NOTE

This manuscript is a first draft of an accumulation of genealogical and historical data on the Bell Family. It has not been verified for the reason that the information has come from many sources, with some apparent discrepancies. Inasmuch as it will be supplemented, hopefully, and require revision, other apparent errors and omissions have not been corrected.

Much of the content was researched by others of our families, who have predeceased us. Some of it was written by Mrs. Eula W. Bell, wife of the late John Montgomery Bell of Chester, South Carolina. Mrs. Bell's notes indicate contributions to her from Miss Dora Bell; the Reverend Robert Murphy Bell; and I am sure there were others, including her husband, who perhaps contributed most of the family traditions. Mr. S. Lewis Bell of Chester, South Carolina has been most helpful and has provided all of the research material of the late Eula W. Bell. Mrs. Margaret Templeton of Memphis, Tennessee; Mrs. Margaret Kilgore of Columbia, South Carolina; Mrs. Margaret Gaston of Starkville, Mississippi; and more recently, Mrs. Helen Elizabeth Malone and her sister, Mrs. Margaret Sue London, of Miami, Florida, have each contributed information.

This is a family project, and hopefully will evolve a more comprehensive History of the Bells of Fairfield District, our heritage and traditions.

R. K. Bell
Coral Gables, Florida
June 28, 1975

John Leroy
Bell's
Letters

Chapter XIII
BELLS AND THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES

Hugh and Martha Bell at Starkville, Mississippi received a letter from their son William of Fairfield District, South Carolina, with distressing news, perhaps of the Secessionist Movement in progress there. On January 1, 1860, Hugh penned this letter to his son, in reply:

"My dear son and daughter: We received your very welcome favor a few days ago, but I must say I was somewhat surrprised to read a letter from Billie, for I thought that he had forgotten how to write. It filled my heart with joy when the announcement came that I had a letter from one who is dear to me. But alas; it brought sad knews. Your mother is very much distressed about you. There is a great deal of excitement here at this time. Mississippi will secede in a few days. They are making up companies here to send too Charleston. The times are improving cotton is worth eleven and a half cents. The are plenty of every thing. We made a sorry corn crop, but by being economical we will have enough to do us. We made sixty or seventy bails of cotton. We sold some cotton, eight bails at eight cents, fifteen at eleven, the balance hand yet. We are preparing to plant another crop. Margaret Valentine has another fine daughter. William Goyens has moved to the place he sold Davis. Miller is doing very well. We received a letter from Sallie last week. Tell her that I am very much oblidged too her for writing. Tell Hugh that I think that he has forgotten us entirely. I thought that he would write as he promised to do so. John is playing around the girls very extensively. I think he has a little thought of marrying. I thought that you would have moved out here, but I have lost all hopes. I think that you will do a great deal better here than where you are. The times are very hard here, but hard as they are negros are hireing at a big price. Negro fellows from two hundred and twenty-five too two hundred and sixty; women from two hundred too one hundred and fifty. If you had your

negros here you could make more by hireing them out, than you make there. I have hired none this year, but I expect to hire, if I can get them at their worth. We made five bails of cotton to the hands. I have written all of the knews. This leaves us all well. I must say that Margaret has been very faithful in writing. I would like that you would write often, and let us hear the knews. Nothing more. I remain forever your true father. Hugh Bell." [1]

In Chester District, Robert Brown, son of James Montgomery Bell, was married to Margaret Ann Barnes on January 12, 1860. Two of his brothers had already married, Joseph Bigham to Eliza Jane Collins on November 24, 1851, and John Leroy to Charlotte Bagley on February 14, 1856. Charles James was married later to Rachel Bigham, December 19, 1867. [2]

December 20, 1860 - an event that all had expected - South Carolina seceded from the Union, and the State of Mississippi followed on January 9, 1861. March 4, 1861, marked the Inauguration of Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States, and, on April 8, 1861, Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, called for twenty thousand volunteers.

Among the descendants of William Bell I, as now known to us, twenty-five were probably eligible for service with the Confederate Army. Fourteen of them resided in Oktibbeha County, Mississippi; six in Fairfield District; four in Chester District and one in the State of North Carolina. We presume that most, if not all, of these saw service during the war. Official records tell of the service of some, Bible records and grave markers of others, and a number of them are unaccounted for. They, perhaps, gave their lives along with those who are known to us to have died in service.

On July 25, 1861, Hugh, son of William and Margaret Bell, died.

[1] Letter in possession of Margaret Starnell Kilgore, Columbia, South Carolina, great granddaughter of William Bell, son of Hugh.

[2] Family Bible of John Bell.

On October 15, of that year, Martha M., daughter of Edward M. and Martha S. Bell, was married to Archibald J. Hamilton. And her mother, Martha S., widow of Edward M. Bell, married Reverend John Hunter on December 10, 1861.

Early in the year, 1862, the Bell men in Fairfield and Chester Districts were leaving the plantations for Camp Instruction at Columbia, South Carolina. Perhaps there were no male adults left at the Bell Community in Fairfield to manage the plantations and oversee the planting of crops. The older men were all dead. In Chester District the responsibility would rest upon James Montgomery Bell to care for the families of his four sons, all in the military service.

From Camp Instruction, Columbia, John Leroy Bell, son of James Montgomery Bell, expressed a thought to his wife Charlotte, one likely shared by all in the service, "I hope to get back to you again. This wicked war can't last long." He expressed other thoughts, too, in his letters that have been preserved to be shared with us: [3]

"South Carolina
Camp Instruction.
Columbia, July 22, 1862

Dear Wife:

I seat myself this evening to inform you of our health which is tolerable good at this time. I hope these lines may come to finding you all well. Charlotte I have wrote you two letters since I came to this place but I have never received an answer yet - I do think the time long to hear from you. * * * They say that we will be taken to Virginia - I would rather not go there if I could help it but if it is Gods will we will come through and get back to our dear friends again. If we have to go I want to go home to see you all before we leave. If it were not for you and my dear little children I could get along but you are never out of my mind. * * * I heard that you had a

[3] Original letters of John Leroy Bell were in the possession of Dora Ann Bell, daughter of Robert Brown Bell, when copied by Eula W. Bell.

storm of wind and rain in Chester last Thursday night - I want you to give me the news about it - let me know how the crops look - I would like to be there to get some apple pie - we cant get apples they are asking 5 ¢ for 2 apples. Charlotte you had better dry all the fruit you can for you have no idea how high and scarce provisions is. Take care of your stock the best you can. Tell William and your mother that I will write to them soon. Let father see this - direct your letters to Columbia Camp Instruction in care of Major Gibbs I hope you will write to me as soon as this comes to hand. Nothing more but I remain yours until death."

"South Carolina
Columbia Camp Instruction

Dear wife and little children

I seat myself this morning to inform you of our health which is good at this time. I hope these lines may come to hand and find you all well. Dear wife I will inform you that we have to take cars to Virginia this evening at 4 o'clock - Charlotte I hope you wont take it hard - I want you to take it easy and pray to God for me - If it is Gods will for me to come to and get back to you and my Dear little children once more - Charlotte you must trust in God and you will get along some way. * * * Charlotte I will write to you as soon as I get there and I hope you will write to me. Nothing more at this time but I remain your husband till death - may God be with you and bless you forever. (postscript) Kiss my little children for me Fare ye well if I never meet you on earth - I hope to meet you in heaven."

"Richmond, Va.
August 2, 1862.

Dear Wife

I take this opportunity to inform you of my health which is good at this time. I hope these lines may come to hand and find you all well. We arrived here about 12 o'clock today - We left the Camp of Instruction last Wednesday

evenin; at 4- we got to Charlotte Tuesday morning at 3 o'clock and we left Charlotte that evening and got to Raleigh about sunrise. We got to Weldon yesterday evening sundown - we had a very uneasy trip the cars was so crowded - we suffered for water and something to eat - we drew two loaves of bread in Columbia - and that was all we got un til we got to Weldon and then we got a half a loaf to a man. We have been eating bread and water since we left Columbia. Charlotte it was hard for me to come through Chester so nigh home and couldnt get to see you but I hope to see you all before long - we are all going to the sixth regiment to the Old Pickens Guard. This is a pretty place there are lots of men here - I can see 25 or 30 carriages of artillery now. I would like to hear from you very bad I havent heard a breath from you since I left Home - I would like to be there to go to preaching with you tomorow - they are expecting a battle here every day but we have to be drilled before we are taken into battle - I havent time to give you all the news at this time - I will give you the news in a few days. Direct your letters to 6 Regiment Company F in care of Capt. R. A. Crawford - Nothing more at this time but I remain your husband til death."

"Richmond, Va.
August 9, 1862

Dear Brother (in-law)

I take my pen in hand this morning to inform you of my health which is good at this time though I am very weak - I had a very bad spell of disentary - I took some medicine this give me relief. I hope these lines may come to hand and find you all well and doing well. * * * We have to drill two hours in the day and we get a half a loaf of bread and it is the worst bread ever I eat - we get enough of meat if we could get wood to cook it. We draw 3 sticks of wood to the mess every three days about enough to make one fire. This is a hard place to be but I hope we will all get home once more. There is lots of soldiers here - there was an exchange made of prisoners

the other day about four thousand which has crowded our camp - they are lying in every direction about here and as lousy as hogs. It is reported that they have been a fighting about 8 miles from this place but that is all that I can tell you - I heard the guns very plain last Sunday evening east from this place - William I think I could get along if I could hear from home - I havent heard from home since I left - I am uneasy to hear - I hope you will stay with my Dear family and do the best you can for them - it seems that I can hear the crys of my little children now - I can never forget the fix I left them in but may God be with and bless them and you all forever - nothing more at this time but I remain yours til death."

"Gordonsville, Va.
August 16, 1862

Dear wife

I take my pen in hand to inform you of my health which is tolerable at this time - I have been very bad off and had got better when we got orders to move - we left Richmond yesterday morning - we landed at Gordonsville at 5 o'clock then we had to march about 4 miles - we had to march 6 miles yesterday morning - we was brought here to reinforce Jackson army - I never wanted to come here but it don't matter God is here as well as there - I think if I had a days rest I would be well enough - I never was so sore in my life. Charlotte I am uneasy to hear from you - I received one letter from you since I left and it was wrote the 31 of July - it was sent to me at Camp Columbia - it was sent (on) to me. I received a letter from sister Nancy and a pair of shoes come by hand to Charles. Nancy's letter stated that our baby was very bad off with that rising and I want you to write me soon and tell my friends all to write and I am hoping to get some of them - I have wrote to many and havent received any til it looks like no use to write. Dear wife I went to the sergeant doctor since I commenced my letter and he excused me from drilling today - he gave me 2 quinine pills to take - we have to

drill 6 hours in the day which is going to be hard on us - I would give the world if this wicked war was over which I hope will be in a short time - if I could hear from home it would do me good - I cannot be easy when I know the fix my dear little baby is in but I hope the Lord will be with and bless us and that the time will not be long when we will all meet again - Charlotte I received that lock of hair that you sent me I was glad to see it - write soon as this comes to hand and fail not. We fare but middling for some thing to eat - we get a half of loaf of bread a day - we get beef and a little bacon - we can live on it when we are well - fruit is worth $10.00 per bushel- 25 cts. for three little apples - I havent bought any since I come to Va. I bought a pint of buttermilk yesterday morning I paid 10 cts. for it - it wasnt fit to drink - I believe I have told you all that I can think of at present. Nothing more at present but I remain your husband untill death."

"Camp near Culpepper,
November 9, 1862.

Dear Father,

I seat myself to-day to inform you of our health which is good at present hoping these lines may come to hand and find you well - Dear Father I got to my Regiment yesterday - I left the hospital Wednesday and got here Friday - I hadnt to walk but 2 miles - I went away to Stanton and we heard that the Regt. had moved and I turned back and got to Culpepper Friday night - we had snow here Friday and it snowed some last night - it is very cold this morning and is some warmer * * * Charles says he wants his old uniform coat and a woolen shirt and drawers if you have them ready when you send the rest of his clothes - we have marching orders but have no idea where we will go - we expected to leave this place by daylight this morning but are still here - we hear such talk as going to the coast - I dont know how it will be but I hope we will get from this cold place - I have told you all that I can think of at present. Nothing more at this time but I remain

„your affectionate son untill death."

"Camp near Fredericksburg
January 22, 1863

Dear Wife

I seat myself this morning to inform you of my health which is good at present. I do truly hope these lines may come to hand and find you all well and a doing well. Charlotte I haven't much to write at this time for I have wrote you 4 or 5 letters since I have got one from you by male the last letter I got with my clothes - I havent got one from you by male in two months and it hurts my feelings that I cant get no letters from you. Charlotte I got my clothes by Mr. Strong and Calvin Chestnut. Calv told me that he saw you at your mothers - he said that you was well and hearty looking - he said that he expected to go to see you before he started back but Mr. Strong took a notion of starting earlier than he expected and hadnt the chance of going to see you - I got one pair of pants two pair of drawers one shirt one pair of shoes 1 neck comfort & something to go over my ears and I got a handkerchief and letter in one of the pockets - and we got some fruit and some butter which we have had som good messes of. It has done us a heap of good - you have no idea how good it eats to us - I wouldnt take 10 dollars for what fruit and butter you sent us - Now Charlotte we are expecting orders to march every minute - we have orders to keep two days rations cooked in our havoc sacks to be ready to march at a moments warning but we have no idea where we are going to - it is hard the way poor soldiers are treated - it is bad weather if we have to march now. I do think yesterday and last night was the worst night of wind and rain and cold that I ever saw - the ground is nothing but mud and water - I am tired of this place and I am worn out with the sound of the drum and drilling - I want to hear the sound of your voice and of them Dear little children and

I do hope to be spared to enjoy that day. I wrote home to you to try to get me to Overase somewhere but it looks like I will never get any more letters from you - I still look every day but I look in vain - you said in your last letter that you had killed your hog - I think you ought to have enough meat to do you - I hope and trust I will get home to help you eat some of it - my advice to you is to save all you can to eat. Tell my little children howdy for me and I do want you to write to me soon and fail not - I will close by asking you to write to me. Nothing more at present but I remain your affectionate husband untill death."

In a postscript to one of his letters to Charlotte, John Leroy Bell left this philosophical bit: "When this you see, remember me -though in some distant land I be."

John Leroy Bell died March 21, 1863, while serving in Company "A" of the 5th South Carolina Regiment. He was survived by his wife Charlotte; two daughters, Mary Agness and Elizabeth Jane; and a son Charles.

Joseph Bigham, brother of John Leroy, died at Atlanta in 1863, following wounds received in the Battle of Chicamauga. He was survived by his wife Eliza, and one son John Robert.

Two other sons of James Montgomery Bell, Robert Brown Bell and Charles James Bell, fought through the war and returned to their families in Chester District.

Two sons of Charles, the son of William Bell II, died: David of Mississippi, November 15, 1862, and John P. of Fairfield District, April 10, 1863, presumably in the military service. David was survived by his wife Jane, and two sons, William and James. [4] John P. was survived by his wife Isabella H. Bell.

And in Mississippi, serving with Company "C" of the 14th Mississippi

[4] U.S. Census 1850 of Oktibbeha County, Mississippi lists children of David Bell. There may have been others.

Regiment, were: J. G. Bell and his brother, Benjamin F., believed to be sons of James II; J. Aquilla and Robert M., sons of William Bell IV. [5]

William Bell, son of Hugh, served in Company "F", 12th Regiment of the South Carolina Infantry, and returned to his family in Fairfield District after the war.

These are but a few of the Bell descendants who saw service with the Confederate Army. Most are unidentified - some unaccounted for until this day.

The year, 1864, saw the price of all commodities sky-rocketing, with government agents purchasing most of the available meat and grain products. Sale of the assets in the estate of Nancy Bell, deceased, [6] in Fairfield District gives us some idea of the cost of living during the War Between the States. Dried peas sold for $5.00 a bushel; wheat at $6.00 a bushel; bacon, $1.50 a pound; lard, $3.00 a pound; cotton at .20 cents a pound; and cattle at $138.00 a head. Slaves were sold for between three and four thousand dollars - all in Confederate currency. As an indication of the scarcity of writing paper during this era, the accounting in this estate was written on brown wrapping paper.

Back now to the Bell Community. After the death of Edward M. Bell, his widow, Martha S., waived her right to serve as executrix of the estate of her late husband in favor of her brother, John S. Douglass. Mr. Douglass was also appointed guardian of the person and property of young Douglass Bell, the widow Martha having married the Reverend John Hunter.

In 1862, Douglass Bell was sent to a boarding school in Due West, South Carolina to complete his primary education. The Reverend Hunter would pay Doug's expenses and bill the guardian for reimbursement. It is interesting to note from the guardianship account that a pair of shoes was purchased in 1862 for $3.00. Another pair, purchased in 1864, cost $60.00.

[5] Historical Sketches Oktibbeha County, Mississippi - Carrol.

[6] n. This Nancy Bell is unidentified, but likely of the family of John Bell II. Department of Archives & History, Columbia, South Carolina.

Department of Archives & History Columbia, South Carolina

Four yards of suit material, purchased December 15, 1868 at Columbia, cost $140.00.

In 1864, Douglass Bell was being schooled by a private tutor, John C. Chisiom, in Fairfield District. [7] His mother, Martha S., suffered a respiratory illness and died April 9, 1864. Though survived by her husband, the Reverend Hunter, Martha was laid to rest beside Edward at the Old Brick Church. A faded receipt given by Dr. Walter Brice of the New Hope Community reflects payment for medical services rendered in 1864. [8]

After the death of his mother, and when he was not away attending school, Douglass Bell lived in the home of his maternal grandparents, Alexander and Martha Douglass, in the New Hope Community of Fairfield District. An account of this home is found in A. Fairfield Sketchbook - Bolick:

"Albion is the largest and most elegant home in the New Hope section. It is the ancestral home of the Douglas family having been built about 1840 by Alexander Douglas, who was a grandfather of the late Albert Douglas, whose widow now owns the place.

"The house is beautifully located on an elevation at the head of an avenue of ancient trees. Its appearance is commanding; a true Southern plantation mansion in the best tradition. Green lawns and larger trees set it off. This tall, three-story manor house is built along simple Colonial lines. The main body is covered with a gabled roof and extends over the upstairs veranda. In the center of the roof is a beautiful gable. The mammoth chimneys are built in the house. Two-story piazzas extend across the entire front and each porch is supported by ten large square columns and are enclosed with picketed bannisters. The windows are long and well placed. The entrances are simple but decorative, surrounded

[7] Original receipt for payment as tutor of Alexander Douglass Bell.

[8] Original receipt of Dr. Walter Brice for services rendered.

by glass side lights. The decorations of the columns, doorways, windows, and trim are beautifully designed and executed.

"As would be expected, the interior is spacious with elegant mantels, rosettes, cornices, and mouldings. A graceful stair of three flights dominates the front hall. A narrower stairway rises from the rear hall.

"The original owner of this old house employed a builder from York to construct his home. The best of materials were used. The original locks and hardware are still in good working order. Alexander Douglas was a slave owner, a successful planter and a builder of good wagons. His wagon shop was located on the main road near the avenue leading up to his home.

"Down through the years this place has remained in the Douglas family. It has been well kept and is still in good condition and with a little redecoration, proper furnishings, and landscaping it could well be one of the show places of the Upcountry." [9]

On March 9, 1864, Ulysses S. Grant was created a lieutenant general and placed in supreme command of all the Federal armies in the field. Sherman was left in command of the west. In November, Sherman cutting loose, began his march to the sea, laying waste the country on a 60-mile front; and he occupied Savannah, December 20-21. When Mobile was taken by Farragut in August, the close of the year saw the termination of Confederate power in the far South. After wintering for a month in Savannah, (January 1865) Sherman again began driving General Johnson to the north through the Carolinas. Orangeburg fell, the Congaree was carried, Columbia and then Charleston were taken, effecting a junction with Slocum's forces at Winnsboro, Fairfield District.

[9] A Fairfield Sketchbook - Bolick page 193.
n. For some reason the Douglass family, after the War Between the States, dropped an "s" from the Douglass name.