



Mary Boykin Chesnut: A Confederate Woman's Life (American Profiles)

Mary A. DeCredico

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Born into the plantation gentry of South Carolina, granted the advantages of wealth, social position, and education by virtue of her family and her marriage to another prominent South Carolina family, Mary Chesnut has emerged as one of the key figures in American history, but not because of a career, her family, or her involvement in a humanitarian cause. Rather, Chesnut's significance comes from her extensive diary. Her commentary and reminiscences about the Confederate era provide an excellent window into the life and death of the Confederate nation. Her keen insight into political, economic, and social developments makes her an excellent source to understand the Southern homefront during the Civil War.

Professor DeCredico uses Chesnut's life to address the role of women in the South, the ideology and leadership of the Southern white elite, and how Southern women in general—and Chesnut in particular—viewed the institution of slavery. Furthermore, DeCredico shows how Mary Chesnut's privileged position gave her an ideal perspective for observing and commenting on the events of the Confederacy.

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