Resource #8. Diary of Margaret Ann Meta Morris Grimball

These excerpts are from the diary of Margaret Ann Meta Morris Grimball, a wealthy resident of Charleston whose husband owned plantations south of the city and several of whose sons were in the Confederate army. Her diary that detailed the effects of the Union siege and the flight of slaves from plantations to federal posts on the Sea Islands off the Atlantic coast. Those events led her and other slaveholders in and around Charleston to flee inland for their safety and the security of their slave property.

Dec. 5 [*1861*]

> *The war goes on and the panic which took possession of the Town and caused people to rush off in great haste to the interior, Columbia, Edgefield, &c, has rather subsided. Old Mr Matthews finding that the Yankees landed 7 miles from him burned down his Mill, his negro houses, his crop, his sons' negro houses and crop. It is said he was in rather an excited state . The poor Edisto Planters have met with great loss & annoyance. We are on the Frontier and Mr Grimball intends making some arrangements about the provisions and negroes but still hopes to plant the crop.*

Dec. 19

> *There has been a terrible fire in Town and a destruction of 4 Churches, the Circular, the Catholic Cathedral, and St Peter's & a Methodist Church & the Quaker Meeting. Many fine houses destroyed and great distress. The fire broke out in a sash & blind factory and the difficulty of getting water and the previous drought and a very high wind which drove the flames caused the general destruction. This fire began at Cooper River and burnt across the City to Ashley River, the Institute Hall, St Andrews Hall, the Savings bank, & Art Museum, all destroyed, many of our friends have been sufferers, among them the Reids. Mr R. is a very kind man, and has often been amiably interested in our affairs, and now in his old age he has been deprived of his home, he is the President of the Bank of South Carolina. -*
>
> *The fire burnt from 9 o'clock one night to the afternoon of the next day. . . . . I feel as if I should never get over the fright of*

Resource #8. Diary of Margaret Ann Meta Morris Grimball (cont'd)

the fire and the expected bombardment of the Town, my things are all packed up, in trunks and bags and our silver is sent to the Bank at Camden for safety.

March 6 [1862]

We are now in the midst of a great calamity. 84 of Mr Grimball's negroes went off all together to Edisto we think of course they are the best. Mr Grimball is quite unstrung by it. Fortunately Berkley can come to him and William is still out of Military position and they both can be with him. We shall perhaps remove from the City and Berkley has gone to look for a place in Anderson, or Pickens, to remove to with the remnant of the negroes. I hope Mr Grimball will be sustained through this heavy trial.

March 25

Mr Robertson the factor offered to let Mr Grimball send his negroes to his plantation, he giving the 4th they made and paying his brother for looking after them. The place is 22 miles from Town and the land poor & the accomodations a barn and Overseer's house. The plan although not a promising one was being acted on. Mr Aiken offered his vessel to carry the negroes to this place when Professor Porcher sent a letter round with an offer from Mr Duboise Porcher to take the negroes and have them work for their food and clothes. They were all brought from the work house 1, Dick, with Typhoid fever. We have been very much tired with the nursing, Elizabeth & I sit up every night until 12 to give medicine & nourishment. Dick is better but Nat has caught the fever from him and is now quite ill and we have the prospect of a time nursing him. Troubles never come alone & we are now in the midst of many. Mr G. had trouble in selling his corn & M. W. Pringlee the Quarter Master wrote up to the man in Adams Run to take the corn by force at 1.10¢ when all over the Country they were offering 1.50. This letter was shown to Mr Grimball.

Resource #8. Diary of Margaret Ann Meta Morris Grimball (cont'd)

April 1

> *Mr G. has been wonderfully relieved by the placing the negroes with Mr Porcher and is now in the country selling his rice. The Dr has left Nat and I hope they will soon be well enough to go to the country. I feel dull and anxious.*

Excerpts from Margaret Ann Meta Morris Grimball Diary, 1860-1866, pp. 51-57, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina. Digitized by Documenting the American South, University of North Carolina. Full electronic text at http://docsouth.unc.edu/grimball/grimball.html.

Questions for Students:

- What are some of the effects of the war on Ms. Grimball?
- What are some of the ways that her husband's and her decisions may affect the lives of enslaved people on their plantation?