners of the Orphan Asylum of Charleston, February 24, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[275] For more on the bread riots, see, Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

So convinced that this quality made them worthy, many women desperately reapplied even after the commissioners rejected them. Julia Devine applied three times for her daughter Mary Ann to enter and became increasingly emphatic about her husband's sacrifice. Captured in Virginia during the war, John Devine had entered a Union Prisoner of War Camp. He had not been released, and she had "chills & fever, and depends for the support of her child on her personal labor."[276] The board refused this application for a single child, which prompted Julia to press her case in person. The response of vice president of the board of commissioners, R. C. Gilchrist, is telling. Noting that there were not an overwhelming number of female inhabitants at the time, he advised the board that "an exception might therefore be made in [Mary Ann's] favor especially as her father gave his life in defense of the Confederate cause."[277] The board agreed that Confederate service did warrant some leniency in their admissions rules.

Non-Charlestonians, facing strict rules against non-residents entering the institution, stressed their wartime sacrifice too. Mother of five Jane Davis, for example, went directly to the Alms House when she entered the city, but because Alms House commissioners actively fought against maintaining children in what they deemed a haven of undeserving, corrupt influences, seven months later in April 1867, Jane applied to send her three oldest children to the Orphan House. Tellingly, she told the visiting commissioner "her Husband got killed in the [Confederate] Army about 4 years ago,"

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[276] Application for Admission for Mary Ann Devine, May 7, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library; and Application for Admission for Mary Ann Devine, January 9, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[277] R. C. Gilchrist, note, May 14, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

but the board rejected her application because she was not a Charleston resident.[278]

Only Davis's final anguished attempt succeeded, and even then the board only narrowly

agreed to admit her children based on her husband's sacrifice.[279]

When possible, caregivers also pressed the board for assistance based on

property loss. In one extreme case, Evelina Ann and Clara Augusta Fripp were utterly

devastated by the war. Their father died in the Confederate Army, and then the U.S.

Government seized all three of their family plantations, two on St. Helena Island and

one in Colleton County. This trauma, the visiting commissioner explained, "alienated the

mind of the mother [so] that it was not considered prudent to converse with her on the

subject."[280] Instead, the girls' uncle, an established Charlestonian, took both girls into

his home, kept them for approximately two and half years and then sent each of them

to the Orphan House when he became too poor to provide. For locals, poverty sparked

by the war, was clear grounds for admission.

Unpropertied poor widows also stressed wartime ruination. War widow Kesia

Ann Bowers, for example, tried but failed to convince the commissioners to admit her

son and daughter on the grounds that her rural home and neighborhood had been

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278 Application for Admission for Emma, Eugenia, and Roennah Davis, April 10, 1867; and
Application for Admission for Eugenia Davis, August 10, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the
Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For
more on the Alms House commissioners' push to transfer children out of the Alms House and into the
Orphan House, see, Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*

279 Application for Admission for Marie R. and Opha F. Davis, January 9, 1868, Records of the
Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston
County Public Library.

280 Application for Admission for Evelina Anna Fripp, January 18, 1866; and Application for
Admission for Clara Augusta Fripp, April 13, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston
Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

destroyed during the war.[281] Similarly, Mrs. Cranmore Wallace attributed her friend

Sarah Shannahan's need for help to post-war job shortages. Explaining Shannahan's

husband had left the city desperately ill after the war, she noted that Sarah was "like

many others at the present time unable to procure head or pay room rent in the

absence of remunerative employment."[282] The board agreed and admitted three

children, leaving just a fourteen-month-old child in Shannahan's care. Traumatized by a

war they had little say in fighting, Confederate widows looked to Charleston's elite

Orphan House commissioners to support their destitute children.

Women whose husbands were still living had an even more pressing need to

explain away their husband's ability to provide. Negligence, abandonment, insanity,

intemperance, workplace injuries, and unemployment were all reasons women cited to

justify a man's absence. With the firing on Fort Sumter, women also began highlighting

Confederate service itself, even with the hope of a soldier's return. For example, in her

application July 1862, Elizabeth Gladden told the commissioners that her husband was a

"sea faring man" who had been a prisoner of war in New York since 1861. Having had no

recent word, she was "poor, living with her father, Louis Rendon who is also poor & near

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[281] Application for Admission for Mary and Eli Bowers, July 18, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For a similar situation, see, Application for Admission for Dennis Youngs, Cornelia Florence, and Thomas Henry Rhett Howel, June 14, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[282] Application for Admission for Edward, Catharine, Daniel, and James Shannahan, October 10, 1868; and Cranmore Wallace to Gent. Wilmot DeSaussure, October 5, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

80 years old . . . [she could] scarce furnish clothing for her children to be decent."[283]

Ten-year-old George and seven-year-old Mary entered the institution. Mother of six

Mary Myatt also told the board that her husband had been imprisoned in a U.S. Prisoner

of War Camp at Fort Warren, which was the only reason she needed assistance.[284]

Indeed, Myatt's release from the POW camp the following year prompted an opposing

plea from Mary, who wrote, "I now beg you gentlemen to give [my sons] up to me as

there Father is now able to take care of them."[285] Unable to draw wages, let alone send

them home while imprisoned, Confederate POWs could qualify for aid.

Nevertheless, while a man's sacrifice in the Confederacy pushed commissioners

to look more closely at an application, military service could not guarantee admission

alone. In 1862, Mrs. J. G. Dupre said she was living "with her young married daughter,

[and that] the husband of both are in the army. Mr. Dupre is a good carpenter and

readily supports his family under ordinary circumstances . . . [but they needed] the O. H.

until the restoration of peace."[286] The commissioners denied her request to send three

children, countering that both parents were alive and not disabled, which falsely implied

she could rely on her husband's wages as a soldier. But even a man's death in the

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[283] Application for Admission for George and Mary Elizabeth Gladden, July 26, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[284] Henry D Lesene to Charleston Orphan House, January 8, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[285] Mary Myatt to the Honorable Commissioners of the Orphan House, 1863, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[286] Application for Admission for Alice, Martha, and Susan Elizabeth Dupre, December 2, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. See also Lucy Ann Davis's rejection and eventual entry, Application for Admission for Lucy Ann Davis, November 22, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Confederate Army, fighting "for Charleston" did not guarantee assistance. In a striking

case, for instance, Mary Gullavilly's application claimed her husband "was killed during

the War in defense of the City . . . and [she had] supported her children with difficulty

during 4 years."[287] By successfully providing for the girls, however, Mary showed she

could provide, and the board denied her request. Only by using the combined evidence

of sacrifice, sincere destitution, and by proving established residency in Charleston,

could women qualify for entry.

In that vein, nowhere was the aspect of residency more complicated than in

cases of refugees. As a major city with promises of work opportunities, better wages,

and security, by 1865 and 1866 Charleston was a magnet for displaced white South

Carolinians and coastal southerners more generally. However, not only did the Orphan

House bylaws restrict its aid to the children of established Charlestonians, but the very

nature of a "refugee," as historian Drew Gilpin Faust explains, implied to Confederates

that an individual had abandoned his or her own community in disloyalty or cowardice

only to become a burden to other areas. In practice, many newcomers had been

unwittingly forced to flee from military action, but the negative connotation was often

an insurmountable barrier in this uniquely white Southern view.[288]

Refugees had the best luck if they could provide proof of residency in Charleston

before the firing at Fort Sumter, regardless of where refugee women and children found

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[287] Application for Admission for Catherine and Margaret Gullavilly, December 8, 1865, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For a similar case, see, Application for Admission for Stephen Dikes, April 1, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[288] Faust, *Mothers of Invention.*

themselves in 1865 and 1866. For example, in November 1869, Columbian resident

George Lezerart sent an application on behalf of Frances Atkinson. As her dying request,

Frances asked that her children "be received into the Orphan House in Charleston,"

where she had lived but fled six years earlier during the city's bombardment.[289] Because

she left Charleston solely due to the war, the board admitted her son and daughter.

By proving residency prior to the war, applicants connected Confederate service,

to Charleston. The most extreme case of this and in fact the last entry of children who

associated themselves with a Confederate soldier was that of the Miott children who

entered in 1877. The six Miott children, the youngest of whom was just a newborn,

were born in Florida after the war, legally marking them as non-residents of Charleston.

In her admissions application, however, their mother Panchita Miott rested on her

husband's storied military service to the city. Born in Charleston, John Miott joined the

Charleston Company of the Palmetto Regiment at age sixteen during the Mexican War

"and shared the dangers & honours of that distinguished body of citizen soldiers . . .

[where Miott was] the first to plant the banner of his company on the walls of the City

of Mexico."[290] Years later, he distinguished himself again in the Confederate Army by

serving until his capture after the fall of Fort Fisher. While Miott settled in Florida after

the war, Charleston, Panchita argued, owed its support to his family in exchange for his

service. The board agreed; eleven-year-old Maurice Alexander entered the Orphan

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[289] George L Lezerart to My Dear Dr., November 1, 1869, Columbia, SC; and Application for Admission for Maurice Alexander, Eleanor Maude, and Anna Randolph Miott, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. Despite being accepted, the Atkinson children never came to the Orphan House.

[290] N. D. Porter to William C Bee, November 28, 1877, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

House. A father's residency *before* the war implied that any movement was a product of the conflict, and these natives of Florida still qualified for entry.[291]

Refugees could also prove residency by linking themselves to the institution. Widowed and distressed mother Marie Rivers acknowledged she was from an outlying district, but she reminded the board she was a former ward of the Orphan House herself and had only left Charleston when she was bound out as a domestic servant. Emphasizing the war, she added "the yankees came and took all [we] had and then we all came to the city and thought if we could not do any better we could go to the poor house."[292] The commissioners granted her $25 and then agreed to admit first William in November 1867 and then Lucius in June 1868.[293] Connections to the institution were persuasive.

Of course, as a last resort, non-residents could also use duplicity, exaggerating their destitution or outright lying about their residency. Deception was risky, as the

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[291] Application for Admission for Maurice A, Annie Randolph, and Maud Claudia Miott, 1877; Mrs. J R Miott to the Board of Instructors Charleston Orphan House, August 26, 1877, Locin, FL; and J Warren to the Commissioners of Orphan House, November 1877; Application for Admission for Mauritia Alex, Anna Randolph, and Elanor Maud Miott, November 29, 1877; Panchita Miott, Application to Apprentice Maurice A Miott, June 2, 1871, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.; and 1880 Charleston Census Record.

[292] Marie E. Rivers to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, March 1, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[293] Application for Admission for William and Lucius Rivers, November 20, 1867; and Application for Admission for Lucius H. Rivers, June 3, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For a similar wartime example, see the cases of the Middleton children, Application for Margaret Jane, Frank, and James Nathaniel Middleton, November 19, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For cases without an explicit connection to the war but connections to the institution, see for example both David Henderson and the Gladden children's entries, Application for Admission for David B. Henderson, 1866; Huger, *Records,* June 4, 1863-June 11, 1863 and September 13, 1866-September 27, 1866; and Application for Admission for George and Mary Elizabeth Gladden, July 26, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

commissioners diligently vetted these applications with spontaneous visits to families

and by speaking to neighbors. But some lies were rewarded. In February 1862,

Savannah, Georgia, resident Mary Eaves explicitly lied when she wrote "Charleston" as

her sons' "place of Nativity," despite having never lived there. Yet, both nine and seven-

year-old John and Thomas entered the institution.[294] Presumably, Mary appears to have

gotten away with her lie because the commissioners were distracted by the war, but she

is likely not alone in her deceit.

Pressed for other reasons why they qualified, mothers highlighted examples of

negative social relationships between poor whites like themselves and African

Americans, even while relying on Black families for economic security. Jeffrey Forret's

Race Relations at the Margins shows this was typical of cross-racial relationships

between poor whites and Blacks, which were fraught with tensions, at times challenging

racial boundaries in positive economic relationships but also reinforcing social

boundaries. Poor whites unlawfully traded liquor, clothing, and even occasionally aided

slaves in escaping, yet slaves and poor whites often ranked the other as socially lower

than themselves.[295]

Poor white Charlestonians were often reliant on economic bonds with Black

people in the absence of a patriarch. When Eliza Lamb received news that her husband

died in a Union prisoner of war camp following the Battle of Fredericksburg, for

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[294] Application for Admission for John and Thomas Eaves, February 6, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[295] Forret, *Race Relations at the Margins.* In recent years, historians have increasingly pointed to evidence of cross-race relationships between poor whites, slaves, and freemen. See, also, Rockman, *Scraping By;* and Lockley, *Lines in the Sand.*

example, she threw herself on the bounty of the Alms House and agreed to send her daughters Sallie and Mary Jane Lamb to the Orphan House in 1867. When she left the Alms House, she unapologetically moved in with a "respectable colored woman . . . in a respectable neighborhood" named Isabella Burke, which enabled her to achieve some level of financial stability. The girls were even able to visit Burke's home at least once.[296]

Women also turned to Black families for cheap childcare. After the death of her first husband, Evelina and Susan Bees's mother married a bricklayer named James Wheeler, who had trouble finding work in a war-ravaged city. Quite sick herself, when Mrs. Wheeler realized she was dying, she trusted neither her new husband nor her impoverished mother. Rather, the visiting commissioner found the children "living with a colored woman, who stated that she had maintained them since their mother's death, [which] occurred about six weeks ago."[297] Free or even cheap childcare was an asset, regardless of race.

Yet, when women applied to send children to the Orphan House, they set aside financial arguments and used race as a way to elicit aid from the commissioners, whose aid could lift poor white children above enslaved and free Blacks. In one bid, highlighting an example of cross-racial violence, Susan Doar claimed her husband had been

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[296] John L. Dawson to the Chairman and Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, February 7, 1867; and Application for Admission for Georgiana Cales, Adelaide Cales, Mary Jane Lamb, and Sarah Elizabeth Lamb, February 7, 1867; and Eliza Lamb to Miss Irving, Principal of the Charleston Orphan House, August 21, 1872, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[297] Ella Wilson to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, November 25, 1869; and Application to Retrieve Evelina and Susan Bees, December 2, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

"murdered by Negroes last May . . . leaving her five children."[298] Susan hoped to distract

the board from the fact that she had already placed two children in the institution, while

her oldest son and daughter were of age to work, but the commissioners denied her

request. In a similar bid, in the spring of 1869 four-year-old Alice Bennett was rejected

as a beneficiary, prompting her uncle A.G. McClure to leave her with two unidentified

Black people. Outraged, a neighbor named Caroline Corkle applied for Alice to enter the

Orphan House again "rather than have her left with a pair of Negroes."[299] This time,

with race at the center of Alice's need, the commissioners agreed. Tools for survival,

cross-racial relationships could be useful in eliciting aid, and these arguments, in turn,

revealed powerful beliefs in the social superiority of whiteness.

Equally dangerous, however, were the influences of what the commissioners

saw as lazy and intemperate poor whites in children's lives, which was an idea desperate

mothers toyed with in cases of a living father. Situations where domestic violence

seemed to be the heart of a woman's problems were particularly persuasive. In 1860,

nine-year-old Samuel Atkinson, for instance, entered the institution on the grounds that

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[298] Application for Admission for Henry Doar, 1866; and Application for Admission for John and James Doar, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. Two years later, Mrs. Doar tried again, and while the commissioner's notes did not fully explain a reason, the board denied her application, likely because her oldest son was then twenty years old and already employed as a laborer. See, Application for Admission for Henry Doar, August 6, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For a similar condemnation but one where a husband abandoned his wife to live with a freedwoman, see, the application for Laura E. Hernandez, Application for Admission for Laura E. Hernandez, September 6, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[299] Application for Admission for Alice Bennet, October 22, 1868; and Application for Admission for Alice Bennet, April 15, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

his father was "a cripple & very intemperate . . . [and] it would be a good charity to remove the boy from the miserable influences around him."[300] Likewise in 1858 Martha Smith described her living husband as "totally unfit to take care of [her sons]."[301] Then, two years later after sending and retrieving Charles Allen, Martha applied again from the Alms House, where she claimed the boys were being "exposed to cruel examples and bad influences."[302] Steeped in their own assumptions that the Alms House was, as they frequently claimed, a place of "corrupt influences," filled with lazy, intemperate, and "undeserving" male delinquents, the commissioners accepted both Smith boys.[303] Martha and many women like her frequently embraced assumptions about the "undeserving" poor in an effort to paint themselves as "deserving."

In that vein, desperate women could also admit to sex work, but this plea was a risk for women who hoped to remain in their children's lives. The binding-out committee, the board responsible for investigating requests to retrieve or indenture children, frowned upon such illicit work. After all, the commissioners believed they were

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[300] Application for Admission for Samuel Atkinson, August 15, 1860, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[301] Application for Admission for Charles Allen and John William Smith, April 8, 1858, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[302] Application for Admission for Charles Allen and John William Smith, June 25, 1860, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[303] See for examples, Application for Admission for William McDonald, February 1866; John L Dawson to the Chairman and Commissioners of the Orphan House, June 7, 1866; and J.H. Munitt, Visiting Commissioner, June 14, 1866, "Report on the Visit to see Robert Cavanaugh, William McDonald, and Richard Cronan," Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For more on the Orphan House commissioners' and the Alms House commissioners' assumptions about the "corruptive influences" of the Alms House on children, see, Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*

protecting orphan children from the vagaries of the city – including their parents.

Women were best served explaining destitution with truth but without absolute truth,

which suggests prostitution is underrepresented in the Orphan House applications.

Indeed, scholars like Seth Rockman and Christine Stansell show that many women, like

those who applied to the Orphan House, engaged in sex work seasonally and

sporadically, even if they did not admit to it in official sources.[304] Given the presence of

first the Confederate and then the Union Army in Charleston, commercial sex may have

even increased, as occupying soldiers had both extraneous money and time.[305]

    Even underreported, some Orphan House mothers engaged in sex work as a

means to support themselves and their families. While the dates are outside of the

scope of this study, the *Charleston Orphan House Index* specifically notes four children

of prostitutes between 1796 and 1929 – two in 1819, one in 1825, and one in 1909.[306]

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[304] Rockman, *Scraping By;* and Stansell, *City of Women.*

[305] Union commanders in Charleston even implemented licensing measures for sex workers to curb the spread of venereal diseases. Danielle Jeannine Cole's "Public Women in Public Spaces," finds that such official attempts began as early as 1863. Soldiers in occupied cities had money, leisure time, and sexual appetites, and commanders were hard-pressed to deny them access. Indeed, they recognized sexual exploitation as one method men could use to assert their manhood. This reality ensured not only that commercial sex flourished in Union occupied cities during the war but that it stimulated public debate over sex work, making these women increasingly visible. In practice, while this did not necessarily mean that sex work expanded during Union occupation, it meant an increase in the number of women working in brothels, rather than the streets. Sex workers also enjoyed the Army's official protection and could profit from their trade without fines or negative police attention. Thomas Lowry's work on this subject highlights the Army in Charleston's official licensing of sex workers, as early as September 1865, where these women received certifications to work upon passing an army physical to test for sexually transmitted diseases. This licensing continued throughout occupation. While neither Lowry nor Cole go so far as to contend sex work *increased* during occupation, it was certainly possible and even likely, given U.S. soldiers' excess time and money. See, Danielle Jeannine Cole, "Public Women in Public Spaces: Prostitution and Union Military Experience, 1861-1865," Master's Thesis, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2007; Thomas P. Lowry, M.D., "The Army's Licensed Prostitutes," *Civil War Times Illustrated* 41, no. 4 (August 2002): 30-36; and Thomas P. Lowry, M.D., *The Story the Soldiers Wouldn't Tell: Sex in the Civil War* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1994).

[306] *Charleston Orphan House Index, 1796-1929,* Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library, https://www.ccpl.org/charleston-orphan-house-index-1796-1929.

There must be more. Vague on the details, the case of four-year-old Thomas Doran's

entry into the home is highly suspect. On July 28, 1869, a commissioner visited the

home of Bridget Doran following the death of her husband. Absolutely disgusted, he

wrote that Bridget was "a very dissipated woman whose influence over her son is very

bad," and she was utterly dependent on the charity of a woman strikingly named

"Madam Jindiere."[307] This language of a "Madam" and Bridget's "dissipated" behavior,

combined with the commissioner's own revulsion to the environment suggests a case of

sex work, perhaps one where the boy even lived in a bawdy house. Thomas Doran

entered the Orphan Home. Prostitution's existence in Civil War-era Charleston is

indisputable, and it went unreported in many Orphan House applications while women

leaned on more respectable arguments, especially when they could call on a man as a

character reference.

In the section titled "Recommendations" on formal applications, women often

included multiple names of men who would support their need for assistance, leaning

on men's reputations to support their worthiness for aid. Maria Altman, for example,

asked three men to sign her application, vouching for her husband's blindness.[308]

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[307] Application for Admission for Thomas Doran, July 28, 1869; and Application for Admission for Thomas Doran, September 2, 1875, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. After Thomas's entry, Bridget's reputation continued to sour. Five years later, following an unremarked exit from the home, Bridget once again sought entry for Thomas, claiming she was utterly homeless and unemployed. With records of Thomas's earlier admission, commissioners did not deem her a suitable caregiver and swiftly readmitted the boy. Intermittently or consistently, Bridget engaged in illicit sexual behavior. See, Application for Admission for Thomas Doran, July 28, 1869; and Application for Admission for Thomas Doran, September 2, 1875, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[308] M. C. Altman to Gentlemen of the Board of the Orphan Asylum, 1871, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Women petitioning the commissioners to release their children were under particular

pressure to elicit supporters. For example, after failing to retrieve two children before

they became apprentices, Caroline Bahr asked four men to write letters on her behalf.

They wrote, "we the under signed do believe Caroline Bahr to be fully capable of

supporting her child which is now in the Institution and which she desires to take home

with her."[309] The board released David. Mrs. L. Laroussoliere also took no chances when

she realized that her youngest son Emil was refusing to eat. Her letter included nine

men's signatures, which quickly prompted Emil's release.[310]

Esteemed patriarchs could be highly persuasive, especially when they included

specific details. Francis Lance wrote that he could "faithfully recommend [Thomas

Charles O'Connor], as a good-well disposed - & well behaved Boy."[311] Such details were

persuasive because they proved an established relationship between widows and male

leaders in their neighborhoods. In other cases, men simply used an emotional appeal,

like J.M. Eason, who wrote on behalf of his cook and chambermaid, Confederate widow

Julia Devine. Angry that Devine's request to send her five-year-old daughter to the

institution had been denied, Eason passionately wrote that he was "determined to

[309] Caroline Bahr, H. Williams, I. Jordan, I. N. Angle, M.D., and E. B. Sigbald to Gentlemen of the Board of Commissioners of the Orphan House, September 24, 1873; and I. F. Jordan, Isaac N. Angle, M.D., E. B. Sigwald, and H Williams to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, September 3, 1873, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[310] L. Larousseliere to the Board of Commissioners of the Orphan House, April, 17, 1861, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[311] Francis Lance to the Commissioners of the Orphan Home, August 28, 1866; and Application for Admission for Thomas Charles O'Connor, August 28, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

contest your right as Commissioner of the Orphan House to reject her application."[312]

Eason's appeal failed, but many such notes from men of standing worked.

In fact, such comments could be so convincing that some women simply eschewed numbers and trusted that a single man in a special position could persuade commissioners. In one extreme case, February 1867, Confederate widow Ellen Thomas went directly to the mayor of Charleston, Gilbert Pillsbury. Pillsbury explained Ellen was relocating to Philadelphia, where her brother had offered his support. Ever aware of budget issues in the post-war era, Pillsbury wrote, "would it not be economy to give transportation, and get rid of supporting the child? Especially as the mother is out of health, and may soon become a charge herself upon the city?"[313] Not surprisingly, with the mayor's stamp of approval, the commissioners sent Ellen's son William Henry Hammond to her. By relying on men of the community who often knew the commissioners personally, women pressured the men around them to uphold the promises of a Southern patriarchal society. This desperate plea often worked.

The greater challenge for women was not in placing children in the Orphan Home but in maintaining some influence over their children's lives. When orphans entered the institution, the board of commissioners assumed full authority, ensuring

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[312] J. M. Eason to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, June 12, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[313] G. Pillsbury to William C. Bee, Esq., May 17, 1870; Application for Admission for William Henry Hammond, February 18, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For his father's service record, see, William Henry Hammond, *U.S. Civil War Soldiers, 1861-1865.*

that mothers formally signed away their rights in indenture contracts. They also limited

contact between children and individuals outside the institution for fear of potential

diseases and the board's assumptions about poverty and its supposed connection to

laziness, intemperance, and negligence. These men believed a disciplined routine,

education, and a successful apprenticeship would ensure the children in their care did

not follow in their parents' footsteps. In practice, however, months and often years

later, many parents retrieved one or all of the children they placed in the Home but had

actively maintained a relationship with, even during the Civil War.[314]

First, a short two-week vacation every summer gave mothers a small window to

organize visits off site. In August 1868, for instance, the board granted Thomas Charles

O'Connor's step father F. Miller temporary custody over the boy for a visit to his

mother. This vacation included Miller's promise that he would "take good care of the

boy and [watch] over his health and morals."[315] Likewise, in late July 1868, the board

approved John and William Shallah's visit to see their aged grandmother, who the boys

had not seen since they entered the institution two years earlier.[316] Of course, crucial to

these agreements was the safety and health of the children. When Confederate widow

Sarah Skipper asked that her daughter Ann Elizabeth be released to see her younger

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[314] Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*

[315] F. Miller to the Chairman and Board of Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, August 3, 1868, Sullivan Island, SC, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[316] Susan Shallah to the Board of Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, July 23, 1868; S.A. Felker to Commissioners of Orphan House, August 6, 1868. For another example where an orphan temporarily left to visit an uncle, see S.A. Felker to the Board of Commissioners of Orphan House, August 4, 1870, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

sister Eva, the commissioners refused, as Eva was terribly ill and a potential danger to the health of the Orphan House.[317] Rather Sarah's wiser request for both Eva (who entered the institution in May 1868) and Ann Elizabeth to attend their grandfather's funeral was more readily approved.[318]

Even more significantly, many mothers simply took advantage of the institution's policies regarding visitors. As a public institution dependent on charity, the commissioners welcomed strangers every day except Sundays and any visitors, including family members, on Wednesdays.[319] While the details of these visits went unrecorded, records of these encounters are evident in the mothers' first-hand knowledge of their children's health. In May 1861, for example, Margaret Jenkins wrote that her nine-year-old daughter Harriet "appears to be very delicate and is a cause of much grief and uneasiness to my mind. So i would like to cary her up to Summerville a little."[320] By noting how Harriet "appears," Margaret reminded the commissioners that she had *seen* her daughter, and Harriet went home to her mother to recover before returning to the institution later that year.

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[317] S. L. Skipper to Mr. DeSaussure, July 30, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[318] Application for Admission for Eva M. Skipper, April 30, 1868; and S. L. Skipper to the Orphan House, August 5, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For an example of a sick child's temporary release, see Dr. Huger's notes on William Calder March 1862, Huger, *Records,* March 13, 1862.

[319] Bylaws of the Orphan House of Charleston South Carolina, Revised and Adopted by the Board of Commissioners, April 4, 1861, Approved by the City Council, April 23, 1861, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[320] Margaret Jenkins to the Honorable Board of the Orphan Asylum, May 16, 1861; and Minutes of the Board of Commissioners, January 19, 1860, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Conflict between Orphan House staff and parents was a natural outcome of these visits. In May 1860, for instance, Ann Arnold discovered that her youngest son John was deaf. She begged to have "the privilege granted to me of having him returned to my care, feeling assured that such must be greater than could be expected from a public institution."[321] The binding-out committee, trusting the expertise of their esteemed Dr. Huger, did not agree. Rather, John remained in the institution another three years until he was of age for an apprenticeship. Evidently, however, employers did not find the boy's hearing loss well-suited for work, and John stayed on the binding-out list well beyond his peers. His mother, rather than see her son follow the pattern of others in his shoes in going to the Alms House, promised that she could "assist him & get him in a place that will give him enough to pay his board."[322] The commissioners finally signed off on the release.

In other cases, mothers intervened upon receiving news that one of their children had died in the institution. When John and James Kiely entered the institution in late 1868, both boys exhibited symptoms of marasmus, a form of severe, prolonged malnutrition, and six-year-old James, Dr. Huger wrote, immediately entered the sick ward "with chill & fever & . . . never recovered from the debility attendant on that disease."[323] By April 15, 1869 the child was dead, and Ellen was desperate about John.

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[321] Ann Arnold to the Board of Commissioners of the Orphan House, May 9, 1860, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[322] Ann Arnold to the Chairman & Commission of the Orphan House, undated; and Minutes of the Board of Commissioners, February 4, 1864, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[323] Huger, *Records,* April 15, 1869.

July 28, 1869, she wrote, "please grant me permission to take my son John Kiely home to his grandmother to take charge of him as my other son has Died in the institution."[324] The commissioners agreed in this case and in others like it, acknowledging the heartbreak of losing a child.

Other appeals focused on a child's well-being more generally. In a revealing moment of inter-family disputes, in August 1860, an older sister of Josephine Ellis, Mrs. Passailaigue told the commissioners that she wanted to take Josephine away "for a few Weeks for the Benefit off her health. . . [and] indisposition."[325] Following her own visit to Josephine, the girls' mother Elizabeth Ellis condemned what she saw as a deceitful ploy to gain a "cheap servant." Her son-in-law Mr. Passailaigue, Elizabeth claimed, had "slandered me and done much to hurt me," and his request for Josephine was made "in defiance of me to make a slave."[326] This cry against Josephine's "enslavement" struck a chord with commissioners, who were committed to raising these white children above any semblance of slavery. Their goal for girls was to place them in situations where they could find suitable husbands – not to provide cheap labor for someone else. Josephine instead became a domestic servant to Dr. Hugh Rutledge the following year before eventually going to live with another sister Sarah Ann Kingdon.

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[324] Ellen Kiely to M. J. Cobin, July 28, 1869; and Application to Retrieve John Kiely, August 5, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[325] Mrs. H. L. Passailaigue to the Board of Commissioners off the Charleston Orphan House, August 22, 1860, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[326] Elizabeth Ellis to the Chairman and Commissioners Orphan House, August 30, 1860, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

The Civil War itself also led many Orphan House mothers to retrieve children, and it prompted a striking increase in the number of younger children who left the institution during the conflict. Unfortunately, providing a precise number of these children is not possible due to the commissioners' sporadic record-keeping between January 1863 and October 1865. Nevertheless, the numbers available during the war are striking. Between 1860 and 1870, of the children who exited the home, 211 adolescents left under indenture contracts, while 370 orphans went home to live with a relative. Total retrievals, then, account for at least 64 percent of those who left the home. In 1863 and 1864, however, retrievals accounted for 79 percent of children's exits, and that number is likely underestimated. The only other times retrievals were above the 64 percent average were in 1869 and 1870, totaling 75 percent and 80 percent respectively. These dates are also telling, as the highest numbers of children admitted into the institution were in 1866 and 1867, giving family members two to three years to recover after the war. The Civil War clearly shaped the numbers of orphans who entered or went home (see Figure 4.5), and families were quicker to bring children home when faced with an advancing Union Army.

Figure 4.5 Percentages of Children Retrieved by Family, 1860-1870

Year	Admitted	Total Exits	True Indenture	Retrieved	% Retrieved
1860	51	47	18	29	62%
1861	73	27	10	17	63%
1862	38	41	17	24	59%
1863	21	33	7	26	79%
1864	2	33	7	26	79%
1865	10	19	11	8	42%
1866	106	42	20	22	52%
1867	107	27	14	13	48%
1868	91	42	20	22	52%
1869	39	59	15	44	75%
1870	53	46	9	37	80%
TOTAL	**591**	**416**	**148**	**268**	**64%**

Mothers who feared U.S. shelling and the war often retrieved their children in an attempt to protect them. In their notes the commissioners recalled that in December 1864 "when Sherman was approaching Orangeburg, [Ellen Cosgrove] became alarmed and applied for her child [eight-year-old Ella]," who she supported along with an older son by working as a seamstress and washerwoman through the conclusion of the war.[327] With peace established, by March 1867, Cosgrove sent Ella back to the institution until she remarried the following year. Her first retrieval was solely grounded in the war. Similarly, in June 1862, Mary Olens wrote that she was "all alone" in the wake of her husband and her brother's enlistments in the Confederate Army, and she wanted her

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[327] Application for Admission for Ellen Cosgrove, March 28, 1867; and Application to Retrieve Ellen Cosgrove, April 2, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

sister Ellen Jane Falk to live with her to fill this void. The commissioners agreed.[328] Mary

followed up in October for her brothers Henry and Isaac, one of which was of age for an

apprenticeship.[329] Bringing both boys home was optimal for Mary; given the absence of

the primary men in her life, Mary's younger brothers promised partial support through

physical labor and sixteen-year-old Isaac's wages.

Even family members who did not directly address the war showed a heightened

sense of stress and martial awareness during the conflict. For instance, when Catherine

Slavean asked the board to release her son John in August 1862, she said that it was her

"duty to take him out."[330] Such a phrase harkened to the martial fervor she had

witnessed during the war. Then, in August 1863, in tandem with U.S. success when the

Swamp Angel's shells hit the city, Isabella Branch penned an impassioned letter

explaining that she was leaving Charleston and that she could not "bare to be separated

from the only child I have and the only relative."[331] Young Isabella, her ten-year-old

daughter, fled Charleston with her after two years in the institution.

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[328] Mary E. Olens to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, June 11, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[329] Mary E. Olens to the Commissioners, October 22, 1862; and Mary Olens to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, October 28, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[330] Catherine Slavean to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, August 12, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[331] Isabella Branch to Mr. DeSaussure, August 28, 1863, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For a similar hasty wartime retrieval, see William Mander's retrieval, Catherine Thompson to the Chairman & Commissioners of the Orphan House, April 27, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. Older siblings could be just as anxious about retrieving children during the war. See for examples, Mary Emily Hodges and Julia Barrino retrievals, James H. Stephens to the Com. of Orphan House, January 30, 1863, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library; Elizabeth Prentice to the Commissioners of the Orphan House of Charleston, August

Even when children were safe and not of age to contribute financially, grieving

relatives like Branch often returned for young children out of love. In one such case,

after her husband was released from a Union Prisoner of War camp in 1863, Mary

Myatt's anxious appeal promised not just the ability to take care of her three sons but

that she "could not be happy without them."[332] Likewise, after watching one daughter

become a domestic servant in a bakery, Caroline Bahr penned a desperate letter asking

that the board release her daughter Catherine. She wrote, "I have been unfortunate as

to leave my oldest Daughter and I feel the loss of her a great deal . . . I would not feel

satisfied to leave her."[333] This heart-wrenching plea, combined with her plan to live with

her husband's family in the country, was persuasive, and the board released Catherine.

Love and genuine affection between mother and child were powerful motivators.

Indeed, even outside the war, between the social and financial advantages of

older children and genuine affection, most mothers retrieved their children if possible.

Marrying a new husband, thereby re-establishing the patriarchal order, was one of the

most seamless methods, and commissioners were always more likely to release a child

to a father or to a mother and a step father for its assurance of support. For example,

widowed mother of two Mary Charlotte Bone swiftly married in an effort to retrieve her

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10, 1863; Capt. John Prentice to Mr. Bennett, August 13, 1863; and Minutes of the Board of Commissioners, August 13, 1863, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[332] Mary Myatt to the Honorable Commissioners of the Orphan House, undated, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. This letter must have reached the commissioners in 1863, as both Edward and Lewis are on the Orphan House Index for an 1863 retrieval by their mother.

[333] Caroline Bahr to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, November 21, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

sons. In 1865, she had sent her ten-year-old Charles and her eight-year-old Arthur to the

institution, trusting that this was the best route to ensure their safety, but the following

year, Arthur's foot was crushed by the wheel of a cart. The injury was so serious that Dr.

Huger reported he was "in a desperate condition, his nervous system has never

recovered from the shock of the injury."[334] Truly lucky, Arthur made a full recovery, but

Mary panicked and remarried within the year, enabling her to retrieve both boys.[335]

Stepfathers promised renewed security and the hopes of genuine affection. Indeed,

George Londrisk's sentiment regarding his two stepdaughters is enlightening. He wrote,

"I am only their step father but I will do all I can for them for when their mother was in

her dying bed she beged me to take care of them and I will do so."[336]

A mother's marriage could also set orphans up for success later in life. In one

extreme example, after Ellen Gorman's Confederate husband disappeared following a

furlough, she lost one son to malnutrition and sent her other two sons to the Orphan

House. Gorman's solution was a quick marriage to William Fogerty, and just one year

later the newly married Ellen Fogerty retrieved five-year-old John, with assurances of a

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[334] Huger, *Records,* May 10-May 17, 1866.

[335] A. J. Mullinaux to Mr. Bee, December 3, 1866, St. Andrew's Parish; and Application to Retrieve Charles P. and Arthur B. Bone, December 13, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For similar cases of marriage to a stepfather prompting retrieval, see the cases of Thomas Finnegan and John and Peter Meyers, Wilmot DeSaussure to J. F. Steinmeyer, September 3, 1866; Application to Retrieve Thomas Finnegan, September 6, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library; William Zimmerman to the Board of Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, November 17, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[336] George Londrisk to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, December 14, 1865; George Londrisk to Mr. Small, undated; and William B. Yates to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, December 7, 1865, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

stable head of household.[337] While Ellen was not able to retrieve her older son Michael

through this marriage, her decision was an asset for both boys. John stayed with his

mother and stepfather until adulthood, arranged his own apprenticeship as a printer

and eventually found work as a carpenter, cigar stand clerk, and even a miner over the

course of his life.[338] Michael spent ten years in the institution and was apprenticed to a

farmer named Alfred Shortey Caldwell at age sixteen. By age twenty, brown-eyed,

brown haired, and ruddy-cheeked, Michael completed his contract and returned home

to live with his stepfather, mother, younger brother John, and his ten-year-old half-

sister Mary.[339] He was a day laborer, a low-paying trade but one he would have been

well-suited for following his training with Caldwell. With just his mother in the picture,

this bleak occupation would have limited Michael's opportunities, but life in his step-

father's house enabled him to enlist in the U.S. Navy in 1888.[340] A devoted sailor, he

never married but spent the rest of his life working with the U.S. Navy.[341] Ellen

Gorman's second marriage helped even her sons.

    In practice, desperate and hopeful women sometimes acted rashly in

remarriage, and in this twist, women seeking the protective confines of patriarchy made

themselves vulnerable to its limitations when men became negligent or violent. In 1866

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[337] E. Gorman to the Board of Commissioners, November 19, 1868; and Wm B Fogerty to the Board of Commissioners, November 25, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[338] 1880 Charleston Census Record; and John Gorman, 1877-1909, *Charleston City Directory.*

[339] This description of Michael matches the notes on his enlistment record later, but the "ruddy" cheeks likely came from his time on the farm. See, M. J. Gorman, May 19, 1888, Return of Enlistments at the U.S. Naval Rendezvous.

[340] Alfred Shortey Caldwell, apprentice application for unnamed child, December 11, 1876, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library; and 1880 Charleston Census Record.

[341] 1910 Charleston Census Record; and Michael J Gorman, *Charleston City Directory* 1912-1913.

for instance, notably *after* their wedding, Mary Ann Miller's second husband refused to

support her ten-year-old son Thomas Charles O'Conner, leaving the boy to live in an

outhouse on a neighbor's property.[342] In another case, Margaret Barclay reported that

she had "been very badly treated by the man who married her, and has since deserted

her and is returned to his real wife."[343] Marriage sometimes only made circumstances

worse.

Even in cases where a man took ownership of his new responsibilities, women

were not ensured security. Mother of six, Mary Jane Sineath, for instance, lost her first

husband in service to the Confederate Army but quickly married a man by the name of

Cobia. Marriage granted Mary Jane and her children financial support, while she could

provide child care for Cobia's own five children from a previous marriage. Nevertheless,

eleven children strained the family's limited means, and in February 1866, ten-year-old

Charles and eight-year-old James Sineath entered the Orphan House. Then, two years

later the board found Mary Jane with "no means of support in bad health, no assistance

whatever from her present husband, they having separated," and both nine-year-old

Georgianna and seven-year-old Frederick Theodore Sineath joined their older

brothers.[344] Only after Mary Jane reconciled with her husband the following year and

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[342] Application for Admission for Thomas Charles O'Connor, August 28, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[343] Application for Admission for Abraham Barclay, April 16, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[344] Application for Admission for Charles and James Sineath, February 8, 1866.; and Application for Admission for Georgianna and Frederick Thomas Sineath, July 9, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Cobia opened a business in Savannah, Georgia, did the Sineath children return home.[345]

Burdened by a large family, Cobia was dependent on lucrative job opportunities, while

Mary Jane was dependent on a patriarch.

Women who married during the Civil War ran an even higher risk of

disappointment, especially when the declining numbers of available men led them to

make increasingly risky decisions. For example, when Mary Gilooly lost her first husband

to a fatal wound nine days after the Battle of Secessionville, she sent eight-year-old Ann

and six-year-old Margaret Gilooly to the Orphan House and her oldest daughter Mary to

the Sisters of Mercy. Within the year, Mary hastily married another Confederate veteran

M Broderick and quickly retrieved both Ann and Margaret. Just under eighteen months

later, however, following Mary's desperate appeal for assistance, the visiting

commissioner wrote, "From all I can learn, [Broderick] is a worthless man, and has

entirely failed to fulfill his promise."[346] Both girls returned to the Home. No less dire,

when her husband James Reilly died following a fatal wound at the Battle of Sharpsburg,

Catherine Reilly married another man in his company named James Brown. But Brown

had received a debilitating injury at Sharpsburg, which left Catherine, the mother of five

children, responsible for supporting her entire family. She had no choice but to send her

three oldest sons and her daughter to the Orphan House in two waves in 1866 and

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[345] Charles Sineath's exit from the home is unclear. See, Mary Jane Cobia to the Chairman and Commissioners of the Orphan House, February 25, 1869; and Mary J. Cobia to the Chairman and Board of Commissioners of the Orphan House, August 19, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[346] Application for Admission for Ann and Margaret Gilooly, May 19, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

1867.[347] Marriage during the war compounded the problems women faced, where

increased risks of widowhood, desertion, and even additional duties in caring for a

disabled veteran were all too likely.

Nevertheless, widows in dire need for support married neighbors in their

communities, other southerners, and both battle-hardened U.S. and Confederate

soldiers. In fact, evidence these women factored loyalty to the Confederacy, Charleston,

or to the South more generally into their decisions to marry again is scarce. They were

willing to marry Union men too. Sarah E. Davis, for example, met U.S. soldier Mr. Jones

while he was stationed at Fort Gibson after the war. By 1867, a date that ensured he

would not be injured or killed in battle, they were wed. But active duty came with its

own risks. Within months, Jones was restationed, and Sarah sent her youngest son,

eight-year-old William to the institution.[348]

As the next pages will show, most women who reported marrying a Union

soldier depicted such men as scoundrels, which causes room for speculation. Mothers

applying to the Orphan House were invested in exacting sympathy; testing prejudices

and assumptions that Union soldiers were con artists intent on exploiting beleaguered

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[347] Application for Admission for James and Michael Reilly, January 11, 1866; and Application for Admission for William and Rosanna Reilly, July 24, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. See also, James Reilly, June 28, 1861, Confederate Enlistment Record. See also the case of Sarah Wingard Stevens, whose first husband died in the Confederate Army and whose second husband was a Confederate Prisoner of War, presumed dead. See, Application for Admission for Johanna and Dolly A. Wingard, June 24, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For her first husband's service record, see also, J. Wingard, *U.S. Confederate Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865.*

[348] Application for Admission for William Davis, May 10, 1866; and Application for Admission for William Davis, July 18, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

former Confederates even when they did not believe what they were saying. Indeed, the U.S. Army had systematically destroyed sections of Charleston during the bombardment that started in 1863 and continued almost to the end of the war, only to follow this shelling with military occupation. The Orphan House itself had been ransacked and used as lodgings. This destruction did not foment positive engagements between U.S. soldiers and elite white Charlestonians, especially when some of those soldiers were members of the 21st United States Colored Troops who entered the city in February 1865. Yet, poor white women also admitted aligning themselves with Union soldiers in matrimony, a fact that could have soured the commissioners' perceptions of these mothers for their lack of allegiance to the Confederacy. The board was also vigilant in its investigations, speaking not just to the applicants but also neighbors who could be brutally frank regarding widows and their children. In that regard, women had a vested interest in telling the truth or at least much of the truth, as to do otherwise was to lose credibility and a chance for assistance.

Women certainly agreed to hasty, troublesome marriages to U.S. soldiers. For example, the commissioners reported Confederate widow and mother of three, Mrs. Zehe, "married a German soldier in the Yankee Army who rob'd her of all she had & ran away."[349] Zehe was so taken aback that she died shortly thereafter. Jane Considine's case was just as desperate. When she applied for her daughters three-year-old Mary

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[349] Application for Admission for D.I. Zehe, August 12, 1870, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For the children's father, see, J. H. Zehe, Enlisted October 1, 1861, *Index to Compiled Confederate Military Service Records*.

Jane and just under one-year-old Ann Eliza to enter the institution, Jane claimed her first husband had died in September 1861; then her "poverty induced her to marry again . . . [but she] was duped by the man she married, he having been married before & having a wife & 8 children."[350] The "villain" Mr. McCall was a member of the Ohio Regiment, which had deterred neither Jane nor Reverend Yates, who was also conned and responsible for officiating the sham marriage. In a telling note, the commissioners called McCall a known con artist who used his connection to the army as a means to flee. The board swiftly admitted Mary Jane, while Ann Eliza was too young.

Similarly duped, the board reported that Confederate widow Annie Elmore "married a Yankee soldier after the evacuation of the city and on his being ordered away from Charleston followed him to New York where she found him living with a woman who was his wife before he married her." [351] Desperate, alone, and as it turned out carrying this soldier's child, Annie retreated to Charleston where months later, struck by the pangs of impending childbirth, she sent three-year-old Michael Joseph Elmore to the Orphan institution. In a telling about-face, Annie's experience in remarriage cautioned her against marrying hastily, even when five years later she had no choice but to institutionalize the child she delivered in 1867, Thomas Elmore, so that

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[350] Application for Admission for Mary Jane and Anna Eliza Considine, March 19, 1862; and Application for Admission for Mary Jane and Ann Eliza Considine, April 2, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[351] Application for Admission for Michael Joseph Elmore, January 30, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

she could work as a domestic servant.[352] This work uniquely gave her the opportunity to

break free from the oppressive restraints of patriarchy, but it left no room for a child.

Poor white women like Annie Elmore, Jane Considine, and Mrs. Zehe married

both Confederate and U.S. veterans, risking wartime death and injury, desertion, or

even just simple movement of the Army. They risked it because in many cases

remarriage was successful, ensuring these women did not apply for assistance.

Allegiances to the Confederacy, if they even existed, were not poor women's priorities.

Indeed, given the frequency with which women who reported marrying a U.S. soldier

also reported the death of a Confederate soldier, these poor women may have resented

the Confederacy for its failure to protect them, even when they could not express this

feeling to the commissioners of the Home. In either case, what they could share with

the commissioners was clear – for women in destitute circumstances, a soldier's

allegiances were irrelevant if he could provide for her and for her children. That support

and perhaps the promises of genuine affection were too strong to ignore.

As the women in this chapter have already shown, however, even outside of

marriage women embraced a web of social networks steeped in patriarchy that began

with the nuclear family and expanded outwards as far as the Alms House and the

Charleston Orphan House. Indeed, its commissioners were patriarchal figures

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[352] Application for Thomas Elmore, May 23, 1872, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library. In an interesting about-face, Annie's fortunes changed when she began working for Mr. J. Adger Smyth, and Thomas Elmore only stayed in the institution three months before Smyth wrote to the commissioners himself promising to support the boy. See, J. Adger Smyth to W. C. Bee, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners Orphan House, August 28, 1872, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

themselves in promising security. In their letters, mothers frequently acknowledged the commissioners as guardians. In her letter asking to retrieve her children, for instance, Mary Myatt wrote, "may god in his Mercies Bless you for your kind Protection."[353] Mildred Ballantine was especially deferential. She wrote, "With the utmost respect I address your most honorable House, humbly & unequally entreating that you will deliver my child . . . What do all poor people in this world have to do in the hopes of living at all. Are we not all servants to One another, under subjection to some Higher Power, Even the highest stationed in this world."[354] In this poignant language, Mildred simultaneously acknowledged her "unequal" relationship to the board as a woman, while also imploring the commissioners to recognize their inferiority to God. This language was persuasive, and it became especially important when women elicited aid on multiple occasions.

Women often sent their children to the institution in multiple waves. Sarah Betancourt, for instance, noted that her husband had owned a successful tobacco store, but his work required trips to Cuba, including a recent trip in August when his letters home had stopped. The loss of her husband was crucial, and in December 1868, Sarah submitted an application for the four oldest children, thirteen-year-old Augustine, nine-year-old Alturo, six-year-old Amilana, and five-year-old Ursula. Noting that Sarah had run out of stock in the store, the visiting commissioner wrote that on the day of her

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[353] Mary Myatt to the Honorable Commissioners of the Orphan House, undated, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[354] M. Ballentine to Honorable Commissioners & Teachers of the Charleston Orphan House, undated, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

application, "being unable to pay rent, her landlord . . . notified her to leave the premises on this day and she knows not where to find shelter for herself and children."[355] Hoping her husband would return, Sarah withdrew Ursula from the admission and sent the three boys just after Christmas, but with four children still in her care just over one year later, Sarah received a report that her husband was in New Orleans, confirming her worst fears of abandonment. She immediately asked to send both Ursula and four-year-old John to the Orphan Home, fully embracing the institution's patriarchal promise.[356] Tellingly, however, in tandem with this application, Sarah was arranging an apprenticeship for her oldest son fifteen-year-old Augustine to Ward H. Markley, a man "engaged in mercantile pursuits" and who could make Augustine a new patriarchal resource.[357]

Like Betancourt, while seeking admission for younger children, mothers often asked to retrieve older children who had lived in the institution for a period of years. In this vein, Confederate widow Ann Carroll's applications in February 1867 are striking. Ann sent an admissions application for her five-year-old son William Carroll just before sending a request to retrieve her older daughter twelve-year-old Mary Nolan, who had been living in the institution with another brother John since October 1861. Mary was of

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[355] Application for Admission for Augustine, Alturo, Amilana, and Ursula Betancourt, December 24, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[356] Application for Admission for Ursula and John Betancourt, January 27, 1870, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[357] Ward H. Markley to the Board of Commissioners of the Orphan House, February 23, 1870; and Sarah Betancourt to the Chairman and Other Commissioners of the Orphan House, January 13, 1870, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

age to be an asset, but in an ironic decision, the board of commissioners rejected both requests. They saw no reason Ann Carroll could not support one child, just as Mary was of age to be an asset to the institution.[358]

Poor families also treated the Home as though it operated with an open-door policy admitting and readmitting children as needed. For instance, a year after her father's death and the birth of her younger brother, four-year-old Frances Ann Martin, entered the institution for six years before she was released in the spring 1861. Three months later, after realizing she had overestimated her financial stability in light of rising prices during the blockade, her mother sent Frances back to the institution for another eight months.[359] Then, in a fluke, April 1862, Frances went home after she contracted Typhoid fever which persisted three weeks and made her appear, Dr. Huger wrote, "to be running into a state of imbecility."[360] Like Martin, desperate mothers who sent children to the institution multiple times embraced the protective security of its patriarchs as needed.

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[358] Application for Admission for William Carroll, March 7, 1867; Application to Retrieve Mary Nolan, March 7, 1867; Application to Retrieve Mary Nolan, March 21, 1867; Anne Carroll to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, February 26, 1867; and Anne Carroll to Commissioners of Orphan House, March 14, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For a similar rejection of a request to release an older child, see the case of Phoebe Lawton, Margaret Lawson to the Board of Commissioners of the Orphan House, October 26, 1865, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[359] Application for Admission for Frances Ann Martin, August 1, 1861, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For a similar ill-timed, short retrieval see Joseph Tynan's file, Application for Admission for Joseph Tynan, October 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[360] Huger, *Records,* April 16, 1862 – May 1, 1862.

In unique cases, women even used the Home's existence as a way to implement some control over a domineering husband. In January 1868, for example, John O'Brien told his wife Sarah that he had found a job in the country and that he would be moving the family with him. Sarah was not pleased, but she was powerless to stop him on her own. Without another man to aid her, Sarah turned to the Orphan House commissioners, applying for all five of her children to enter "in hope of preventing his carrying the children." Naturally, after speaking to Mr. O'Brien, the board rejected the application, but the fact that Sarah even tried gave her husband pause. Six months later, an unemployed Mr. O'Brien himself sent in an application for his oldest son and daughter. He had not taken a job in the country.[361]

Beyond and often synonymously with the Orphan House, mothers often turned to extended male family members. But these situations were always tenuous when men had their own families. For the greatest security, women relied on multiple male family members. Catherine E. Pardue's case is striking. Following her husband's death in the Confederate Army, Catherine moved in with her aged father W.P. Smith, whose age left the family so destitute that within fifteen months, all three of her children entered the Orphan House.[362] Four years later January 1870, with Catherine's fifteen-year-old son William aging out, Mr. Smith stepped in again by retrieving William to "see to his

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[361] Application for Admission for Mary Virginia, Margaret, Elizabeth Ann, Thomas, and John William O'Brien, January 7, 1868; and John O'Brien to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, June 4, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[362] Application for Admission for William, George, and Lilla Pardue, May 16, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

welfare."[363] Then the following year, just as George was turning fifteen, Catherine wrote

that her "brother is now in Sumpter and will endeavor to get him a permanent situation

by the fall."[364] Finally, after another two years, with William's eighteenth birthday and

prospects of her own remarriage, Catherine confidently asked to collect thirteen-year-

old Lilly, and by 1880, she had married Isaac T. Brown, re-establishing an official

patriarch in her life.[365]

Catherine Pardue Brown continued to lean on male family members up to her

death. By 1900, forty-six-year-old William, the oldest of Catherine's sons, was

supporting both his mother and stepfather as the foreman of a phosphate company

where he had been working as early as 1877. He was financially secure enough to

support not just the three of them but eventually his own wife. By 1903, he became a

clerk before shifting into fruit farming, which he maintained until his death from

gangrene on January 22, 1918.[366] Similarly, George Pardue worked in the phosphate

industry until 1908 when he went into tree farming. George was able to maintain a wife,

Ruth Cotesworth Magwood, his mother-in-law Susan Magwood, and his only daughter

Georgette, who lived with her father almost until his death on September 13, 1924 from

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[363] W. P. Smith to Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, January 18, 1870, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[364] C. E. Pardue to the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, August 3, 1871; and C.E. Pardue to the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, August 10, 1871, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[365] Catharine E. Pardue to the Board of Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, August 27, 1873, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library; and 1880 Charleston Census Record.

[366] William Pardue, *Charleston City Directory,* 1877-1918; and William Pardue, January 22, 1918, Charleston, SC Death Certificate.

chronic myocarditis, or an inflamed heart.[367] Together, then, William and George supported six dependent women for more than twenty years, including their mother. Their mother Lily Pardue, in turn, had relied on not just her sons but two husbands, her father, her brother, and the commissioners of the Orphan House over the course of her life, fully embracing the promises of nineteenth-century paternalism.

Beyond family, women had a network of usually male neighbors that offered at times daily survival and even long-term security. Neighbors sometimes paid rent, purchased food, provided clothing, a place to sleep, or even simply information. Even more crucial were neighbors who offered connections to potential employers. For example, in 1862, after widowed mother of three Mary Eaves sent her sons John and Thomas to the Orphan House, she and an older daughter took in two boarders Hugh Gurley and Alexander McIntosh, who were Firemen working for the Central Railroad. Then in May 1868, when Mary discovered that John had been indentured to a farmer without her approval, she penned an outraged letter promising she had "secured for him the assurance of a profitable employment in Savannah in connection with one of the workshops of the Central Rail Road." [368] This was the same company that had employed her tenants Gurley and McIntosh in 1862. Just as crucial, some widows also found male employers willing to welcome orphaned children into their homes. For instance, Mr. J. Adger Smyth told his domestic servant Annie Elmore that he held "no

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[367] George Pardue, *Charleston City Directory,* 1874-1920; 1900 and 1920 Charleston Census Records; and George Pardue, September 13, 1924, Charleston, SC Death Certificate.

[368] Application for Admission for John and Thomas Eaves, February 6, 1862; and Mary Ann Eaves to Elizabeth Irain Matron, Charleston Orphan House, May 29, 1868, Savannah, Georgia, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

objection to her bringing her child" and wrote to the board asking that they release her youngest son, Thomas.[369] Men could offer practical aid and timely job opportunities.

Even when women turned to other females, a new man offered the greatest stability. In August 1867, for example, the visiting commissioner noted widow Mrs. S. S. Clanton, was "encumbered by the care of her mother and two younger sisters . . . and is thus prevented from taking proper care of her child."[370] In contrast, married sisters Mrs. Peterson and Mrs. Zehe split responsibility over their nieces and nephew, where Mrs. Peterson took in Diedrich Zehe and Mrs. Zehe took in Annie Zehe and her older sister. Only when these families struggled did the children enter the institution three years later.[371] While single females could become a new burden, aunts could lean on their husbands in supporting extra children.

On rare occasions, even without a patriarch, women could find success by collaborating. In one extreme case, Confederate widows, Mary Ritter and Adeline Roberts, travelled from Colleton district to Charleston in January 1868 with the express purposes of sending their children to live in the Orphan House. Nonresidents, they received swift refusals, and the women had little choice but to return to Colleton

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[369] J. Adger Smyth to W. C. Bee, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners Orphan House, August 28, 1872, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[370] The board denied this application on the grounds that Clanton was young and healthy. For the board, her obligation was to her child first and foremost, and there was no reason she could not support her daughter Elizabeth. Application for Admission for Mrs. S. S. Clanton, August 15, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[371] Application for Admission for D.I. Zehe August 12, 1870; Application for Admission for Annie Zehe, November 16, 1870; Annie Zehe, Application for Admission for Annie Zehe, November 22, 1870, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library; and 1920 Colleton, SC Census Record.

district, where Adeline Roberts welcomed the homeless Ritters onto her farm. The families, including both women, eight-year-old Adolph Ritter, five-year-old William Ritter, twenty-two-year-old Charity Roberts, twenty-year-old John Roberts, and nine-year-old Wright Roberts, lived together at least two years. By collaborating, neither woman married again, and by 1880 Mary Ritter had her own home, where she stayed until she moved in with her youngest son William in 1920.[372]

This partnership was crucial to Adolph and William Ritter's success later in life. Having grown up on the Roberts farm, both boys started their own farms. In 1886, Adolph married his wife and the mother of his six children (five of which lived to adulthood), while William married his wife Martha in 1895. Martha gave birth to seven single children and a pair of twins, although the twins did not live to adulthood. Tellingly, William also recognized the crucial role Adeline Roberts had played in his childhood, as he named one of his youngest daughters – Adeline Ritter - after his mother's close friend. While William and his wife maintained their farm for over fifty years, even leaving behind a late picture of the two of them in front of their farmhouse, by 1910, Adolph shifted from agricultural farming to become an employee of the General Farm Lumber Company. By 1920, he owned his own wood yard, which he maintained into his 70s. He was so successful he was even able to send his youngest son Rudolph to law school. Adolph lived a long, successful life, not dying until he was

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[372] Application for Admission for William C. and Adolph Ritter, January 9, 1868; Application for Admission for R.T.W. Roberts, January 9, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library; 1870 Colleton, SC Census Record; and 1880 Colleton, SC Census Record.

seventy-five when he was in a severe automobile accident that caused "traumatic" head and chest injuries and ultimately heart failure on January 21, 1938.[373] Just as successful, William lived even longer, dying aged eighty-nine years old on June 29, 1955.[374] By working together, poor women like Adeline and Mary, could flourish, but most women preferred reconstituting an ideal patriarchal family.

In this way, although the Civil War compounded the burdens white women at their most vulnerable carried, poor mothers were committed to patriarchal ideals, and they incorporated the war into the networks they had long since trusted, including the Charleston Orphan House. Women who lost their husbands to the war, naturally highlighted sacrifice to request aid or retrieve children. They requested support for their losses as Confederate widows, refugees, or simply victims of a Charlestonian labor system simultaneously dependent on them and designed to keep them at the margins. In practice, however, they displayed neither loyalty to the Confederacy or to the U.S. and were set on exacting the promises of a patriarchal tradition, even begging men in the community to support their bids for assistance.

In reality, however, just as poor white mothers attempted to exert control over powers above them, they were beholden to the expectations and desires of their own children. Orphans, always at the core of parents, employers, Orphan House, and Alms House correspondence, were largely silent in historical records. Nevertheless, as the

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[373] 1900, 1910, and 1930 Colleton, SC Census Records; 1920 Beaufort, SC Census Record; and Adolph Ritter, Sr., January 21, 1938, Colleton, SC Death Certificate.

[374] 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, and 1940 Colleton, SC Census Records; and William C. Ritter, June 29, 1955, *Find a Grave Index.*

next and final chapter will discuss, even limited by age, class, and sometimes gender,

children actively shaped their lives, sometimes in direct opposition to the plans and

strategies adults in their lives so carefully set in motion.

CHAPTER 5. 'ANXIOUS' FOR A NEW LIFE: ORPHANS OF THE CHARLESTON ORPHAN

HOUSE

In June 1862, Henry A. Wilson, a married and childless Confederate soldier,

visited the Charleston Orphan House with the hopes of adopting a son who could fill the

void of his absence at home by assisting Wilson's wife. During a single visit, Wilson

selected a healthy, polite eight-year-old full-orphaned boy named John Pierce and wrote

to the commissioners asking to adopt.[375] Wilson's commanding officers even submitted

a recommendation letter on his behalf.[376] Young John had stood out among all the other

boys, and with the commissioners' approval he was poised to begin life anew in Wilson's

home just outside Columbia.

This dream quickly soured. Five years later, John Pierce refused to remain with

the Wilsons any longer. After first displaying "disobedient" behavior on the farm, John

fled back to the Orphan House in Charleston where he begged the commissioners to

intervene. He claimed that Wilson had forced him to carry the burden of work and had

failed to provide for his needs, particularly with regard to food. The commissioners

investigated, prompting a defensive letter from Henry Wilson on April 21, 1867. Wilson

wrote that John's claim "was not true I never treated him like Apprince [apprentice] I

treated more like A father than A master . . . the times was hard and my health was bad

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[375] In nineteenth-century terms, the word "orphan" applied to any child whose father was deceased. Public and private institutions dedicated towards helping these children and their mothers did, however, sometimes delineate between "full-orphans," who had lost both parents and "half-orphans," whose mothers were still living.

[376] Henry A. Wilson to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, June 28, 1862; and S. M. Rook, T. J. Hooker, E.S. Hook, and A. Howard to the Commissioners, June 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

I was not able to very mutch Work But thank the one that rules us all that I feale that I

dun my Duty toward him he was Disobent and try to hide his folts . . . he runaway from

me without my Provocation."[377] Wilson, then, acknowledged some hardship but

reminded the commissioners about the conditions of life in a war-ravaged, destitute

state. "The times was hard" for everyone. Wilson may have even borne long-term

physical or psychological injuries from his time in the Confederate service. But where a

hardened veteran recognized the vestiges of wartime South Carolina, young John

blamed his adoptive father, and the boy strove for a better life.

The commissioners were invested in John's welfare, and they terminated the

contract. In response, Wilson let slip some truth in the boy's accusation. He declared

that he had treated the boy "Better than if he had bin my one child becose he was a

poore friendless boy he is my Apprentice but he is rude disobent and untruthfull."[378] Yet

in saying "he is my Apprentice," he revealed John's story had in part been true. While he

was not an oppressive "master," he was also not the altruistic father he had claimed in

his first letter and in adopting John years earlier. John, in turn, reshaped his life. Never

returning to Wilson, he was indentured to a farmer just outside Charleston in 1869.

Orphan children like John Pierce occupied an ambiguous space - neither fully

independent nor dependent, neither fully in the public eye nor fully relegated to the

private household. This chapter seeks to examine that middle ground—just as historians

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[377] H. A. Wilson to Mr. W. C. Bee, April 21, 1867, Columbia, SC, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.
[378] H. A. Wilson to Mr. J. H. Howard, May 26, 1867, Columbia, SC, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

have done for other people caught between different social and cultural worlds.[379] It

asks, how much or how little agency did these children have? How did they try to direct

their own affairs? And how much did martial fervor shape their behavior during the Civil

War? Indeed, exploring orphan children shows that not only did the war affect them but

that their position came with incredible vulnerability, where they often carried the

burden of prolonged malnutrition, disease, and neglect. Yet despite their dependency

and the deprivation that came with it, they had a unique opportunity to influence the

adults around them. At times this meant embracing adult expectations, but when those

visions did not conform to an orphan's dreams of the future, children also had

resources. They played the adults in their lives against each other, manipulated

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[379] The basic premise in exploring a middle ground or the space in between defined categories is grounded in the historiography surrounding the confrontation between indigenous peoples and European settlers in the Americas. Building on Richard White's ground breaking *Middle Ground,* which examines the common ground upon which Great Lake's tribes and Europeans negotiated, Alida Metcalf's *Go-betweens and the Colonization of Brazil* argues for the centrality of people who occupied this middle ground in shaping the Portuguese colonization of Brazil. These "go-betweens" fell within three categories, but the crucial aspect that united all of them was that they occupied a space that granted them access to both worlds and gave them tremendous power.[379] While white orphans and Charlestonian adults did not face the cultural and language impediments that indigenous and white settlers confronted, this chapter embraces this idea of a person caught between two worlds. Orphan children occupied similarly ambiguous spaces – both in the public and behind the scenes, at times ignored or cast into the limelight, both vulnerable and powerful. See, Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Alida C. Metcalf, *Go-betweens and the Colonization of Brazil: 1500-1600* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005). For other works addressing this middle space and the clash of cultures, see also, Alfred W. Crosby Jr., *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003); Elaine G. Breslaw, *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem: Devilish Indians and Puritan Fantasies* (New York University Press, 1996); Kathryn Burns, *Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Stewart B. Schwartz, *Blood and Boundaries: The Limits of Religions and Racial Exclusion in Early Modern Latin America* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2020); Eve M. Duffy and Alida C. Metcalf, *The Return of Hans Staden: A Go-between in the Atlantic World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); and Erik Lars Myrup, *Power and Corruption in the Early Modern Portuguese World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015).

potential employers to select or reject them as apprentices, or simply engaged in

outright disobedience. The Civil War only expanded children's abilities to engineer lives

of their own making, with its martial fervor, new routes for disobedience, wartime

deprivation and hardship, and its inadvertent ability to bring orphans to the forefront in

southern imaginations.[380]

     The middle ground examined in this chapter was a constant in the Orphan

House, while the Civil War expanded opportunities for children like John Pierce. Most

prominently, this negotiated space played itself out in the ways children left the Home,

typically either to return to a relative or to enter an apprenticeship, the focal point of

the first section in this chapter. For children who entered apprenticeships, questions

abound. What made orphans "willing to be taken?" What made other children resist

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[380] Traditional scholarship on children tended to focus on adult ideas about children, rather than the actions and decisions of children themselves. Newer scholarship has successfully positioned children as agents of change in their own right, reacting to and helping shape the events around them. In Civil War historiography, James Marten's monumental work on this subject focuses not only on the ways the war affected children but on how it politicized them both during and after the conflict itself. While children's abilities to act were often limited by the adults around them, they had agency. For historiography that address childhood agency during the Civil War see, James Marten, *The Children's Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); James Marten, *Children for the Union: The War Spirit on the Northern Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004); James Marten, ed., *Children and Youth during the Civil War Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Anya Jabour, *Topsy-Turvy: How the Civil War Turned the World Upside Down for Southern Children* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010); and Edmund Drago, *Confederate Phoenix: Rebel Children and their Families in South Carolina* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008). For scholars discussing children's agency in other places and times, see, Ann Twinam, *Public Lives, Private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America* (Palo Alta, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); and Jorge Rojas Flores, "The Life and Times of an Aristocratic Girl in Santiago, Chile (1666-1678)," in *Raising an Empire: Children in Early Modern Iberia and Colonial Latin America,* edited by Ondina E. Gonzalez and Bianca Premo (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007): 107-136. For works addressing children in the Civil War era more generally, see, Catherine A. Jones, *Intimate Reconstructions: Children in Postemancipation Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015); Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard College, 2004); Robert Bremner, *The Public Good: Philanthropy and Welfare in the Civil War Era* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980); Megan J. McClintock, "Civil War Pensions and the Reconstruction of Union Families," *Journal of American History* 83, no. 2 (1996): 456-480; Sarah D. Bair, "Making Good on a Promise: The Education of Civil War Orphans in Pennsylvania, 1863-1893, *History of Education Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (2011): 460-485.

one potential master over another? In some cases, children resisted employers because of where that individual lived. Some children also resisted apprenticeships because of occupations they found unattractive, often rejecting farming in favor of a skilled trade.[381] Equally important, what made masters conclude one orphan was more suitable than another, and to what extent did children exploit this perception?

Exploring these questions, and the ambiguous space between orphans and potential employers, draws on social theory about the relationship between the powerful and the powerless. Political scientist James C. Scott has called the set of social values or expectations that subordinate and dominant persons perform during their interactions the "public transcript." In performing the public transcript, parties on both sides act out the expectations of the dominant class, where masters wear the mask of power and dominion, while subordinates appear appropriately demure and obedient. At the same time, both parties attempt to decipher the other's true intentions. In this way, although masters' wishes typically prevail in this public domain, they are never in absolute control. Scott argues that the way to understand these power relationships is to explore "hidden transcripts," or what happens outside of the realm of direct public observation. Both dominant powers and subordinate groups have hidden transcripts, which most often appear under private constraints but occasionally manifest in public outbursts, and both groups have a vested interest in concealing these truths, although

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[381] Henry Davis, for example, told his future master he was "unsettled" about becoming a farmer. See, Lewis P. Collier to the Board of Directors Charleston Orphan House, July 11, 1874, Reserve Station, SC, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

the stakes are always much higher for subordinates. These actors constantly negotiate

the space between hidden and public transcripts.[382] Although Scott originally referred to

the most extreme examples of these dichotomies, in worker to boss, slave to master, or

subject race to dominant race, this negotiation can also explain the relationship

between orphan children and adults. As historian Catherine Jones explains,

interdependence and not dependence characterizes these human relationships.[383]

In the antebellum South, white orphan children had one crucial advantage in

these public transcripts: their whiteness acted as a protective shield. Although Irish and

German immigration between 1830 and 1860 ensured Charleston's white population

exceeded the Black population until after the Civil War, a large number of Black people

as well as South Carolina's dependence on slavery played a vital role in shaping

benevolence. For wealthy Charlestonians, the idea was that if they could not drive out

free laborers in favor of the enslaved, they had to create unique labor zones for white

workers, or poor whites would find unity with Black people. Especially following the

major slave uprising in San Domingo in 1793 and the Denmark Vesey Conspiracy in

1822, elite whites felt pressure to find ways of binding the white community together

across class lines, even banning the whipping of white laborers. Elite commissioners in

charge of the Charleston Orphan House likewise limited harsh punishments of white

children in order to build dependence and not resentment. In this way, their kindness

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[382] James C. Scott, "Behind the Official Story," *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990): 1-18. For a powerful example of this theory's use in explaining the relationship between slaves and masters, see Walter Johnson's discussion of the antebellum slave market. Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
[383] Jones, *Intimate Reconstructions.*

elevated white children above slaves, and later freedmen, when economic degradation did not.[384] This public transcript of elite benevolence and obedient, needy children shaped all interactions between children and Orphan House staff. This reliance on whiteness, and on benevolence such as free education to help secure racial loyalty, also continued after the Civil War, stymying efforts towards establishing public school systems in much of the South. Examples of the orphans' overt disobedience or attempts to exert some autonomy, however, offer a glimpse of the hidden transcript, which pushed against these notions of orphan dependence and helplessness.[385]

This attempted white benevolence was reflected in indenture contracts. Most importantly, orphan apprentices could envision a life of freedom beyond their contracts, where they could either marry an economically independent husband or become independent themselves. Potential indenture masters and Orphan House commissioners also presented themselves as paternalistic fathers. The commissioners vetted employers and orphan family members and even asked the orphans for verbal consent. When they applied for children, masters characterized their intentions to treat children as they would their own sons and daughters, like John Simonton's promise to give Honora Durkin a "comfortable home & kind treatment."[386]

This paternalistic performance began from the moment potential masters entered the Orphan Home to meet the children. The standard indenture process began

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[384] Barbara Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders: Assisting the Poor in Charleston, 1670-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993).

[385] Bremner, *The Public Good;* and Jones, *Intimate Reconstructions.*

[386] Mrs. G. H. Moffett to the Board of Commissioners of Orphan House, January 11, 1872, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

with an interest letter. Then, most potential masters visited in person once, sometimes

even two or three times, to meet the children on the binding-out list. Staff members

often made suggestions, and visitors could speak to any orphan on the list (of age and

literate) before submitting an application for an apprentice.[387] Masters carefully shaped

these meetings. In March 1861, one of the Home's donors, R. M. Kay recommended

Cauble as a successful businessman and farmer. Kay's widowed mother Melissa Kay was

a successful plantation owner, with land between Charleston and Cauble's home in

Greenville, ensuring Kay himself had influence and prestige in both cities.[388] He noted

that if Cauble "fancies any of them, and one of them desires to live with him, he will get

a good home, and be well cared for, as Major Cauble is a good hearted, free, open, and

generous individual."[389] To present himself in this "open," and "generous" patriarchal

manner, Cauble undoubtedly extolled his experience in the mercantile business and in

farming, actively selling the skills he could teach. In turn, he would have appeared open

in his responses to questions from the orphan boys. His tone must have been warm,

with perhaps even a smile to show he was genuine. All of these characteristics, of

course, would have been an attempt to appeal to the brightest, most promising orphan

boys, but it also gave these boys an opportunity to present themselves as strong

candidates for the business as good listeners and conscientious workers.

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[387] The process for connecting Masters and orphans was established in 1793. See, Board of Commissioner's Meeting Minutes, July 25, 1793, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[388] 1860 Abbeville, SC Census Record.

[389] R. McKay to John S. Small, Esq., March 14, 1861, Greenville, SC, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library. See also, H. A. Cauble to the Chairman & Commissioners of the Orphan House, March 1861, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

For their part, within the Orphan Home, commissioners preferred to apprentice children of age over releasing them to live with a relative, although this preference had declined exponentially by 1860. An apprenticeship, the argument went, provided orphans with a skill which they could use to stay independent, while they provided vital labor contributing to Charleston's economy. Officially, since their work tended to be less physically demanding and unskilled, girls were eligible to be bound out at age thirteen; boys were eligible at age fourteen, although these ages were only loosely followed. Prospective masters met and spoke with the children, and if the child, living relatives, and the binding-out committee agreed, a formal indenture began. In exchange for labor, indenture contracts promised apprentices room and board, basic clothing and food, training in the agreed upon vocation, and a cash payment upon completion of the terms of service. After 1850, this payment was twenty-two dollars for both girls and boys. Apprenticed children, in short, were expected to work in exchange for a valued skilled and even a small wage to help them begin a successful adult life. A girl's success hinged on her finding a spouse while she worked typically domestic jobs.[390]

John Murray's work on this subject shows that although ideal apprenticeships were skilled positions, like shoemaking, tailoring, and printing, by 1860, such trades had rapidly declined in availability, forcing many children into unskilled and more undesirable positions like farming.[391] Nevertheless, even between 1860 and 1870, Orphan House adolescents entered professions that spoke to the broad picture of urban

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[390] Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*
[391] Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House.*

life in this period, showing the ways these poor whites were central to Charleston.

Twenty girls, for example, left as domestics, while a smaller number became

dressmakers, mantuamakers, milliners, and even a bookbinder. Reflecting the rise of

professional nursing, four left as "nurses" between 1865 and 1868. For boys the most

common indenture was in farming, but at least eight boys worked as printers and

another three as merchants in this period. Other positions included baker, blacksmith,

bookbinder, cigarmaker, dentist, engineer, machinist, tinner, storekeeper, and even

physician, directly reflecting the many needs of the city.

Because of this variety and because the board wanted indenture contracts to

succeed, orphans had a surprising amount of influence. In fact, the commissioners only

approved apprenticeships when a child's living parents, typically only the mother, *and*

the child agreed to the contract.[392] The board almost never approved a contract if an

orphan opposed it. Thomas Charles O'Conner, for instance, stayed on the binding-out

list for over a year, refusing several indenture requests. The commissioners concluded

he was afflicted with "infirmity and laziness and absolute disinclination to work," but

they did not authorize a contract, preferring to send him home to his mother.[393]

Across most of the United States, this Orphan House policy was unique, despite

the fact that binding out poor children was common throughout England, colonial

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[392] The commissioners did not codify the need for a child's agreement in their bylaws for apprenticeships. However, they established a consistent pattern in asking orphans for their assent from the Home's earliest days. See, John E. Murray, "Apprenticeship," *The Charleston Orphan House: Children's Lives in the First Public Orphanage in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013): 152-153.

[393] Mary Ann O'Conner's Application to Retrieve Thomas O'Conner, February 9, 1871; and Mary Ann O'Connor to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, February 6, 1871, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

America, and the U.S. until the mid-nineteenth century. Apprenticeships were believed to act as a means for preserving the peace and for providing order in the community. The poor labored for their "betters," and indentured young people learned self-control and became useful to the community. In this view, because the apprenticeship supposedly saved poor children from their parents and from themselves, the opinions of the poor and especially children were of little value. However, this process was also intensely local and varied from place to place, designed to best serve the particular needs of that community. New Orleans, Louisiana, for example, followed a similar policy to Charleston in requiring a child's permission for an indenture.[394]

The single most important facts that redefined the experiences of white children in Charleston's public Orphan House were the predominance of enslaved people in the state and the commissioners' great pride in their personal reputations for benevolence. They refused to bind out orphans who were not literate and, it seems, refused to bind out orphans they believed would be intractable or inclined to run. Such orphans reflected poorly on the commissioners and on the Orphan House more generally, while contentment and literacy publicly reflected the advantages of the white poor over Black slaves and freedmen. The board was set on perpetuating and protecting the status of white people, including preventing disruptive white children from entering the city. This reality, however, gave orphans a measure of autonomy that they otherwise would not have possessed.

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[394] Ruth Wallis Herndon and John E. Murray, eds., *Children Bound to Labor: The Pauper Apprentice System in Early America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

Sarah Olivia Johnson turned down an offer specifically because she had other prospects. In May 1870, she received a request to become a child's nurse, but, the board reported, "the child expresses a decided desire to remain awhile, even a year longer in the institution to obtain a better situation."[395] Within weeks, Sarah Olivia received additional requests, the final of which was the "better situation" she had envisioned. The second request was from John B. Adger, who withdrew when he discovered Sarah Olivia had an older sister, Mary Jane, in a different neighborhood, who could have tempted Sarah to abandon her work or to ask for time away. Sarah Olivia, or perhaps Mary Jane, must have told Adger this information, strategically setting the groundwork for the next offer. Then, tellingly, Henry Heinitch, a neighbor of the man who had indentured Mary Jane, told the board Mary Jane's, "earnest desire [was] to have her younger sister with her . . . and I suppose from what she has said to us, that her sister [Sarah] desires to come to her," and he asked to indenture Sarah.[396] Unfortunately for Mary Jane and Sarah Olivia, here Sarah's influence fell short, for the board had removed Sarah Olivia from the binding-out list, suggesting she was not yet ready for independent work or had not achieved the board's literacy expectations. Yet, Sarah had come very close to setting herself up within walking distance to her sister.

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[395] H. Bolney, Report on the Application to Apprentice Sarah Olivia Johnson, May 12, 1870; and O. A. Bowen to Mr. Wm C. Bee, Chairman of the Commissioners Orphan House, May 5, 1870, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[396] Henry E. Heinitch to Wm C Bee, June 14, 1870; and D. Wotten, Report on the Application to Apprentice Sarah Olivia Johnson, June 2, 1870, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Although orphans could not make the final decision about starting an apprenticeship, they could persuade commissioners or potential masters to consider the contract or even adoption. In December 1862, eight-year-old Julia McCollum met Rev. and Mrs. C.P. Bland, who were hoping to adopt, rather than indenture. Bland wrote, the girl "expresses herself as willing to be taken," even though she would be leaving two siblings.[397] Julia, in other words, simply told the Blands she would like to go – and they listened. Instances where orphans voiced their desire for an apprenticeship were common, and when the commissioners approved of the master, they generally agreed.[398]

Children like Julia, however, had reached one of the final stages in the apprenticeship or adoption process – the moment where masters expressed interest or submitted an application. Determining that a master would be fair and that the work was acceptable, in the space of only one or even two meetings, was no easy feat, and yet orphans had little choice. In that way, they had to make snap judgements based on what they could see and what visitors said. Children, in turn, could present themselves as disagreeable, or they could characterize their strengths, ambitions, and experiences as advantageous. Before reaching the point of discussing the contract itself, orphans drawn to a potential master had to first "sell" themselves above other contenders.

[397] C.P. Bland to Chairman and Commissioner of Board, December 5, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[398] For examples, see H. A. DeSaussure to Mr. J. L. Small, August 10, 1864; Edward Reedy and Mary Fickens, J. and T.S. Heffron to the Chairman & Commissioners of the Orphan House, May 23, 1861; Application to Apprentice Edward Reedy, May 30, 1861; and William Brederman to the Chairman and Commissioner of the Orphan House, June 16, 1863, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

A visitors' first impression began with a child's looks. When Ann Roberts visited the Orphan House in Orangeburg in December 1865, she applied for Sophia Fink, as she was "favorably impressed by her appearance."[399] Roberts *saw* Sophia and concluded she would suit. Precisely what impressed Roberts was unspoken, but Sophia was likely clean with her hair neatly brushed and pinned up. She would have also worn the customary simple but unsoiled uniform, which acted as a reminder of the girl's sewing abilities and of the Orphan House's emphasis on clean garments.[400] Unmarked skin, healthy teeth, alert eyes, shiny hair, and even nimble, strong hands for housework would have indicated her health and ability to work, despite four years of war-induced deprivation. As these features indicate, of course, some visual aspects were out of children's control. A farmer looking for a boy who was physically strong, for instance, would notice if a boy was too weak for the work, and children marked by disease, injury, or signs of the "Itch" or with bruised skin, lethargic eyes or infected gums could not have been appealing. Difficult to hide, such physical signs indicated malnutrition, sickliness, and ultimately the child's inability to complete the work and the potential need for costly medical care. On the other hand, as chairman DeSaussure's own request to find an "ugly, good tempered,

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[399] Ann R. Robertson to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, December 5, 1865, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. See also William Henerey's language regarding William Clarence Emlyn's "appearance and manners," William S. Henerey to the Commissioners of Orphan House, September 4, 1861; and Application to Apprentice William Clarence Emlyn, October 24, 1861, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[400] Female orphans stitched and repaired all Orphan House children's uniforms. See Murray," Orphan House," *The Charleston Orphan House*, 48-49.

girl" to work for his niece suggests, girls who were too attractive might also be

unacceptable options for domestic work.[401]

Equally important, however, masters were not just interested in whether

children *could* do the work but in whether they *would*. A child's disposition, indicating

whether he or she would cooperate, could be easily faked, especially in the short

meetings between visitors and children. A slouchy posture, droopy eye, foul expression,

and even resistance to questions were ways children could appear unattractive. These

nonverbal and verbal communication skills indicated an unwilling disposition and poor

listening skills, rather than the deference expected in a master-servant relationship. In

this way, Ann Elizabeth Skipper succeeded in making herself disagreeable by simply not

appearing for a meeting.[402] Evidently, this refusal continued, with one additional,

mysterious offer retracted and then a dearth of further inquiries. Rather, Ann Elizabeth

remained in the Orphan Home until she was nineteen years old, much longer than most.

As a healthy, yet intractable, young woman, no longer eligible for support from the

Orphan House, the commissioners finally discharged her in 1874 in a unique case of

simply dismissing a child.[403] Ann Elizabeth had scared potential masters away with her

dismissive attitude, and the commissioners washed their hands of her.

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[401] H.A. DeSaussure to John S. Small, July 6, 1864, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[402] James D. Blanding to Miss Irving, December 15, 1869, Sumter, SC; and Application to Apprentice Ann E Skipper, December 23, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[403] Charleston Orphan Home Index, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. Although health concerns sometimes played a role in preventing some children from becoming apprentices, this does not appear to be the case for Ann Elizabeth, who appeared in Dr. Huger's medical journal just once on September 8, 1871, when he reported her convalescent following a bout of fever. See, Dr. W. H. Huger, *Physician's*

In contrast, other orphans appealed to the ideals of prospective masters. For instance, after meeting ten-year-old Kate Gordon, Joseph Rahner concluded Kate was a "solitary, helpless girl," which she may have demonstrated by physically distancing herself from other orphan girls in the room and in her responses to Rahner's questions. Although she had an older brother already successfully engaged in an apprenticeship with a druggist, she also lied in denying having any family in the city.[404] Sad eyes and possibly even tears cemented this image. Kate was also likely small for her age. When she was just four years old, her Confederate father had died in the Civil War, leaving her mother and three children dependent on charity and undoubtably severely malnourished.[405] Prolonged malnutrition in childhood can lead to stunted growth, and Kate appeared vulnerable and in need of a loving patriarch.

Orphans also projected themselves as knowledgeable, tractable workers. When John R. Paddison wrote to Principal Agnes Irving before his visit in 1877, he told her that he was hoping to find a "smart, pleasant, agreeable girl to assist" his wife in her household duties and in caring for their three children, including a four-month-old

Records, September 8, 1871, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[404] L Muller, Paster German Luth. St. Matthews Church to the Commissioners of Orphan House, April 24, 1872, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For Kate Gordon's brother Thomas, see, T. C. Poole to the Hon. Commissioners of Orphan House, April 22, 1869, Mt. Pleasant, TX; S. P. Adams to the Board of Commissioners of the Orphan's House, May, 14, 1869, Mt. Pleasant, TX; S. P. Adams, M.D. to the Hon. Comm. Orphan's House, April 22, 1869, Mt. Pleasant; and Joseph Rahner to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, March 11, 1870, Augusta, GA, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[405] Application for Admission for Thomas and Catherine Gordon, October 8, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

baby.[406] Although the commissioners denied the application, Florence Johnson caught

his eye, likely through pleasant facial expressions, good body posture, proper eye

contact, responsiveness to questions, and clear diction. These mannerisms would have

depicted her as both intelligent and "agreeable." She may have also been physically

attractive, without scars and other skin blemishes and with healthy teeth, strong,

nimble fingers for sewing, alert eyes, and even a pretty face. Knowledge of Paddison's

expectations, which Florence would have learned before or early into the interview, also

provided an opportunity to impress and even flatter with questions about the family's

three children. Florence's life when she left the institution even suggests she was

shrewd and an accomplished seamstress. Rather than marry, she established herself as

a successful, independent dressmaker in Charleston, able to rent her own room until

she was sixty-seven. At that point, childless and unable to work, she reentered

institutional life, this time entering the William Enston Home for the elderly.[407] But she

had managed to run her own business – as a woman – for most of her adult life. She

must have been highly perceptive and skilled in sewing.

Even under contract, children continued to take advantage of the terms of

apprenticeships to shape their own lives. William McDonald, for example, impressed his

master H.A. Gibson so that just three months after the contract began, Gibson assured

the board, William "is well, has grown, strengthened, and freshened up a great deal

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[406] Jno R. Paddison to A. K. Irving, January 8, 1877, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.
[407] 1900 and 1930 Charleston Census Records; and Charles A Johnson, Charleston, *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995.*

since he has been with me. He is highly pleased with his new home, and is perfectly reconciled every way."[408] William profited from this exchange so that by 1910, he was married to Mary E, had one living child Charles and two deceased, and he was a self-employed retail merchant. He also owned his home. By 1920 his business soured, but he relocated to Camden, New Jersey, where he worked as a ship yard accountant, supporting his wife Mary, two daughters Ethel and Marnie, son-in-law Ralph, and his grandson Ralph Jr. He was fifty-two but disappears from the record, likely dying before the 1930 census.[409] McDonald, like many orphans before him, pushed back against the forces in place to control him and forged a life of his own making. Crucial, however, was that McDonald and children like him also adapted to and negotiated a shifting, tumultuous landscape.

Between 1860 and 1870, the Civil War acted as the defining backdrop to orphans' lives, shaping not only the challenges they faced but also how they could exert some control. The immediate effect of South Carolina's secession on December 20, 1860, was that disobedient behavior and the numbers of runaways began increasing. As the board of commissioners later explained, "the war had given boys unusual license in their conduct and behaviors; and those under our care, derived from the circumstances

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[408] H.A. Gibson to Mr. E.M. Grimke, March 26, 1876, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For similar language, see, L. P. Collier to the Board of Commitioners Charleston Orphan House SC, December 26, 1874, Reserve Station, SC, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[409] 1910 Charleston Census Record and 1920 Camden, New Jersey Census Record.

stated, additional incentives to idle and irregular habits."[410] This behavior started from

the beginning of the conflict. Possibly inspired by political unrest and celebration, in

January 1861, twelve-year-old William Nunan even attempted to burn down the Orphan

House. As punishment, the commissioners banished him on board a ship leaving the

country and locked his two accomplices in a closet for ten days with only bread and

water.[411] Wartime fervor in the city encouraged orphans to take action, when before

they appeared contented, or at least resigned to their position. In December 1860, for

example, William Dunlap began a contract with merchants R.C. and C.C. Seyle.[412] By

January 1861 just after South Carolina seceded, William was suddenly adamant about

leaving, seemingly intent on enlisting.[413] Exasperated, on January 21, R.C. Seyle told the

commissioners that William "not being willing to learn our present business, we wish to

transfer him to his uncle [John Orchard]."[414] William even signed the letter, in a rare

instance where an orphan's signature existed on any of the correspondence between

commissioners and active or potential masters.[415] Inspired by secession, William

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[410] Trenholm, Orphan House School Report, November 1866.

[411] Board of Commissioner's Meeting Minutes, January 1, 1861; and Report of Special Committee on Attempt to Set Fire, January 7, 1861, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[412] William Dunlap, *Charleston Orphan House Index.* Dunlap's indenture in the index is dated 1854, but this is an error. There is no earlier William Dunlap admitted into the home, and not only is the entry date clearly 1855, but he also was not of age for an apprenticeship. He likely joined the Seyle's between 1858 and December 1860.

[413] For more on Charleston's response to secession, see Walter J. Fraser, Jr., *Charleston! Charleston!: The History of a Southern City* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

[414] R.C. and C.C. Seyle to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, January 21, 1861, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[415] John Orchard to the Commissioners of Orphan House, January 24, 1861, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. In contrast, in November 1873, for example, George H. Moffett transferred Anna Gilhouly to Mr. Joseph T. Dill after corresponding with the Orphan House commissioners. Anna's opinion regarding the transfer is left unstated. Her signature is nowhere to be found. See, George H. Moffett to

initiated the transfer. Twenty years later, suggesting William's motivation was indeed martial ambition, he was a married police officer with four children.[416]

Other orphans were equally inspired by secession and war to become more independent. Historians including Catherine Jones report an increase in runaways in Southern cities like Richmond, while scholars like James Marten and Edmund Drago show the ways that children more generally engaged in increasingly rebellious games and play, took advantage of loosened courtship rituals, and even joined the army or local home guard units to achieve independence.[417] Charlestonian children had reasons to feel inspired. Following the Confederacy's attack on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, secession flags emerged throughout the city, and militia companies became a frequent sight in the streets, with martial enthusiasm and the confidence of what Charlestonians believed was an impending victory.[418] Children responded.

For some boys, the Confederate Army offered an attractive, albeit risky, alternative to apprenticeships. Although the Confederacy's first conscription law in April 1862 required men to be between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, many recruiters accepted boys as young as seventeen or even sixteen who claimed they were of age.

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the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan Asylum, November 7, 1873; George H. Moffett to the Board of Commissioners of Orphan House, June 3, 1873, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[416] 1880 Charleston Census Record; and William H. Dunlap, 1879, Charleston, SC, *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995.*

[417] Jones, *Intimate Reconstructions;* and Catherine A. Jones, "Reconstructing Social Obligation: White Orphan Asylums in Post-emancipation Richmond," in *Children and Youth during the Civil War,* edited by James Marten (New York: New York University Press, 2012): 173-187; Marten, *The Children's Civil War;* Drago, *Confederate Phoenix;* and Marten, ed., *Children and Youth During the Civil War.* For the rhetoric of "independence" in young men's enlistments, see Amy Murrell Taylor, *The Divided Family in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

[418] Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*

Then, by October 1864, the Confederacy extended this age range to between seventeen and fifty years old, ensuring the Orphan Home's oldest boys were eligible in their own right. Drummer boys and other supporting positions could be as young as twelve.[419] For example, in February 1863, James Pinkney Thomas approached Captain B. A. Goodlett of the 16th SC Regiment about joining as a marker for his company. Goodlett quickly agreed, bypassed the commissioners in asking James's mother for permission, and finally told the board the boy had enlisted.[420] The board could scarcely have intervened, but they were already inclined to agree.

Elite white Charlestonians, the commissioners were ardent Confederates, embracing the army as a way to place boys on the binding-out list but also as a route for punishing others for disobedience. On October 1, 1864, while discussing a group of boys who had run away and stolen clothes from the institution, chairman of the commissioners W. A. DeSaussure wrote, "if any of them were old enough, I would put them in the Army . . . you must punish these boys more severely than usual."[421] In this way, the army offered both escape and punishment depending on the orphan. Yet, early jubilation underestimated the fight and the blockade to come, and undoubtably the boys DeSaussure discussed in 1864 would have been far less enthusiastic about joining the Army than the hot-headed early enlisters.

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[419] James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[420] Capt. B. A. Goodlett to All Whom It May Concern, February 23, 1863, Adams Run, SC; James White Master A. H. to the Commissioners, December 30, 1863; and H. A. DeSaussure to Mr. J. S. Small, December 30, 1863, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[421] W. A. DeSaussure to J. S. Small, October 1, 1864, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Early pressure in the city became evident with Abraham Lincoln's blockade of

Southern ports on April 19, 1861. As historian Douglas Bostick explains, Charleston, the

"cradle of secession," became a focal point for the U.S. for its crucial role not only

politically but also in aiding blockade runners due to its proximity to Bermuda (780

miles) and Nassau (500 miles). Indeed, 80% of blockade runners were able to evade the

U.S. frigates assigned to patrolling the area, but in Charleston food and personal goods

became increasingly scarce and expensive, leading, as discussed in Chapter 3, to dire

food rations in the Orphan Home. By November, the Federals also successfully claimed

Port Royal, Hilton Head Island, and Beaufort, the Sea Islands just south of Charleston as

its base, striking fear into the hearts of Charlestonians for their proximity to the city.[422]

The next strike, however, came not from Union troops or ships but from a

devastating fire, which caused Charleston the most damage it would endure over the

course of the war. On December 11, 1861, slave refugees allegedly started a small

campfire for warmth or cooking purposes that quickly grew out of control, burning

through more than 540 acres of the city, with an estimated $8 million dollars' worth of

property losses.[423] While the fire did not reach the Charleston Orphan House, it

dislocated hundreds of poor and wealthy Charlestonians before the Union Army even

began shelling. Poverty and over-crowding became rampant.

Emotions in Charleston ran high. Over the course of one year, they had

experienced the exultation at the firing on Fort Sumter, dismay over the Sea Islands,

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[422] Douglas W. Bostick, *Charleston Under Siege: The Impregnable City* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2010); and Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!.*

[423] Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!;* and Bostick, *Charleston Under Siege.*

terror over the fire of 1861, and the prominent and growing presence of Confederate troops, including nearly 7,000 soldiers in camps in and around Charleston as early as February 1861. On top of these events, many stores closed, and Charlestonians began to report higher numbers of sex workers and thriving gambling saloons that the Confederate officers and soldiers frequented. As the war continued and especially by 1864, general theft also went virtually unchecked, as the officers of city services were away in the Confederate Army, unable to police the streets. This environment created a world not only without strict policing but also with new faces in the streets, including a mixture of Confederate soldiers, displaced Charlestonians from the Burnt District, and both white and Black refugees from other parts of the Carolinas.[424]

Young, white runaways had a high chance of successful flight in the midst of this chaos. In October 1862, when Mary Olens received news that her brother Henry Falk was "all the time running away," she begged the commissioners, as he was his mother's "pet and father's to and it hurts me so to see him so bad I know I can do more with him than anyone else."[425] The commissioners agreed, perhaps in part due to their inability to prevent the boy from fleeing into busy streets, offering a poor example to other orphan boys. Other runaways continued to take advantage of wartime Charleston. In mid-1863, for example, Joseph Toy snuck out of the institution and ran to his mother, stubbornly refusing to return to the Orphan Home. His mother told the board, "while expressing to you my sincere regret at my son Joseph leaving your excellent Institution so improperly

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[424] Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*
[425] Mary E. Olens to the Commissioners, October 22, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

without your consent, I beg leave to ask your permission for him to stay with me. Joseph

having expressed. . . unwillingness to return."[426] Joseph made clear not only the ease

with which he had run but that he would do it again.

While Joseph and boys like him took extreme actions, other orphans found

alternative ways to reshape their lives. Disgruntled orphans could simply ask family

members or even the commissioners for help. In June 1862, for example, Sarah Ann and

Eliza Smith's brother-in-law James Elsey asked that the girls be released to him. James

had no children but owned a farm outside of the city, and his wife, the girls' older sister,

had virtually raised both girls and was anxious to have them returned to her.[427] The

commissioners initially agreed, but then before the transfer was complete, they

concluded, "the applicant is highly recommended. But the children express an earnest

desire to remain in the institution. This the committee are of opinion is sufficient in the

present case to warrant them in recommending that the application be not granted."[428]

Eliza and Sarah Ann did not want to leave with the Elseys, perhaps because this move

would include hard work and life on a farm or, given recent events in Charleston, they

may have wanted to remain close to the excitement. In either case, the commissioners

supported the girls over the Elseys.

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[426] Mary Toye to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, October 7, 1863; and Board of Commissioner's Meeting Minutes, February 4, 1864, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.
[427] James W. Elsey to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, June 27, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.
[428] Application for Retrieving Sarah Ann and Eliza Smith, July 23, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

As the girls' reluctance suggests, life in 1862 offered terrifying events for the orphans. By March 1862, the South Carolina governor Francis Pickens warned Charlestonian noncombatants to evacuate, and in May, fear of an impending attack and social discord prompted Confederate General Order No. 11, declaring martial law. These changes required anyone attempting to leave the city to receive a written permit, while newcomers had to report to the provost martial upon entry. By June the U.S. Army began landing troops on James Island, roughly seven miles south of Charleston, leaving only a small harbor separating Federals from the city and setting the stage for battle. Children certainly reacted. In May 1862 in the midst of this tension, the visiting commissioner concluded Martha Mallory could not "manage the boy [her son Lewis], she put him to school but he plays truant so frequently, she can do nothing with him, though she has frequently punished him."[429] Lewis even attempted to join the Confederate Army as a soldier's assistant, but a train conductor caught him hiding in the cars. This martial fervor led children, particularly boys like Lewis, on quests to take part in or at least take advantage of the war, as historian James McPherson explains, with enlistments spiking during crisis points.[430]

Yet, by June 16, the Battle of Secessionville, the Union's only attempt to capture Charleston by land, ended in a devastating loss to Federal troops. Confederates repulsed three frontal assaults and suffered just 204 casualties to the U.S.'s 700. Although the

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[429] Application for Admission for Lewis H. Mallory, March 27, 1862. See also, Application for Admission for Louis H. Mallory, May 14, 1861, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[430] James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

loss of many Charleston locals in this battle tempered excitement, this decisive victory

reinvigorated the Charlestonians sheltering in the city, and the Confederate command

lifted martial law. Capping this success, elite white women of Charleston also finished

raising funds to build a gunboat, which the builders christened the CSS *Palmetto State* in

October 1862.[431] The CSS *Charleston* followed the next year. These ironclads offered a

swift strike on the Union naval vessels patrolling the harbor. January 30, 1863, the

Palmetto State forced the U.S. fleet to vacate the harbor for a full day without a single

Confederate loss. These victories on land and at sea bolstered Charlestonians'

commitment to resisting the blockade, especially since they ensured the Federal

gunboats were never close enough to shell the city directly.

As a result, most noncombatant Charlestonians, including the Orphan House

commissioners, ignored all recommendations to evacuate in 1862 and early 1863.

Because of this, the number of impoverished noncombatants in Charleston became a

serious issue, and the Confederates created a Free Market funded by public taxes and

private donations, which provided food to approximately 2,000 people and prevented

the bread riots that struck places like Richmond.[432] Then, by the summer of 1863, two

additional humiliating defeats for the U.S ended in more than 1,500 casualties at Battery

Wagner (to 200 Confederates) and left just one U.S. ironclad the USS *New Ironsides* to

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[431] Bostick, *Charleston Under Siege;* and Patrick Brennan, *Secessionville: Assault on Charleston* (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 1996).
[432] Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*

capture blockade-runners. The casualties had included 272 men of the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts, the first Black regiment recruited by the Union.[433]

Anxious to break Charleston's resolve, these final military defeats prompted Federal commanders to shift strategies. By August 22, an engineer named Colonel Edward Serrell developed an ingenious gun platform in a high-lying location on Morris Island just close enough to Charleston for a 200-pound Parrot gun, the Swamp Angel, to shell the city directly. Thirty-five shots landed in the city before it burst the following day, stressed beyond its ability to contain the force of a 150-pound shell, but those shells sparked panic in civilians who had been convinced they were safe. The poorest people, businesses, and hospitals moved inland out of range, while many others left the city altogether.[434] As discussed in Chapter 2, fearing the children's safety at last, the Orphan House commissioners moved the orphans with a skeleton staff to Orangeburg, South Carolina, seventy-seven miles north-west and well out of range of shelling.

Life in a new facility with fewer staff members offered greater freedom to challenge rules, while the move itself and the war likely made children restless. Rosa Lee Owens, for example, was dismissed from the Orphan House in Orangeburg in February 1864 for not obeying "the rules, discipline, & order of the Steward & Matron," which DeSaussure found to be an "injurious" example to the other girls.[435] Other children, particularly boys like those DeSaussure threatened to send to the Confederate Army,

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[433] Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!,* 262.
[434] Bostick, *Charleston Under Siege*; and Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*
[435] H. A. DeSaussure to J. S. Small, Steward, February 25, 1864, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

just ran away. In December 1865, for example, Charles Bunch found himself in the U.S. Army's General Military Hospital on Hilton Head Island, his destination upon sneaking away in 1863. While Dr. John Huber of the Hospital begged the board not to "throw [Charles] into bad influences and on the cold public" Charles had already proven himself willfully disobedient. The boy maintained his independence.[436]

While institutionalized orphans became increasingly willful, life for noncombatants in Charleston became more dire. By November 1863, bombardments were regular, totaling 587 days, including a nine-day stint in January 1864 when more than fifteen hundred rounds poured into Charleston.[437] This, combined with the Union's hard-won victory over Battery Wagner in September inched the Federals closer to Charleston, although the Confederates did not surrender Charleston until almost the conclusion of the war.[438]

In September 1864, the fall of Atlanta spelled doom for the city, and the Confederates finally abandoned Charleston and Fort Sumter in an attempt to rout Sherman February 1865. In their haste, they blew up their remaining gunboats and left fires all over the city burning more than two thousand bales of cotton and thirty thousand bushels of rice. Only free Black and enslaved people remained to counter them, leaving open a door for further disaster even with Federal forces seizing Fort Sumter and landing in Charleston February 18, 1865. While playing around a bale of

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[436] John Huber to the President of the Orphan Asylum at Charleston, SC, December 15, 1865, Hilton Head, SC, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library; and Meeting Minutes, January 4, 1866.

[437] Bostick, *Charleston Under Siege;* and Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*

[438] Additional Confederate victories with the *H.L. Hunley's* ramming of the USS *Housatonic* and another rebuff at Fort Sumter delayed surrender.

cotton on fire on the western side of the city, several young boys found a store of

gunpowder and began tossing it onto the fire, enamored with the sparks.

Unintentionally, they created a trail of gunpowder from the fire to the store, which

caused a massive explosion. 150 poor whites and Blacks who were nearby seeking food

died, with an additional 200 others burned and injured.[439] This accident came at the

hands of curious, sometimes disobedient children like those who entered the Orphan

House, demonstrating one of many ways children inserted themselves into the larger

conflict intentionally and even unintentionally.

With the start to U.S. occupation, Federal commanders placed the city under

martial law, requiring citizens to take the oath of allegiance. Making matters even worse

for locals, U.S. soldiers began looting homes, businesses, and public buildings, but the

Orphan Home was able to return to Charleston in late 1865.[440] Union occupation,

combined with the destruction of Charleston during the 1861 fire and wartime shelling,

ensured that youthful rebellion would continue after the surrender. In fact, one of the

peak moments of runaways was during the return from Orangeburg. James Ruth who

had been in the institution for eight years, for example, lost his place in the Home when

he went for a visit to his mother, just as the orphans were returning to Charleston.

Writing on Mrs. Ruth's behalf, A. Toomer Porter explained, "I beg your clemency in

taking back her son James . . . [Mrs. Ruth had] heard the children espirted home & kept

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[439] Bostick, *Charleston Under Siege;* and Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*
[440] Bostick, *Charleston Under Siege;* and Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*

him thinking it needless for him to go back."[441] James, however, had marked himself as an insubordinate influence, carelessly willing to take advantage of a chaotic, poorly staffed move. The commissioners would not readmit such a boy and did not even seek out the other boys who went missing. Rather most runaway boys in this period escaped with scarcely a comment unless the commissioners saw them again, and then the board refused to readmit, sending a clear message about rebelliousness.

Nevertheless, life in an occupied, over-crowded city offered opportunities for disobedience that were difficult for children to ignore. January 1866, for example, the commissioners investigated several instances of illicit trading between orphans and individuals who, evidently, had no idea the children were institutionalized, possibly Black and white U.S. soldiers or even former slaves who were new to the city.[442] As had been typical in the antebellum period, however, the board was vague on the details of these interactions, preferring to minimize any attention to cross-racial alliances. On one occasion in 1807, children had traded penknives and twine, but other possibilities included tobacco products and alcohol.[443] In the streets, children sometimes fled Charleston or disobeyed their mothers in refusing to attend the Free Schools. For Mary Ann Farmer, who skipped school and had not returned home for two weeks, and

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[441] A. Toomie Porter to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, November 14, 1865, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For another example, see John Davis, Application for Admission for William Davis, July 18, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[442] Orphan House Meeting Minutes, January 4, 1866.

[443] For more on early illicit trading with institutionalized orphans, see Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House,* 54-55. For more on antebellum illicit trading between poor whites and slaves, see Timothy Lockley, *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia, 1750-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

brothers Charles and John Smith, who seemed to have lost "respect" for their mother

and refused to attend school, this willfulness ended in their institutionalization. Their

mothers washed their hands of them.[444] In accepting the children, the board may have

recognized army-occupied streets as disruptive to family dynamics and discipline.

Equally important, however, in a post-war, post-slavery era, these elite, patriarchal

white men had a vested interest in keeping these children out of Free Schools for their

inclusion of Black children.

Unsurprisingly, although the commissioners feared the dangers of entanglement

with the U.S. Army and former slaves, rebellious young orphan boys and girls sometimes

found soldiers enticing. Indeed, Mary Ann Farmer and the Smith brothers are examples

of this pull, where they not only embraced the crowds of the streets but likely engaged

in trade and conversation with Black refugees and U.S. soldiers. In another case, in July

1866, John McCaffer and John Linde ran away from their apprenticeships to a farmer

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[444] Application for Admission for Mary Ann Farmer, September 27, 1866; and Application for
Admission for Charles and John Smith, May 10, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston
Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. Mary Ann
Farmer's admission application was rejected in 1863, due to the fact that her father was alive, even
though he away as a soldier in the Confederate Army. Charles and John Smith were former beneficiaries
who had already been released to their mother, but their age and her financial stability went against the
board's desires to readmit them. Only their willfulness prompted intervention. For their and Mary Ann's
earlier applications, see, Application for Admission for Mary Ann Farmer, 1863; Charles Allen and John
William Smith, Application for Admission for Charles Allen and John William Smith,, April 8, 1858;
Application for Admission for Charles Allen and John William Smith, June 25, 1860; Martha Smith to the
Board and Directors of the Charleston Orphan House, January 30, 1861; Martha Smith to the
Commissioners of the Orphan House, April 9, 1861; H. A. DeSaussure to Mr. John S. Small, Steward of the
Orphan House, February 22, 1864; and Julius Tavel to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, February
22, 1864, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston
Records, Charleston County Public Library. Two of the McDonald brothers simply ran north to find their
father in Virginia. See, Application for William McDonald, February 1866; John L Dawson to the Chairman
and Commissioners of the Orphan House, June 7, 1866; and J.H. Menitt, Visiting Commissioner Report,
June 14, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of
Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

who lived in the countryside. Unbeknownst or ignored by their new master Robert C. Gilliam, the boys did not want to leave Charleston. He reported he did all he "could persuade them to remain with me, & used every argument to convince them of their duty & position, but nothing seemed to convince them."[445] Rather, the boys sold all of their spare clothes, and fled, even walking to a distant train station after William McRay, the local station's railroad agent and a former Orphan House beneficiary himself, tried to stop them. Both boys were quickly reassigned as apprentices to locals Jacob Small and paperhanger Mrs. Tannlunson.[446] These masters ensured the boys would remain in Charleston, close to their friends, and close to the U.S. Army, and they did not run again. Their willfulness appeared connected to Federally-occupied Charleston.

By the end of 1866, economic life in Charleston showed signs of recovery but not an end to children's sense of agency. The train tracks Sherman had destroyed leading in and out of the city were in the process of repair, and the Burnt District, the section of the city destroyed by fire in 1861, had begun to rebuild. By 1867, elite whites who had survived the war with their fortunes intact began organizing and attending prominent social balls, while horse racing and even baseball began anew. Yet, for families that had lost their fortunes, the long-standing poor whites of the city, and Black refugees, urban

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[445] Robert C. Gilliam to Wilmot DeSaussure, September 19, 1866, Greenwood, SC, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For the apprenticeship to Gilliam, see, Robert C. Gilliam to Commissioners of Orphan House, July 16, 1866, Pickens, SC; T. D. Aiken to Wilmot G. DeSaussure, July 24, 1866; and Application to Apprentice John McCaffer and John Linde, August 9, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.
[446] Charleston Orphan House Index.

life still proved difficult. Such people faced post-war deprivation, Union occupation and overcrowding, and the psychological trauma of having lived through the war. They had survived the blockade, the loss of countless young white men to the Confederacy, shelling, evacuation, and even the prospect of Sherman's march to Charleston, although it never came to fruition. As historian Anya Jabour shows, this psychological trauma forced children, both white and Black, to develop coping strategies.[447]

For institutionalized orphans, one approach was to reach out to adults they had long since trusted – family members or the staff that had sheltered them throughout the Civil War. Inglis Egan, for example, stayed in the home from 1864 until January 1872, when he wrote to his sister Caroline asking her to retrieve him, and she told the commissioners, "I would be very glad to have him and I am sure he would get along well here."[448] Inglis rightly trusted this sisterly bond, while other children looked to the Orphan House commissioners and staff for support. After eleven years in the institution, November 1869, sixteen-year-old Lizzie Bertha Nelson told first Principal Irving and then the board, "I have for a number of years been an inmate of this institution. I desire to thank you for all that it has done for me during that period, but as my aunt has offered me a home with her . . . I trust that there will be no objection to my going."[449] Indeed, although Lizzie did not mention this detail, her older sister, Henrietta Nelson, a former Orphan House pupil herself, had found a position as a domestic servant and left the

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[447] Jabour, *Topsy-Turvy.*

[448] Caroline Egan to Miss Irving, January 1, 1872, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[449] Lizzie B. Nelson to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, November 11, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For Henrietta Nelson's domestic work, see, 1870 Charleston Census Record.

aunt's home, leaving space for her sister. With a stable home in her future, the board

agreed with Lizzie. In reaching out to Principal Irving first, however, Lizzie revealed a

sense of trust she had in the woman's guidance, forged through the war, move to and

from Orangeburg, and years of institutional classes. Other staff members, like the

Home's one-time matron Mrs. Steinmeyer, were also common correspondents.[450]

When adults disappointed, however, one coping strategy for children was deeply

rooted in the bonds they had forged with one another. Psychologist Richard G. Tedeschi

theorizes that trauma has the ability to make people more appreciative of those closest

to them and to help them create new relationships. Survivors of a crisis often feel more

connected to each other too.[451] Although children must have forged long-term bonds

prior to the Civil War, they certainly maintained powerful connections after it. In 1866,

both Harriet Emma Prince and Amelia Yates went as far as to marry young men who

were former Orphan House pupils themselves, Julius L. Wallace and William Riley.

Although Julius exited the institution without note, both girls and William spent the

duration of the war in the Home, suggesting bonds that were forged in the institution

over the course of the Civil War.[452]

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[450] See for example, A. Toomer Porter to the Board of Commissioners of the Orphan House Charleston, March 1, 1860; and Board of Commissioner's Meeting Minutes, March 1, 1860; and Anna Maria Willsden to Mrs. Steinmeyer, May 6, 1867, Williamsburg, NJ, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[451] Richard G. Tedeschi, Jane Shakespeare-Finch, Kanako Taku, and Lawrence G. Calhoun, *Posttraumatic Growth: Theory, Research, and Applications* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

[452] Report on Harriet E. Prince's Application for Marital Funds, January 16, 1867; Board of Commissioner's Meeting Minutes, January 4, 1866; and Charleston Orphan House Index, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

In many other cases, orphans helped each other pursue work near them,

keeping the people they trusted most close. Thomas Seyle, for example, lived in the

institution from 1861 to 1868, when he left the institution. At age seventeen, Seyle

moved to Mt. Pleasant, Texas, as an apprentice to a farmer named T. C. Poole, and he

proved so diligent a worker, he appealed to Poole to find places for two more boys.[453]

Poole wrote to the commissioners, "I have with me Thos Seyles who I am proud to say,

has so conducted himself as to win the esteem of all good citizens, as well as myself and

family, and at his earnest request – I write your Hon. Body to secure for his Brother and

friend a good situation."[454] Although Thomas had vouched for his brother Eddie Seyle

and his friend John Rians, Rians had left with his mother. Thomas Gordon left in his

stead, under the care of Dr. S. E. Adams in 1869, while Eddie Seyle was indentured to a

printer.[455] This connection, forged by Thomas Seyle, was so fruitful that Adams

suggested apprenticing three girls, although this never came to fruition. Orphans who

impressed their employers could sometimes share their good fortune with their closest

friends.

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[453] T. C. Poole to Wilmot G. DeSaussure, January 16, 1867; and T.C. Poole to the Chairman of Board of Commis. of Orphan House, January 15, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[454] T. C. Poole to the Hon. Commissioners of Orphan House Charleston S. Ca., April 22, 1869, Mt. Pleasant, TX, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[455] S. P. Adams to the Board of Commissioners of the Orphan's House Charleston, SC, May, 14, 1869, Mt. Pleasant, TX; S. P. Adams, M.D. to the Hon. Comm. Orphan's House, April 22, 1869, Mt. Pleasant, TX; and T. C. Poole, M.D. to the Hon. Commissioners of Orphan House, April 22, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For a similar example, see Thomas Jeffords and Henry Krum's apprenticeships to Ellen Olivero, Ellen D. Olivero to Wm. Steinmyer, February 24, 1868, Orangeburg, SC, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Of course, some connections between orphans were problematic. James

Connelly's friendship with James Silcox serves as an example. In March 1868, Connelly

became an apprentice to a farmer named S.E. Graham, but according to Graham, he

found the work difficult, having, "never been accustomed to labor" and no "since of

duty."[456] Equally problematic, Connelly rekindled his friendship with another orphan

Henry Silcox who was slightly older than James and had left the institution in December

1865 as an apprentice to a tinner and roofer named F. H. Duc. Both boys spent the

entire war institutionalized, building trust. While the details of his working relationship

with Duc are unclear, by mid-1868, Silcox appeared on the doorstep of Isaac Graham

demanding a job – strikingly the brand-new employer of James Connelly. When Graham

refused to take on another boy, Connelly listened to his trusted friend, and he followed

Silcox's recommendation to run away, making "a wholesale distribution among the

negro boys [of his clothes] before he left."[457]

Within weeks, James Connelly regretted his decision and returned to the

institution destitute and hungry. The commissioners separated him from the other

orphans but in pity refrained from total confinement. Then, significantly, Connelly asked

to return to Graham, and DeSaussure reached out to Graham on his behalf.[458] Graham

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[456] S. E. Graham to the Board of Commissioners of the Orphan House, February 26, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[457] Isaac W. Graham to Mr. W. DeSaussure, August 11, 1868, Givhans, SC, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[458] Wilmot G. DeSaussure to C. A. DeSaussure, Steward of Orphan House, August 3, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

told the board that he had two sons of his own, who did not need the influence of an older boy who induced them to "falsehood," but he was willing to take James back, which he singularly based on the fact that he did not believe James would have run away without Silcox's influence.[459] Graham understood the power of such a war-forged bond and was willing to forgive young Connelly. Other boys were likely less fortunate. As Connelly's case also suggests, however, when adults and friends did not help in the way children hoped, a third coping strategy emerged in acts of defiance.

One of the simplest acts of disobedience was for an orphan to refuse to work or to work less diligently. In January 1867, after seven years in the institution, Sarah Ann Smith became a domestic servant for James W. Bones in Augusta, Georgia. This contract meant leaving Charleston, the only home she had ever known, and her older sister Eliza who had begun her term as a domestic servant in the city just the year before. Sarah Ann refused to work. Within a month, Bones and his wife attempted to rescind the contract, even if they had to pay a sixty dollar penalty. In April, giving the board no alternative, Bones gave the girl ten dollars and sent her by train before even penning his final letter, but his final comments are telling. He wrote, "I meant no disrespect to the Board in taking this step, having resorted to it as the only means of releasing my wife from what had become an intolerable burden to her. The child too was very unhappy in the relation she sustained to us, her great desire being to get back to Charleston."[460] Sarah Ann did not run away, but in calling her "an intolerable burden," Bones suggested

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[459] Graham to DeSaussure, August 11, 1868.
[460] Bones to DeSaussure, April 6, 1867.

not just that she had spoken of her unhappiness but that she may have avoided work

altogether. Even after she returned to the institution, Sarah Ann remained willful,

sabotaging yet another contract as a domestic servant. By late 1868, she finally began a

more permanent position in the home of P.C. Kirk and never returned to the Home.[461]

Yet in making herself burdensome earlier, she stretched the start of her

permanent position almost a full two years and controlled *where* she was indentured,

likely in an effort to be close to her sister Eliza in Charleston. Scholars who discuss

nineteenth-century relationships between sisters argue they were deeply intimate, like

the relationship discussed earlier where Mary Jane Johnson "earnestly" worked towards

indenturing her sister to a neighbor so that they could be close.[462] This fact, in tandem

with the reality that Eliza and Sarah Ann had survived the Civil War in the institution,

cementing their bond ever tighter, explains Sarah Ann's desperation.[463]

Similarly, twins Juliet and Margaret Spears seem to have run away to be close to

each other. Just seven months after their father abandoned them, their mother, and

two younger siblings in 1863, the two girls entered the Orphan Home, where they

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[461] Charleston Orphan House Index; and Mrs. F. DeWitt to the Board of Commissioners of the Orphan House, January 15, 1868; and Gabriel DeWitt to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, January 23, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[462] Heinitch to Bee, June 14, 1870; and Wotten, Application to Apprentice Sarah Olivia Johnson, June 2, 1870.

[463] For more on sisterhood, see, Taylor, *The Divided Family*; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," in *The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective,* edited by Michael Gordon 2nd ed. (New York: St Martin's Press, 1978): 334-358; Nancy Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Melinda A. Buza, "Pledges of Our Love': Friendship, Love, and Marriage among the Virginia Gentry," in *The Edge of the South: Life in Nineteenth-Century Virginia,* edited by Edward L. Ayers and John C. Willis (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1991): 9-36; and Lorri Glover, *All Our Relations: Blood Ties and Emotional Bonds among the Early South Carolina Gentry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

experienced the trauma of that conflict, a move to Orangeburg, and then the return to

Charleston.[464] In 1868, Juliet left to work for J. A. Alpers, while Margaret became a

child's nurse for William C. Johnston, who lived in Georgetown, SC.[465] Roughly sixty

miles from her sister, this distance seems to be the reason both indentures quickly

soured. Just one month after her contract with the Alpers began, Juliet "claudeslikely

and secretly left" the house and did not return.[466] Margaret took similar steps the

following year, suggesting a possible collaboration. Her master Johnston told the

commissioners, by March 1869, she had "for the third time absented herself from my

employ & under circumstances so aggravated that I feel myself absolved from any

further responsibility on her acct."[467] Perhaps Margaret was running to her sister Juliet.

Even if they ran separately, the sisters made clear the fact that they had one final

recourse in shaping where they lived and who employed them. They could simply run,

easily blending into over-crowded cities like Charleston, leaving their former employers

uninterested in retrieving them after witnessing their disobedient behavior.

Of course, the fact remained that most girls did not flee the Orphan House or

their masters. From the earliest years, as John Murray's work on the Home up to 1860

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[464] Application for Admission for Juliet and Margaret Spears, 1863, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[465] J. A. Alpers to the Board of Trustees of the Charleston Orphan House, January 2, 1868; and Jane M. Fraser to the Board of Commissioners of the Orphan House, February 19, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[466] J. A. Alpers to the Board of Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, March 12, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[467] William G. Johnston to the Commissioners of Charleston Orphan House, March 20, 1869, North Santee, SC, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

shows, "boys far outnumbered girls among escapees," from the institution.[468] Although

Murray did not address boys who ran from employers, this number likely extended to

those relationships as well. Between 1860 and 1870, boys unquestionably outnumbered

girls in fleeing their apprenticeships. In a patriarchal society, young boys had more

options than girls did to achieve some modicum of financial security. Girls would have

also been in greater physical danger in rural and urban streets, making even a miserable

apprenticeship the lesser of two dangers.

Equally important, boys were encouraged to be more willful as they transitioned

into manhood. Nineteenth-century white boys were expected to be active, challenging

each other to be better and stronger in what E. Anthony Rotundo's *American Manhood*

terms "boy culture." This competition included violence in hunting, games, and physical

confrontation; conflict and rivalry were steps to becoming a man.[469] A generational

conflict between fathers and sons was also a ritualized nineteenth-century reality where

acts of defiance played out in the household and were crucial steps in a boy's quest to

becoming an independent patriarch.[470] For orphan boys, no longer under the authority

of a singular patriarch, acts of defiance erupted against their immediate patriarchs more

generally – masters and Orphan House commissioners.

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[468] Murray, *The Charleston Orphan House,* 127.

[469] E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). See also, Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); and Taylor, *The Divided Family.*

[470] Taylor, *The Divided Family;* Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor;* Steven Mintz, *A Prison of Expectations: The Family in Victorian Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 1983); Anne C. Rose, *Victorian America and the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Knopf, 1991); and James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983).

This reality ensured that boys were far more likely than girls to behave defiantly.

Commissioners often reported boys running shortly after admission, while masters

reported boys fleeing to alternative mentors or to join family members.[471] In other

cases, rather than run towards something or someone, many boys aimlessly ran *away,*

especially in cases where boys left together, like the incident between James Silcox and

James Connelly, who came to regret his decision. Unlike Silcox and Connelly, however,

many of these associations were fruitful, at least to the extent that the boys never

returned. On March 11, 1869, for example, *The Charleston Daily News* reported, "Two of

the Orphan House boys have absconded."[472]

As the boys simply running away suggest, however, in the years following the

surrender, a new cause for disobedience also began to manifest, directly connected to

the collapse of the Confederacy. In this way, these orphans echo historian James

Marten's conclusions that the Civil War shaped how children viewed politics, their

country, and their communities.[473] Where Marten argues the war politicized children,

with southern children developing a nostalgia for the Lost Cause and an increasingly

bitter perception of race, however, poor white Confederate orphans in the first decade

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[471] For correspondence including examples of this behavior, see, Wilmot DeSaussure, "Annual Report of the Binding Out Committee," November 1868; Claus H. Meyer to the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, June 30, 1870; and Application to Indenture Arthur Randolph, June 30, 1870; and Claus H. Meyer to the Board of Commissioners of Charleston Orphan House, February 9, 1871; Ward H. Markley to the Board of Commissioners of the Orphan House, February 23, 1870; Sarah Betancourt to the Chairman and Other Commissioners of the Orphan House, January 13, 1870; Application for Admission for Augustine, Alturo, Amilana, and Ursula Betancourt, December 24, 1868; Ward H. Markley to the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, May 27, 1870.. See also, Augustin Betancourt to the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, May 31, 1870, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.
[472] "Reporters' Crumbs," *The Charleston Daily News,* March 11, 1869.
[473] Marten, *The Children's Civil War.* See also, Drago, *Confederate Phoenix.*

after the surrender sometimes appeared angry about the toll the conflict took on their lives. The Confederacy cost them their fathers' lives, failed to protect their mothers, and failed to protect them. This frustration manifested in defiant acts of rebellion in the Orphan Home, in their work as apprentices, and even in the years after their association with the institution ended.

Fourteen-year-old John Moore, for example, had entered the Orphan Home after his father died in the Confederacy at the beginning of the war. Upon news of the death, John's destitute mother abandoned a rural South Carolina home and went to Charleston for work only to enter the Alms House, along with all four of her children, Pauline, John, James, and Australia. John was just six years old. Because they were not Charleston residents, the children were not immediately eligible to enter the Orphan House but stayed in the Alms House, lodging with the poorest and sickest of their class for several months. The implications of this exposure on a young boy were dire, especially given the likelihood that John's mother had intimated to John that the Confederacy or at least Charleston would support them in light of his father's sacrifice. Instead, although he and his siblings eventually entered the Orphan Home, John lived in an institution for eight years. Orphaned by the war, unsupported by the government to blame for that loss, and exposed to some of the bleakest circumstances of nineteenth-century life at a young age, John Moore had reason to be angry. Then, in March 1869, adding insult to injury, John was forced to leave his siblings for an apprenticeship over seventy miles from Charleston. Although John's words are lost to history, he took action. John quickly became a problem for his master, a farmer named N.E.W. Sistrunk. By July,

Sistrunk told the commissioners John "went off" and that "while he was here his

conduct was contemptable and after trying every means, except whipping to inform him

threatened to send him off to a place of mine at which my father and mother in law

reside."[474] John left the day of this threat, prompting Sistrunk to wash his hands of the

boy. While John never explained his actions, anger seems to have inspired him to take

some control of his life.

This defiance in the face of a disappointed life played itself out in other ways.

Another victim of the war, James McDermott, was the youngest son of a Confederate

sailor who died on a Gun Boat in February 1865, just months before the surrender.

Brothers Thomas, John, and three-year-old James eventually entered the Orphan

Home.[475] Four years later, by 1870, Thomas and John had left the institution, but James

remained, separated from his entire family, until he finally followed his newly remarried

mother to New York City in 1880. His past, triggered by his father's death in the

Confederate navy, haunted him, and James became a sailor like his father.[476] By the

time he was eighteen years old, July 1882, James landed himself in prison. Possibly

resentment over his past, combined with exposure to a rough crowd in his work, led to

this incarceration. His record described him as a tobacco user with two small scars on

his forehead and a tattoo of a "J" on the underside of his right forearm, possibly in

reference to his beginning initial. This description spoke to a hard, dangerous life as a

[474] N. E. W. Sistrunk to H. B. Olney Esq., July 23, 1869, Orangeburg, SC.

[475] Application for Admission for Thomas and John McDermott, August 21, 1866; and Application for Admission for James McDermott, September 19, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[476] 1870 Charleston Census Record; and 1880 New York City Census Record.

sailor, the work he had embraced in his father's footsteps. In potentially one bright spot, the listing also noted him as married.[477] Perhaps inspired by his wife, following his release, James attempted to straighten out his life by working as a painter, but his past proved costly. On March 21, 1887, he died from phthisis pulmonalis, or tuberculosis, which he likely acquired in prison.[478] Some young impressionable boys like James, orphaned by the Civil War and unsupported by the Confederacy or Charleston, became angry about their lives and behaved recklessly as adults.

Not all orphans became bitter or misbehaved. Rather, some recognized advantages in good behavior and in adapting to the expectations of the adults around them. Most importantly for children, adults actively watched orphans, looking for signs of their lives in the Home. On April 8, 1870, South Carolina's *Barnwell Journal* reported it had enjoyed visiting the Orphan Home, where the children's "happy faces and tidy appearance satisfied us at once that they had indeed found a home." The author went on to marvel at the children's obedience and cleanliness, concluding the Home "surely has no superior."[479] Obedient children projected the very image of order and paternalistic caregiving the commissioners wanted to present.

Orphans also had many opportunities to represent the institution in the community. Throughout the year, even during the Civil War, the commissioners

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[477] James McDermott, July 7, 1882, New York City U.S. *Sing Song Prison Admission Registers, 1865-1939.*

[478] James McDermott, March 21, 1887, New York City Death Certificates, 1862-1948.

[479] "*Barnwell Journal* visits Orphan House," *The Charleston Daily News,* April 8, 1870.

authorized group visits to charity events and entertainment venues at the behest of community invitations. Orphans distributed food tickets for the Alms House and attended science and musical exhibitions, theatre shows, and fundraisers.[480] But what mattered most to observers was how these children *looked.* After a Christmas Tree Fair, for example, an editor noted visitors were "rewarded with a sight of the orphans, male and female, all looking neat and clean, well dressed, and with happiness beaming from their innocent faces, the best possible certificate of the tender care and nurture accorded them by their kind benefactors."[481] Four verbs associated with what people could *see*, "sight," "looking," "dressed," and "beaming," pointed to what this told viewers about the orphans' lives. In this image, the commissioners were tender patriarchs, nurturing hapless white orphans into contributing members of society, a message perfectly designed to encourage donations. Yet it was also reliant on that visual representation – the orphans. In this unforeseen paradox, the children's "happy faces" and their obedience could be the difference between donations and financial need.

Equally important were the comments children made to adult Charlestonians, although newspapers only rarely reported these interactions. One of these occasions occurred after the Orphan House's annual picnic, which entailed a visit to a donor named Philip J. Porcher's farm each spring. During the visit on April 30, 1869, a current pupil and a former one gave speeches brimming with gratitude. James Ingham gave the

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[480] For some examples, see, "Extract from the Minutes," Alms House to the Orphan House Commissioners, December 12, 1862; The Ladies in charge of the entertainment for St. Mary's Church to W. C. Bee, Chairman of Comm. Of the Orphan House, November 23, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library; and "Hibernian Hall," *The Charleston Daily News,* January 3, 1866.

[481] "The Christmas Tree Fair," *The Charleston Daily News,* December 19, 1867.

first. Central to his comments was the fact that he was still in the institution and was a

beneficiary of the commissioners' special attention for academically-inclined boys,

eventually including a scholarship to attend Walhalla College in 1870. Brimming with his

personal experience in the Home, he declared the orphans were not "unmindful of the

watchful care and parental solicitude evinced by you, our respected guardians, towards

those who, in the providence of God, have been cast upon that charity which it is your

sacred privilege to administer," and never could they forget, those who had "labored so

assiduously to render us useful, wise, and happy."[482] Then, former inhabitant William

Morrison pointed to Principal Agnes Irving, whose "self-sacrificing labor, and ceaseless

anxieties and aches," transformed a young boy's life.[483] Ingham and Morrison, then,

praised the care the orphans received in the past, while pointing towards their own

usefulness in the future. They echoed the "self-sacrificing," "useful," protestant work

ethic of their benefactors.

      Of course, the commissioners were not naïve enough to expect good behavior

without reward. Children had a vested interest in obedience, as it could have direct

bearing on their lives after the institution. A December 12, 1867, article set the bar high

when it said, "some of our most distinguished legislators, lawyers, physicians,

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[482] "Annual Picnic of the Orphan House, *The Charleston Daily News,* April 30, 1869. For the build-up attracting spectators to the event, see *The Charleston Daily News,* April 20-April 29, 1869. For more on Ingham's scholarship see his mother's letter to the commissioners, E. Ingham to the Chairman and Commissioners of the Orphan House, March 10, 1870, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[483] "Annual Picnic," April 30, 1869. William Morrison was also a trusted child of the Orphan Home while institutionalized. He was one of just six boys sent to assist the Charleston fire brigade in the summer of 1862. See, H. Goudin to Henry A. DeSaussure, July 11, 1862, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

clergymen, professors, teachers and merchants have proceeded from its halls."[484]

Students who found favor could enter promising professions, or at least receive aid in the form of clothing, books, or scholarships for college.[485] For some orphans, education itself was the reward, and they often expressed their desires for an education verbally. For example, ten days after taking his step-son James Riley home, disabled veteran James Brown asked that the boy be allowed to return, "he being anxious to do so, in order to acquire more education than he now has."[486] The board refused, and James became an apple wheelwright.[487] But Riley's request reveals the extent to which the board's claim for improved educational opportunities and cross-class unity succeeded.

In their attempts to elicit aid, some orphans linked the loss of an education to the war. Albert Spencer was well-aware of the board's financial support for higher learning for their most promising boys, having already received funding for a suit of clothes to attend High School in January 1866. Thus in March 1867, he applied for an additional monthly stipend in order to pursue a degree in medicine. Strikingly, he argued, "the calamites of war intervening prevented them for a time in fulfilling their object [of attending school]."[488] Had it not been for the war, Albert claimed, he could

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[484] *The Charleston Daily News,* December 12, 1867.

[485] James Ingham, whose scholarly oration followed the 1869 picnic, for example, received a scholarship for Walhalla College. See, Board of Commissioner's Meeting Minutes, January 4, 1866, and E. Ingham to the Chairman and Commissioners of the Orphan House, March 10, 1870, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[486] James Brown and Catherine Brown to the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, May 17, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[487] 1880 Charleston Census Record.

[488] Albert R. Spencer to the Hon Chairman and Board of Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, March 6, 1867, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For his earlier clothing stipend, see Board of

have completed his degree. The commissioners also saw the war as a disappointing

barrier to education. On July 16, 1868, the committee on the schools reported, "from

the very limited means of education in the past seven years, a very unusually large

number of the children who have been recently admitted, were so entirely deficient in

education, as necessarily to be placed in the lowest or A. B. C. class."[489] But where the

board sympathized with his educational delays and had sole control over their private

fund, Albert Spencer's petition for a monthly stipend was too much for an over-

stretched budget. Other orphans leaned on the war with greater success.

In their requests for aid, orphans often linked personal struggle to the war,

particularly when young women asked for their dowries. Throughout the Civil War era,

commissioners' main expectation was for orphan girls to embrace the patriarchal order

in marriage, and they rewarded obedient girls a dowry on the eve of their weddings. As

an added bonus, in South Carolina, female apprentices could also end their contracts

early if they married.[490] Even in a war-ravaged state, matrimony held promises that

these girls would never send their own children to the Orphan House, and

commissioners sometimes even showed their support by attending the girls'

weddings.[491] Orphan girls were keenly aware of this marital pressure, its link to proper

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Commissioner's Meeting Minutes, January 4, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[489] Wilmot DeSaussure, "The Committee on the Schools Report," July 16, 1868, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[490] Edgar W. Knight, *Public Education in the South* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1922), 61.

[491] Former Orphan Home beneficiary Mary Catherine Jane Kains remembered commissioners Mr. Bell and Mr. Hunter attending her wedding to John Spearing. See, Mary C. J. Spearing to Dear Friends, June 14, 1870, Columbia, South Carolina, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

behavior, and the challenge finding young white men in the postwar era. In their

applications, they assured the board of their "proper" behavior, actively defining

themselves as credits to the institution.[492] For the commissioners, this conduct was

more important than who a girl married. However, girls also exacted sympathy by

connecting their requests to the war. In 1868, Amanda Bullen, who had once gained

prominence in the institution as a skilled seamstress, told the board she was settling in

Bridgeport, Connecticut, because "the times were such that he [her fiancée] was

compelled to leave his native place and seek for a living."[493] Not only was she a proven

credit to the institution in her work as a seamstress, but she needed the money, and by

referring to "the times," she acknowledged the Civil War's role in this appeal. The board

rewarded her with twenty-five dollars. Orphans like Amanda understood the toll the

Civil War took in Charleston.

These requests, of course, were not new; even before the war, orphans could

elicit educational support from the commissioners and other leaders of the community.

For example, when Z. Yeardon Anderson entered the Orphan House in 1846 with his

sister Sarah Ellen Anderson, he quickly showed a propensity for religious studies, which

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[492] For examples of girls using this language, as well as their discussions of their betrothals, see Mary McCollum to the Ch. and Coms's of Orphan House, October 31, 1872; and Application from Jessie Shaw for the Matrimonial Present, May 20, 1869; and Jessie Shaw to the Commissioners of the Orphan House, May 21, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[493] Amanda A. Bullen to the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, September 9, 1868, Bridgeport, CT, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For a similar case requesting a dowry based on destitution, see, Minnie Clanton's correspondence and her reward of $20, Minnie Clanton to the Hon. Board of Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, June 27, 1874; and Minnie Clanton the Honorable Board of Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, July 30, 1874, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

he used to obtain aid for many years. In 1853, he was indentured to a planter named James B. Richardson, the relative of a former South Carolina governor by the same name and a powerful landowner. By the time of his death in 1859, Richardson left over four hundred slaves to his wife and children and left a lasting legacy in Yeardon, including direct exposure to the institution of slavery.[494]

Upon completing his contract in the spring 1860, Yeardon entered the Theological Seminary in Camden, where he "earnestly and arduously [began] pursuing his studies in order to become a minister . . . to labor chiefly among the slaves."[495] He had the backing of the son of his former benefactor J. P. Richardson, but he still lacked the funds for his clothing and books. Here, despite Yeardon having left seven years earlier, the Charleston Orphan House intervened at the behest of the fifth Episcopal Bishop of South Carolina, Thomas F. Davis. Echoing the commissioners' own expectations, Davis promised Yeardon's "conduct is entirely good, and his character humble, industrious, and pious."[496] In one of its most extravagant financial promises to an individual orphan, the board quickly granted $100 annually as long as Yeardon was a seminary student.[497] This decision spoke to Yeardon's diligent study inside and outside the institution and of his wise choice in eliciting the aid of a prominent clergyman.

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[494] 1830 Sumter, South Carolina Census Records; and James B. Richardson, *Last Will and Testament,* South Carolina, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1670-1980.

[495] Thos. F. Davis to Henry A. DeSaussure, esq., March 29, 1860, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[496] Davis to DeSaussure, March 29, 1860.

[497] W. A. DeSaussure to Rev'd Thos. F. Davis, April 5, 1860, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

Equally important, the following year, Yeardon's request for further aid showed

how he would be an asset to the community. Stressing the ideals and the expectations

of the benefactors around him, he said, "up to this time I have endeavored as much as I

could, to be independent of foreign resources, and will be truly obliged should you be

disposed to aid in its continuance."[498] In Yeardon, Richardson could envision a minister

who could use Christianity to help control slaves in direct opposition to the slaves'

religious practices.[499] Davis could envision a promising new minister promoting the

Episcopal Church, and the commissioners could pride themselves in sending out a

contributing member of society. Boys like Yeardon could scarcely dream of becoming

planters, but they could have high ambitions of independence and racial mastery when

they reaped the rewards for obedience. The Civil War simply gave orphans an additional

claim for support.

For girls, of course, financial aid beyond the dowry was limited, with the

expectation being that they find suitable husbands, but there were some opportunities.

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[498] Z. Yeardon Anderson My Dear Sir, July 15, 1861, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[499] Historians have explored the many ways slaveowners and slaves used religion to support or resist slavery, but it seems likely Richardson's financial support for Yeardon was self-serving and directly related to defending slavery. See, Christine Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976); Lockley, *Lines in the Sand*; Nell Painter, "Soul Murder and Slavery: Toward a Fully Loaded Cost Accounting," in *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays,* Linda Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, eds. (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1995): 125-146; Daniel Walker Howe, "Awakenings of Religion," *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 164-202; Emilia Viotti da Costa, *Crowns of Glory, Tears of Blood: The Demerara Slave Rebellion of 1823* (Oxford University Press, 1994); and Tatiana Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico: From Chinos to Indians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014). For more on religion as a means for social control, see, Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); and Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, & the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (Oxford University Press, 1995).

Rosanna "Rose" Reilly used the skills she learned while working for a sixty-one-year-old bookkeeper. Perhaps due to his age, he asked her to assist in running aspects of his business, which she later used to work independently as an unmarried clerk as late as 1931.[500] Due to Principal Irving, girls also had a limited opportunity to become teachers. In March 1869, *The Charleston Daily News* highlighted their work as one of the strongest markers of the Home's success, when it wrote, "Charleston can boast of one institution unsurpassed by any of its kind perhaps in the country, and that is its Orphan House . . . the educational discipline is especially attended to. The present teachers are all graduates of the institution."[501] In a city ravaged by a fire in 1861, a four year siege, 587 days of bombardment, and bitter post-war racial politics, this statement drew attention from these elements of division by pointing to orphans. But it also spoke to the prominent, independent role the cleverest orphan girls could achieve.

Teaching offered a respectable position with payment, room, and board, as well as some autonomy. After she became a teacher, Agnes Beahan stayed in the institution until she was nineteen years old – significantly longer than normal, and then she only left when *she* asked to leave, strikingly just three months after her younger brother Thomas left as an apprentice. Agnes may have preferred to stay with her brother in an attempt to offer protection and sisterly comfort. The brief delay gave her time to make arrangements for a major move west to live with her aunt. Then, in her eloquent request to leave, a clear credit to her success as a student, she wrote, "during years of

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[500] 1880 Charleston Census Record; and Miss Rosa Riley, *Charleston City Directory,* 1881-1931.
[501] "A Model Orphan House," *The Charleston Daily News,* March 4, 1869.

helplessness, this House sheltered me; and my leaving now will make room for others more helpless than myself."[502] Grounded in her experience as a teacher, Agnes Beahan left on her own accord.

A decent alternative for some autonomy in the Orphan Home was for girls to work closely with the sewing mistress. Teenagers Miss Arnold and Miss Amanda Bullen became regulars in the sewing department even after they were released from the institution. At that point the commissioners continued to provide lodgings and clothing, as well as seven dollars per month for Miss Arnold and six dollars per month for Miss Bullen.[503] Other girls could, on occasion, receive even higher payment.[504] While reasoning for this varied pay scale is unclear, what seems likely is that the girls were paid upon completion of each item, just as seamstresses were in cities at large.[505] Because Miss Bullen and Miss Arnold also received board, they likely received lower wages. What these girls show, however, is that they could begin working for wages even before they left the institution, granting them some autonomy. Amanda Bullen, like the

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[502] Agnes J. Beahan to the Commissioners O.H., July 15, 1869, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library. For more on Agnes's time as a teacher and a brief stint in the Orphan House's sick ward, see Huger, *Records,* October 25, 1866*;* Minutes, January 3, 1861; and "Proceedings of City Council: Thirty-Second Regular Meeting," *The Charleston Daily News,* January 19, 1867. For another successful orphan turned teacher, see Jane Ingham, the sister of James Ingham, who gave a speech at the Orphan House picnic already discussed. While the commissioners rarely named their assistant teachers in their meeting minutes, Dr. Huger significantly added the title "Miss" to an entry regarding Jane Ingham when she was "quite sick." Huger only used this title in reference to teachers, nurses, and staff. Huger, *Records,* July 11, 1867*;* and Huger, *Records,* July 1, 1870.

[503] W. C. Bee, Committee Reports, April 12, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[504] Miss Coughlan, for example, received twelve dollars for one month's work in July 1866. M. H. Coughlan to Mr. Steinmeyer, "Payment Receipt," July 14, 1866, Records of the Commissioners of the Charleston Orphan House, 1790-1959, City of Charleston Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[505] For more on urban seamstresses, see, Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009)*;* and Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York 1789-1860* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

teacher Agnes Beahan, also stayed until she decided to leave Charleston on her own.[506]

Even more promising, at least one girl Florence Johnson used her skills to become an

independent dressmaker upon leaving the Orphan Home.[507] Girls with advanced skills

could gain some independence within the Home and even outside it.

In this sense, despite all odds poor white orphan children of the Civil War-era

were not entirely powerless. Parents, neighbors, Orphan House staff and donors, and

even politicians maintained high expectations for these children, striving to make them

not only independent but loyal to white Charleston and South Carolina more generally.

But within those margins and, indeed, in areas of adult conflict over that future, children

found spaces to negotiate. Hamstrung by a society designed to keep them at the

margins, they, like any subjugate group, found ways to remake or just simply rail against

their lives in autonomous action. But that freedom hinged on their whiteness. The

Charleston Orphan House offered white poor children a space where they could expect

a better education, improved nutrition, and quality medical care. And orphans could

exploit those advantages and more in order to more probably fulfill their own hopes for

the future – because they were white. In that sense, then, Orphan House commissioners

rightly saw the Orphan Home as a crucial cog in the fight for white supremacy through

the antebellum era, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. For them, the time and money

they invested in the institution were well-spent.

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[506] Amanda Bullen discusses her resignation in her letter requesting her dowry, Bullen to the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, September 9, 1868.
[507] 1900 Charleston Census Record.

CONCLUSION

On August 1, 1876, shortly before the "revolution of 1876" and deep into the

Democratic Party's coercive and violent struggle to deter Black voters and cement white

unity, a farmer named H.G. Lucas wrote to the Charleston Orphan House with questions

about Michael Gorman, an orphan he was considering for an apprenticeship. Strikingly,

Lucas asked not just about the boy's education or even his status as a full or half-

orphan but whether or not Michael was "perfectly Anglo Saxon."[508] He was concerned

the boy was not entirely white. The commissioners would have confidently responded

that the boy had already been vetted, but in this way Lucas spoke to the anxieties of

men like him throughout South Carolina and the rest of the South, where the

Democratic Party, in-part forged around a platform of white supremacy, was quickly

gaining control. To ensure this outcome, white unity, regardless of class, was essential.

Indeed, the timing of this question – 1876 and not 1866 – spoke to the way in which

white supremacy had become more explicit in politics, even though it had always been

an underlying current. Michael Gorman would one day be a voter. In fact by 1880,

although the commissioners rejected Lucas as an indenture master, Michael had

completed an apprenticeship in farming and had returned to Charleston to live with his

mother and stepfather where he was eligible to vote the following year. Undoubtably,

he voted Democrat.[509]

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[508] H.G. Lucas to William Bee, Esquire, Chairman of the Orphan House, August 1, 1876, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library.

[509] 1880 Charleston Census Record; 1910 Charleston Census Record, and Michael J. Gorman, *Charleston City Directory,* 1912-1913. For the successful application to apprentice Michael Gorman in 1876 see, Alfred Shortey Caldwell, Apprentice Application for unnamed child, December 11, 1876, Charleston Orphan House Records, Charleston County Public Library.

By the 1870s, white Southerners were increasingly dedicated to ousting what

they deemed an illegitimate Republican Party through any means short of rejecting the

electoral system. As historian Michael Perman explains, their methods included overt

violence that became increasingly political even after the federal government

successfully disbanded the Ku Klux Klan in 1872. White southerners also vilified and

rejected the Republican Party as the party of outsiders – northern "carpetbaggers,"

southern "scalawags," and Black men. Vindicating this argument was the party's failure

to protect citizens (from white violence), and its initiatives for funding public hospitals,

orphanages, asylums, and railroads, which unintentionally accumulated millions of

dollars of debt in the states and disgruntled voters all across the South. The Panic of

1873 only drove that discontent deeper and distracted the federal government.[510]

As Perman and historian Richard Zuczek explain, however, none of these factors

alone could have ousted the Republican Party. White southerners acted in unison. In

South Carolina, for example, between 1874 and 1876, although the Republican vote

actually grew slightly, the Democratic vote grew by roughly 15,000.[511] Then, victorious

in overthrowing Reconstruction and the Republican party, new Democratic leadership

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[510] Michael Perman, *Pursuit of Unity: A Political History of the American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); and Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984). See also, Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina.* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996); Mark W. Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion: A New History of Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014); Mark W. Summers, *The Press Gang: Newspapers and Politics, 1865-878* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Mark W. Summers, *A Dangerous Stir: Fear, Paranoia, and the Making of Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988); and George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University Georgia Press, 1984).

[511] Perman, *Pursuit of Unity.*

set to work to ensure the South remained a one-party system united around low taxes,

smaller government (as a direct counter to the Republican Party's earlier policies), and

white supremacy. Poll-tampering, which in South Carolina even included instituting an

eight-box ballot system representing different local, state, and federal offices,

intentionally suppressed Black, largely illiterate, voters. Here, even poor but literate

white voters, like Michael Gorman and other former orphans of the Charleston Orphan

House, mattered.

There is no disputing the fact that many such children became active members

of their communities, committed to the Democratic Party. By 1880, for example, former

Orphan House wards twenty-three year old Louis and twenty-one year old Joseph Myatt

were of age to vote. Louis was also working as a railroad hand, actively contributing to

Charleston's success and its connection to the rest of the state. Similarly, Joseph and a

seventeen-year old brother Frank were boat pilots. Although Louis eventually moved to

first Texas and then Little Rock, Arkansas, where he married and had six children, both

Joseph and Frank became fixtures in Charleston. Husband to Mary T. Myatt and father

of six children at his death August 30, 1902, Joseph's obituary called him a "worthy pilot

and an Estimable Citizen" and a "warm-hearted, generous, and brave man . . . [a]

faithful, favorite with masters of vessels, amiable and agreeable."[512] Joseph was not a

man to rock the political boat but was a respected white Charlestonian. The younger

Frank Myatt changed his name to Edward, likely paying tribute to his father Edward C.

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[512] "Death of a Worthy Pilot and Estimable Citizen," *Charleston News and Courier,* August 31,
1902.

Myatt, a veteran of the Confederate Army and a former prisoner of war. Like Joseph, Frank "Edward" worked as a boat pilot until December 26, 1924 when he died "suddenly at sea" from a stroke after dedicating his life to serving Charleston in the harbor industry. The father of at least eight children and husband to Lou T. Myatt, his headstone reads "Papa," suggesting he had been a dedicated parent.[513]

Naturally, of course, not all white orphans of the Charleston Orphan House had such rewarding outcomes. Some died before or shortly after leaving the Home, while others with infirmities went straight to the Alms House. Some children made brief appearances on census records or city directories years later in Charleston but also in places like Texas, Florida, and New York, showing the varied paths nineteenth-century poor white children could have taken. Many, especially girls who married without official documentation of that union, simply disappeared from the historical record altogether.

Ultimately, then, just as the Orphan House commissioners expected, most of the children who entered the Home left with only slightly better chances than those of their parents. In fact, sometimes those same orphans later sent their own children to the Home. In that sense, they were markedly different from the elite white commissioners of the Orphan House who sought white unity even in the face of poor white destitution. Ironically, the Party's commitment to diminished funding for public health and social services as well as state institutions like hospitals, asylums, and prisons, only furthered

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[513] "Edward Myatt Obituary," *Charleston News and Courier,* December 27, 1924; and Frank Myatt, Charleston, SC Death Certificate, December 26, 1924. See also, *Charleston City Directory* 1895 and 1899; 1880 Charleston Census Record; and 1920 Charleston Census Record.

that hardship. Yet nevertheless, once-institutionalized poor white orphans of Charleston appeared committed to the values of the southern white leaders around them, likely voting Democrat for its assurances of their advantages as white southerners, the very message the Orphan House commissioners had-long prioritized in their efforts to manage and improve the Home. A phoenix, risen from the ashes, the Charleston Orphan House continued to be a symbol of white benevolence and of cross-class unity long after the American Civil War and Reconstruction.

Ultimately, the institution maintained operations at its site on Calhoun Street until September 1951, when Sears, Roebuck and Company purchased and razed the site. At that point, the commissioners relocated to a new modernized site in North Charleston which they called Oak Grove. Only there, and likely only after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, did the board finally begin admitting Black children. Then, in 1978, the city finally relinquished municipal authority over the orphan home, making it an independent nonprofit organization called the Carolina Youth Development Center, which supports all children regardless of race, finally serving all of Charleston.[514]

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[514] Leigh Handal, *Lost Charleston* (London: Pavilion Books, 2019).

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Education:

2023 (Expected)   Ph.D., United States History, University of Kentucky
                   "Orphans, White Unity, and the Charleston Orphan House, 1860-1870"
                   Advisor: Dr. Amy Murrell Taylor
                   Committee Members: Dr. Mark Summers, Dr. Erik Myrup, and
                        Dr. Andy Doolen
                   Defense: November 21, 2023

2014   M.A., United States History, University of Southern Mississippi
                   Master's Thesis: "A Tale of Two Cities: Vicksburg and Natchez, Mississippi
                   during the American Civil War"
                   Advisor: Dr. Susannah J. Ural

2013   Certificate, Public History, University of Southern Mississippi
                   Internship: Vicksburg National Military Park
                   Supervisor: Tim Kavanaugh, National Park Service

2011   B.A., History, University of Southern Mississippi (*Summa Cum Laude*)

2011   B.S., Psychology, University of Southern Mississippi (*Summa Cum Laude*)

Teaching Experience:

2015 – 2021   Primary Reading Instructor for Kindergarten students through
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2014-2017   Teaching Assistant, University of Kentucky

Summer 2014   Lecturer, University of Southern Mississippi

Publications:

Review of Paul D. Escott, *Black Suffrage: Lincoln's Last Goal,* Civil War Monitor.
November 2, 2022. www.civilwarmonitor.com/blog/escott-black-suffrage-2022

Review of Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton
Kingdom*. H-War, H-Net Reviews. H-War, H-Net Reviews. October 2014.
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"Broader Perspectives on Confederate Defeat and Historical Memory," Review of Jewett, Clayton E., ed., *The Battlefield and Beyond: Essays on the American Civil War*. H-War, H-Net Reviews. November 2012. www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=36370

Fellowships and Awards:

2022   Lipman Fellowship, University of Kentucky
2022   Bryan Chair Fellowship, University of Kentucky
2021   Clifford and Jane Roy History Scholarship, University of Kentucky
2016   Glover Moore Prize for the best MA Thesis on a Mississippi topic completed in 2014 or 2015, Mississippi Historical Society
2015   Robert Lipman Award, University of Kentucky
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2014   Phi Alpha Theta Graduate History Award, University of Southern Mississippi
2013   Center for the Study of War & Society Travel Award, University of Southern Mississippi
2012   Center for the Study of the Gulf South Travel Award, University of Southern Mississippi
2012   History Graduate Travel Award, University of Southern Mississippi
2011   Joseph E. Gonzalez Undergraduate History Scholarship, University of Southern Mississippi
2011   Undergraduate Best Overall Paper, "Puritan Pregnancy: Salvation or Curse?", Regional Phi Alpha Theta Conference
2009   Phi Kappa Phi Study Abroad Grant
2008   British Studies Scholarship, The English Speaking Union of the United States, Mississippi Chapter

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