



Sacred Heart
UNIVERSITY

Sacred Heart University
DigitalCommons@SHU

History Undergraduate Publications

History Department

4-26-2017

Uncovering the Truth: Women Spies of the Civil War

Olivia Traina (Class of 2017)

Sacred Heart University, otraina95@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/hist_undergrad



Part of the [United States History Commons](#), and the [Women's History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Traina (Class of 2017), Olivia, "Uncovering the Truth: Women Spies of the Civil War" (2017). *History Undergraduate Publications*. 3. http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/hist_undergrad/3

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the History Department at DigitalCommons@SHU. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Undergraduate Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@SHU. For more information, please contact ferribyp@sacredheart.edu.

Uncovering the Truth:
Women Spies of the Civil War

Olivia Traina
April 26, 2017
Jennifer McLaughlin, Thesis Advisor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Expectations of Women	4
Rose O'Neal Greenhow	10
Belle Boyd	13
Sarah Emma Edmonds	15
Elizabeth Van Lew	18
Motivations	20
Familial Impact	26
Love Lives	32
Big Five Study	38
Post-War	40
Conclusion	46
Bibliography	48

INTRODUCTION

The American Civil War is one of the most impactful events in our nation's history. There is so much that can be analyzed within this one event, from the years leading into the war, during the war, and Reconstruction. Most historians and school history textbooks only focus on the male and battle aspects of the war. While these two topics make up a majority of Civil War history, there is another huge component that played a prominent role, and that is the women spies.

Women spies played a vital role in the Civil War. Rose O'Neal Greenhow, Belle Boyd, Sarah Emma Edmonds, and Elizabeth Van Lew are just four examples of many women who went undercover in order to serve their cause. Women who acted as spies either worked from their home or on the battlefield dressed like men. One husband and wife couple even fought in the War as their honeymoon.¹ These women were looked down upon by the women in their respective societies because of their big, outgoing personalities. They did things that were not expected, or accepted, by society. Each woman acted in a unique way, and had various influences. They each had many different motivations and reasons as to why they wanted to spy, including different backgrounds, varying opinions, etc. Every action and move they made greatly impacted not only their cause, but their families and friends. Their love lives were formed through their actions, and most were only made because of what they did. Essentially, every aspect of their lives was impacted by the decisions they made to spy for their cause. Through various journals, letters, newspaper

¹ Abbott, Karen, *Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy: Four Women Undercover In The Civil War*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014, 16.

articles, and more, we are able to analyze the impact these women left in our nation's history.

As with most events in history, there is almost always controversy and speculation. In the case of Greenhow, Boyd, Edmonds, and Van Lew, many historians do not give credit to their stories. These women are often accused of fabricating their stories, yet there are many sources that prove otherwise. Nina Silber in "A Woman's War: Gender and Civil War Studies" explains how Northerners and Southerners developed false tales of powerful women in order to undermine the men of the opposite side, an example being Barbara Frietchie of Maryland, who was a 98 year old woman who supposedly put herself in the line of fire.² There are many historians who have attempted to tell the true stories of these women. From Karen Abbott in *Liar Temptress Soldier Spy: Four Women Undercover In The Civil War*, to Ann Blackman in *Wild Rose: The True Story of a Civil War Spy*, to Elizabeth Varon in *Southern Lady, Yankee Spy: The True Story of Elizabeth Van Lew, A Union Agent in the Heart of the Confederacy*, and many more, there are many stories to be unfolded about these women spies.

In this study, I aim to prove how these women had an influential and impactful role in the history of the American Civil War by breaking out of the roles expected of women. If it was not for Greenhow passing information onto Jefferson Davis, the Confederacy might not have won the First Battle of Manassas (Bull Run). If Boyd had not run onto the battlefield to pass on information at the Battle of Front Royal, the Confederacy possibly would not have won that one either. If Edmonds did not disguise herself three times over

² Silber, Nina. "'A Woman's War: Gender and Civil War Studies.'" *OAH Magazine of History*, The Civil War, 8, no. 1 (Fall 1993): 11. Accessed September 28, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25162919>,

and pass on information to the Union, the Union would not have had half the intel it had. If Van Lew did not open her home to escaped Union soldiers, or resist the pressure to support the Confederacy, the Union would not have had the support it had. Each of these women played a unique role in the war, and it is through their motivations, impact on family, love lives, and more that we can truly see what they meant to society.

EXPECTATIONS OF WOMEN

As society changed over the years, the expectations of women changed. What was expected of women in 1776 was different from 1820, and was different from 1860. The change in expectations from this time period (1776-1860) reflects the shift to different types of society (e.g. agrarian to industrial changes). The responsibilities and expectations of men changed, which also meant that of women changed, too. However, many women did not want to conform to these expectations, and desired something more out of their lives.

Harper's New Magazine published an article titled "Rights and Wrongs of Women" in June 1854. It is in this article that the author outlines truly what is expected of women. The article states, "Her power is essentially a silent and unseen moral influence, her functions are those of a wife and mother".³ This is the main point in the article; women were expected to do the functions and duties of a wife and mother, and that was it. The article defines a difference between a "natural woman" and an "emancipated woman". The "natural woman" was the one who did what was needed for her husband, children, and other home tasks. The "emancipated woman" was the one who taught, preached, voted, acted as a judge, a commander to men-at-war, and essentially went against the duties of the "natural woman".⁴

"Rights and Wrongs of Women" also made the point that women lived in the shadow of their husbands, and her happiness was guaranteed by him. The article states, "Her home is in the shadow, and her duties are still and noiseless; his is in the broad daylight, and his

³ "Rights and Wrongs of Women." *Harper's New Monthly*, June 1854. Accessed March 2017. <http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=harp;cc=harp;view=toc;subview=short;idno=harp0009-1>, 77.

⁴ "Rights and Wrongs of Women."

works are stormy and tumultuous”.⁵ Women were expected to sit and obey their husbands, and to not do anything that would outshine him. At this point in history, when a couple got married, whether true love or arranged, it was implied that women were guaranteed safety and fulfillment in her marriage. According to the article, “Yet no woman who does her duty faithfully to her husband and children, will find her time unemployed, or her life incomplete”.⁶ What this meant was that a woman should not look to do more than her basic duties, because her life was “employed” and “complete” when her duties to her children and husband were completed. However, this was not exactly the case, and this can be seen in the life of Betsy Edmondson, Edmonds’ mother. Because she never had a son (up to her husband’s standards), Betsy lived a life full of fear and incompleteness. She assisted her daughter in her escape, and had no hesitation in doing so. This article is a prime example of how it attempted to get women of this time to follow certain expectations, and to not act out in unaccepted ways.

Despite these expectations and stereotypes, there were many women, such as Betsy Edmondson, who did not find comfort or completeness in their lives. In “‘A Woman’s War:’ Gender and Civil War Studies” by Nina Silber, “The Civil War inevitably tested the boundaries of female behavior, forcing women of both sections into new and unsettling circumstances.”⁷ According to Silber, the struggles women faced in their involvement in society existed due to the gender behavior and responsibilities that Victorian society possessed. These standards of behavior were still held high throughout the nineteenth century, despite the drastic change in society, where “Women had to provide moral

⁵ “Rights and Wrongs of Women”, 78.

⁶ “Rights and Wrongs of Women”, 77.

⁷ Silber, 11.

support, relinquish their menfolk, and sacrifice material needs.”⁸ These expectations differed from previous ones because during the Civil War, women needed to learn to not depend on their husbands, in addition to needing to learn his role of the home in addition to her own, all without *acting* like a man. However, for example, many female nurses took this new opportunity of responsibility, combining what they knew from the home with the needs of the battlefield. These women, termed “maternal crusaders”, “spoke out against corrupt commanders or drunken administrators.”⁹ This is just one example of the many ways women reacted to the ever-changing roles they were expected to fulfill in the mid-nineteenth century.

Although *Harper’s New Monthly* showed the expectations of women across the country, the war brought about new expectations and opportunities that women never had before. Lisa Tendrich Frank’s chapter “Women” in *The Civil War in Georgia*, Elizabeth D. Leonard in *Yankee Women: Gender Battles in the Civil War*, and Drew Gilpin Faust in *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* each do an excellent job of outlining what women did during the Civil War in order to not only help the war effort, but to break out of their stereotypical roles.

In the chapter “Women”, Frank discusses the differences between elite and poor women of Georgia. Elite and poor women had wildly different experiences during the war, despite being from a country that had parallel expectations for women. Elite Georgia women delved into the public sphere. They engaged in politics, ran businesses, raised money, and more. They became nurses, a role that was previously only held by men. One of the biggest roles they played was encouraging their husbands to enlist. Frank says they did

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Silber, 12.

this by “appealing to their manhood and sense of honor”.¹⁰ Because women were expected to hold their husbands highly and respectfully, they knew exactly how to make him feel bold and important. While these elite women stepped out of their shells and were given many opportunities, poor women had a different experience. There were fewer resources available to them. They worked in factories, which often did not last too long due to many urban areas becoming battlefields. These roles, of both elite and poor women, although different from each other, vary from the expectations and duties of women portrayed before the war.

Leonard addresses the new roles of middle-class women in the North in *Yankee Women*. These roles were new because they differed from the roles expected of women before the war; the giant number of men taken away from the home in order to fight left a demand for the “jobs” of men to be completed, and this responsibility fell on women. Leonard takes a look at three women who occupied different roles in the Union. Leonard uses these three stories in order to answer various questions, including whether or not the work of these, and other, women impacted the outcome of the war. She makes the point that women challenged themselves and put themselves into positions they never had to do, or even think of, before. Although one can see many similarities between the work of Northern and Southern women, one major difference is how men responded to women’s new-found empowerment. Leonard wrote, “...tension in the gender system that the war had produced, a tension that demanded relief. Relief came, for the most part, as women persisted and as men backed down, coming to appreciate and even depend upon women’s

¹⁰ Tendrich Frank, Lisa. "Women." in *The Civil War in Georgia: A New Georgia Encyclopedia Companion*, edited by John C. Iscoe. University of Georgia Press, 2011, 164.

contributions under the circumstances, learning to relinquish power”.¹¹ The lasting impact of the actions of women during the war in the North varied from the impact in the South. This was the case in the first place because although Northern women played a huge role in the War, most battles took place in Southern women’s backyards; these Southern women saw things most Northern women never saw.

In contrast to Leonard’s *Yankee Women*, Faust’s *Mothers of Invention* studies and analyzes various letters and documents from Southern women of the Civil War. Just as those in the North, these women entered new roles and positions, from sewing uniforms and flags, writing letters of encouragement, holding fundraisers, and more. These women varied in their willingness to even want to partake in these opportunities. Many were up to the challenge, and succeeded; others crumbled under the pressure and their husband’s were forced to ditch the battlefield and return home. Whatever the response to the pressure, Southern women were presented with opportunities they never had before, opportunities that continued even after the end of the war. However, their husbands were not as open to accepting their wives’ new roles. Economic instability was rampant in the South after the war due to the large hit to their economic and change in slavery. The men were not as apt to accepting women’s new roles because of the risks they posed to the economy.¹²

Rose Greenhow, Belle Boyd, Emma Edmonds, and Elizabeth Van Lew, despite where they each came from, went against the expectations of women before and during the Civil

¹¹ Leonard, Elizabeth D., *Yankee Women: Gender Battles In The Civil War*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994, 198.

¹² Faust, Drew Gilpin. *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*. Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies. New York: University of North Carolina Press, 2004, 251.

War. It is true they took advantage of the opportunities they were presented with, but in a very different way. Women of the North and the South supported their causes through working their husband's businesses, preparing supplies to send to the troops, raising funds for the troops, and more. Greenhow, Boyd, Edmonds, and Van Lew all took an approach that would directly involve them in the course of the various battles and overall war. They felt they had more of a purpose than sewing uniforms or holding a fundraiser, and went against these new expectations and roles of women. Because of their drive to want to do for their cause and to make a name for themselves, these women gave a different perception of the ability of women to make a change during this time period.

ROSE O'NEAL GREENHOW

While there is much competition between who is the “most notable” spy of the South, Rose O’Neal Greenhow, also known as “Wild Rose”, is probably the most renown. She was born in 1815 in Montgomery County, Maryland, to John and Eliza Greenhow. Her father was injured during a night out drinking, then murdered by his favorite slave. After his death, her mother sent her and her sister, “the ‘extra’ ones”, to their aunt’s home in Washington.¹³ Even from an early age, Greenhow was strong-minded and determined in whatever she did. She came to marry Dr. Robert Greenhow, a distinguished physician, scholar, and high-ranking official of the State Department, in 1835. Greenhow had eight children with Robert, five of whom died in their childhood. This marriage brought about a lot of moving (to San Francisco, to Mexico City, etc.), in addition to a lot of power and prestige. Greenhow became one of the most eminent women of Washington D.C., a socialite of the city. By the time her husband died in a freak accident in 1854, Greenhow had climbed so far up the social ladder she did not see herself wanting to come down any time soon. She was associated with elites like John C. Calhoun, Dolley Madison, John Tyler, Martin Van Buren, James Buchanan, and many more. Although she considered herself at the same social level as these people, they are all, for the most part, remembered more highly and more well-respected than she is.

Although Greenhow is regarded as one of the most powerful and impactful woman spies of this time, she received a lot of “looks” and comments from others, more specifically, women. She went against the “norm” of how a woman should present herself. Greenhow was a woman with a charisma that could convince anyone to do anything. She “was

¹³ Abbott, 144.

outspoken and blunt. She also had a reputation as a woman who would do anything -- yes, *anything* -- to get ahead. She was *ambitious*, other women said, gossiping among themselves. That may have been fine for a man, but not for a Southern woman of her breeding".¹⁴ Greenhow was never afraid to say or act on what her beliefs were. In her memoir, titled *My Imprisonment and the First Year of Abolition Rule at Washington*, she wrote, "Between us and those former friends is a gulf deep and wide as eternity; and under these circumstances I have felt myself at liberty to be much more unreserved in the narrative of my personal recollections."¹⁵ At a dinner she was in attendance at in 1860, she made her opinions clear in a conversation with Abigail (Brown Brooks) Adams, the wife of Charles Francis Adams. As Adams was boasting about John Brown being a hero, Greenhow had no hesitation in saying how he was a traitor, thus insulting Mrs. Adams.¹⁶ Another instance of her honesty was at a dinner in London with many abolitionists. She had no hesitation in calling out a man for standing in support of abolitionist writer Harriet Beecher Stowe, and exclaimed how he was "a candidate for the strait jacket".¹⁷ Greenhow was never tolerant of anyone who had opposing views to her, and immediately shut them down. These are just a few examples of the many times Greenhow spoke her mind, and why many believed she was not a true Southern lady.

Greenhow is noted as a woman of *many* talents. She was a "hostess, a lobbyist, strategist, presidential confidante, and spy...She was also a slave owner, a social climber, an

¹⁴ Blackman, Ann. *Wild Rose: The True Story of a Civil War Spy*. New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005, 12.

¹⁵ Greenhow, Rose O'Neal. *My Imprisonment and the First Year of Abolition Rule at Washington*. Vol. 1. London: Spottiswoode and Co., 1863, 4. Accessed via University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/greenhow/greenhow.html>.

¹⁶ Blackman, 15.

¹⁷ Abbott, 359.

elitist, and a snob. Clever, beautiful, articulate, and outspoken”.¹⁸ She will always be remembered as the woman who alerted the rebels of enemy plans in 1861, which led to the Battle of Manassas. She is also the woman who ran a successful spy ring in the middle of Washington, D.C. However, you will not read about her in history textbooks or most studies. Greenhow is one of the many unsung heroes of the Civil War, in addition to the other female spies in the Union and Confederacy.



Rose O'Neal Greenhow
Source: American Civil War Stories.

¹⁸ Blackman, X-XI.

BELLE BOYD

Maria Isabella “Belle” Boyd is the youngest of the four women spies focused on in this study. She was born on May 4, 1844 in Martinsburg, Virginia (now West Virginia). She was the oldest of eight children of Benjamin Boyd, a prominent shopkeeper and slave-owner, and Mary Rebecca Boyd (Glenn).¹⁹ Over time, Boyd’s work as a spy has earned her the nicknames of “La Belle Rebelle”, “the Siren of the Shenandoah”, “the Rebel Joan of Arc”, and “Amazon of Secessia”.²⁰ Boyd was always very headstrong and knew what she wanted, and exactly how to get it. She was quick on her feet, even at a young age. When she was eleven, her parents hosted a dinner party in which she was not invited due to her age. In an act of rebellion, she rode her horse into the dining room and exclaimed “Well, my horse is old enough, isn’t he?”²¹ This act showed how determined Boyd was, and only foreshadowed what her future would hold.

Like Greenhow, Boyd used her beauty and charm in order to gain information from sources. And, like Greenhow, the women were always opposed to her actions and attitude, disapproving of her “unlady-like” personality. She was always telling crazy stories, and people could never tell if she was telling the truth or not. In telling a group of soldiers about the time she shot a Union soldier, they did not know how to react. As Abbott wrote, “None of the boys, Yankee or Confederate, knew quite what to make of her”.²² It was exactly this persona that enabled Boyd to gain crucial information to send to the Confederate Generals.

¹⁹ Boyd, Belle. *Belle Boyd: In Camp and Prison*. Edited by Drew Gilpin Faust and Sharon Kennedy-Nolle. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998, 5.

²⁰ Groh, Mary Lou. "Maria 'Belle' Boyd." Civil War Trust. 2014. Accessed November 2016. <http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/biographies/maria-belle-boyd.html?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>.

²¹ Abbott, 7.

²² Abbott, 97.

Abbott wrote, “Women...made for a surly audience, their lack of interest in her stories directly proportionate to her insistence on telling them”.²³ Boyd clearly loved being the center of attention, and one can see this in her ability to manipulate someone who fell for her charisma. Women despised her attitude and her foolish imagination, but the men loved it, and went along with it because of her beauty. This is what made Boyd the successful spy she was.

Boyd was the type of woman who always needed to be doing something, and could never sit for a moment without having a task or activity to do. Sharon Kennedy-Nolle wrote in her 1998 introduction of Boyd’s book, *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison*, “Whether as a soldier, a spy, an actress, or finally, an author, Belle emerges in her memoirs as a woman who always *worked*”.²⁴ Although Kennedy-Nolle attributes these constant work changes as a means to avoid poverty, one can also see this as a way for Boyd to change herself, just as she had to do numerous times within her years of spying for the Confederacy.



Belle Boyd
Source: National Portrait
Gallery,
Smithsonian Institute, ca. 1864

²³ Abbott, 187.

²⁴ Boyd, 13.

SARAH EMMA EDMONDS

In New Brunswick, Canada on a stormy day in December 1841, Sarah Emma Evelyn Edmondson, Emma for short, was born. She was the sixth child and fifth daughter of Isaac and Betsy Edmondson. While there is controversy of when it happened, Edmondson changed her surname to Edmonds. Edmonds lived in a very unhappy household, her father described as being “a stern and taciturn Scot”.²⁵ Because her mother only had one son, her father took the difficulties he faced running a farm out on his family. This made Edmonds feel the need to make up for what her only brother, an epileptic who was limited in what he could do, could not do. She hunted, built, and did the things a normal “boy” would do, but nothing was good enough for her father. The only gift and the first novel she ever received was given to her by a stranger, and became her most prized possession. Entitled, *Franny Campbell, the Female Pirate Captain*, by Maturin Ballou, Edmonds got many ideas and dreams in her head. With the pressure from her father of working on the family farm and going into an arranged marriage, Edmonds finally got the courage to escape, using the ideas she got from *Franny Campbell*. As written in a biography written by Laura Leedy Gansler, “Still, the story of Fanny Campbell gave Emma something to dream about. ‘From that time forth I never ceased planning escape, although it was years before I accomplished it’”.²⁶ Edmonds was only seventeen when she made the decision to runaway, but despite being young, she knew exactly what she wanted in life, and it was not what she had been already living.

²⁵ Gansler, Laura Leedy, *The Mysterious Private Thompson: The Double Life of Sarah Emma Edmonds, Civil War Soldier*. New York: Free Press, 2005, 1.

²⁶ Gansler, 6.

Running away meant not only escaping her family, but escaping the identity she had known for seventeen years. Edmonds became Franklin Thompson; they were ultimately one in the same. Edmonds was a slim, on the taller-side girl, standing at 5'6". This made many heads turn when she introduced herself as a man. In joining the military, she was rarely questioned about her stature, as there were more pressing issues at hand. One officer asked her "Well, what sort of living has this hand earned?", where Edmonds responded that she had dedicated her life thus far to pursuing an education.²⁷ As her time in the military continued on, and she met more soldiers, they all accepted her petite-ness, giving her the nickname "our woman".²⁸ She eventually met Jerome Robbins, a soldier who was moved to her Infantry, who she eventually had a relationship with and exposed her secret to. When they first met, Robbins reported their encounters, writing that "A mystery seems to be connected with him...Hard to name".²⁹ This "mystery", was one that struck many, but rarely anyone questioned.

At first look, neither Sarah Emma Edmonds nor Franklin Thompson came across as being a female spy. However, as her time in the military continued, Edmonds was asked on numerous occasions to pursue espionage missions, where she disguised herself as another man, a slave, and, ironically, a woman. Edmonds did not become Frank in order to fight in the war, but in order to do the things in which a woman was not able to do. In becoming Frank, she also became many different personalities, all because of the pressures she faced at home, and because she believed "...this was a calling, that he had to do what he could 'for

²⁷ Abbott, 12.

²⁸ Abbott, 15.

²⁹ Abbott, 93.

the defense of the right’’.³⁰ Through what she experienced and how she changed her life, Edmonds was able to make an impact on the War.



Sarah Emma Edmonds
Source: National Archives.



Franklin Flint Thompson
Source: National Archives.

³⁰ Abbott, 13.

ELIZABETH VAN LEW

Born in Richmond, Virginia in October 1818, Elizabeth Van Lew is the oldest of these women spies. Also known as “Crazy Bet”, Van Lew came from a wealthy, well-known, slave-owning family. Her father, John Van Lew, was from Jamaica, Queens, Long Island, and her mother, Elizabeth “Eliza” Baker, from Philadelphia; these are the sources of Van Lew’s Northern roots. She was educated at a Quaker school in Philadelphia, thus strengthening her feelings against slavery. After her father’s death in 1843, Van Lew and her family, which then included her mother and her brother John (her sister Anna lived in Philadelphia) had a goal of freeing their slaves (whom they had in the first place in attempt to “assimilate into Richmond society”).³¹ When the war began in 1861, the steps to achieve this goal were in full swing, and Van Lew did whatever she could to free her slaves and help the Union in any way possible.

Van Lew was always seen as a unique woman to men and other women. Kimberly J. Largent of The Ohio State University wrote “All who met Elizabeth found her personality charming and her pale blue eyes and dark hair attractive”.³² While Van Lew was able to use her good looks and personality to gain vital information for the advancement of the Union, most people found it very odd that, by 1861, she was a forty-three year old woman who had never been married and still lived with her mother. This was not normal for this time; most women were married at a very young age and tended to their own families. Most people viewed her as “an eccentric old spinster destined to die alone in her house on the

³¹ Varon, Elizabeth R., *Southern Lady, Yankee Spy: The True Story of Elizabeth Van Lew, A Union Agent in the Heart of the Confederacy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003, 9.

³² Largent, Kimberly J. "Elizabeth Van Lew: "Crazy Bet" Brings Down Richmond." Elizabeth Van Lew: "Crazy Bet" Brings Down Richmond. Accessed March 2017.
<https://ehistory.osu.edu/articles/elizabeth-van-lew-%E2%80%99Crazy-bet%E2%80%9D-brings-down-richmond>.

hill”.³³ While there is no clear evidence that this reputation ever impacted Van Lew’s work, it almost seems as if this motivated her to achieve anything she put her mind to. Her beloved city of Richmond tolerated her background and eccentric behavior for the time before the war; the minute she openly opposed the secession of Virginia was when their tolerance “degenerated into open hostility”.³⁴

Van Lew operated a successful spy ring that gave her the recognition she has today. She was able to succeed because “her social position and gender served as her most convincing disguise. No one would believe that a frail, pampered spinster was capable of plotting treasonous acts, let alone carrying them out right under the government’s nose.”³⁵ Most were not too surprised when Van Lew denied invites to help sew rebel uniforms, or when she openly opposed the institution of slavery, because she never kept her loyalty to the Union a secret. While it sometimes made them suspicious, there was not much done on their questioning, and that is how Van Lew was able to achieve what she did.



Elizabeth Van Lew
Source: smithsonianmag.com

³³ Abbott, 38.

³⁴ Abbott, 41.

³⁵ Abbott, 47.

MOTIVATIONS

Although all four women had the same intentions (defending and supporting their cause, whether it be for the Union or Confederacy), Greenhow, Boyd, Edmonds, and Van Lew all had different motives for doing what they did. They each had similar, yet varying upbringings that gave them different opportunities. According to “A Woman’s War:” Gender and Civil War Studies”, women “acted out of their own, personal motivations and not simply with the intent to humiliate enemy men. Nonetheless, both Northern and Southern women were influenced by notions of gender that were a significant part of their mid-nineteenth-century world.”³⁶ These different political, economical, and social forces each made them become the spy that they were.

One thing that Greenhow, Boyd, and Van Lew had in common was that they all came from wealthy, almost stable, upbringings. Their parents or husbands gave them the tools and opportunities they needed to be successful. Edmonds, although not from as wealthy an upbringing as the other three women, made the most of her situation, escaped when she was ready, and put herself right into work. This wealth was something that gave each of these women the connections they needed to further the achievement of their cause.

Greenhow had always been among the rich and powerful. Her closest friends included Presidents, Senators, high-ranking military officials, and more. Greenhow was the type of woman that loved to be the center of attention; she loved knowing she had connections to have anything she wanted. Her husband’s position as a prominent physician and in the U.S. Department of State made her a “greedy prospector of the powerful”.³⁷ Greenhow knew that as long as she kept her relations with those of power, she would have

³⁶ Silber, 12.

³⁷ Abbott, 23.

no worries in life. Another thing that motivated Greenhow was that her looks could just about convince any one of any thing. Union colonel Erasmus D. Keyes once said she was “one of the most persuasive women that was ever known in Washington.”³⁸ Knowing this was how those who were powerful saw her, Greenhow knew she was capable of delivering vital information to the Confederacy in order to beat the Union. However, internally, Greenhow suffered from her husband’s death. Abbott wrote, “The work overtook her mind, muting the dull, relentless drumbeat of thoughts about what her life had become. She was a widow with no steady income, forced to take seamstress jobs and put up furniture as collateral for rent money.”³⁹ This was another motivation for Greenhow; things were not all easy and happy, and she needed to make sure people did not know that.

Through Greenhow’s connections, she knew Captain Thomas Jordan, who switched sides early on in the war. Being a native to Virginia, he believed in their secession and wanted to support it. He felt it was necessary to create a spy ring in the (then) capital, and believed Greenhow was the woman to do the job. He believed this because “No woman in Washington knew more men of power and influence, of both the Northern and the Southern persuasion”.⁴⁰ This was the connection that led Greenhow into the position she became as organizer of the spy ring. She took on this position not only because of her desire to defeat the Union, but because of her fear of falling down the social ladder. Abbott states, “both despite and because of her occasional indiscretions...Rose accepted on the

³⁸ Abbott, 24.

³⁹ Abbott, 26.

⁴⁰ Abbott, 22-23.

spot”⁴¹ In addition, Greenhow also had an extreme hatred for the Lincoln’s. This was motivation enough for Greenhow to become a spy.

Just like Greenhow, Boyd was also exhilarated by the feeling of doing more than what was expected of women at this time. Boyd was one to take action rather than wait for the consequences to happen. Coming from a wealthy, stable family, and using her good looks, Boyd was able to get away with almost anything. At the young age of seventeen, after Union soldiers broke into her home and attempted to attack her mother, she used her pistol and shot a soldier, who did not survive. Although she was a suspect, she got away with the act, claiming it was self-defense. In her memoir, she wrote “I could not stand it no longer, my indignation was roused beyond control; my blood was literally boiling in my veins”.⁴² She intercepted letters and gathered intel from the Union to send to Confederate generals, and got away with all of it. Boyd knew that she could continue on with what she was doing because of her social standing and beauty, but yearned to do more. She also knew that when matters were taken into her own hands, things got done.

Boyd was motivated to become a spy because she could no longer take the inappropriateness of Union soldiers, or their demeaning attitudes. She also was motivated because of her belief in the institution of slavery. She did not think it was ready to fall, and was willing to fight for it. In addition, Boyd admired and looked up to Greenhow and what she had done for the Confederacy. Boyd personally knew Bettie Duvall, an emissary of Greenhow, and dreamt of being like her. She wrote that she “admired the girl’s ‘intrepidity and devotion’.”⁴³ This was a major driving factor for Boyd to do what she did. This goal of

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Boyd, 82.

⁴³ Abbott, 54.

being like Duvall and Greenhow is what pushed her to ask her uncle, a Lieutenant in Stonewall Jackson's unit, to be a part of the fight.⁴⁴ Boyd believed that she was the answer to many of the Confederate military's problems; according to Abbott, "It felt like a place where anything could happen, where she could *make* anything happen".⁴⁵ These are the major motivations Boyd had for becoming a spy.

Edmonds had varying motives compared to women like Greenhow and Boyd. Her motives lay in the situation she was living in at home. Because of her father's harsh attitude toward her, her mother and her siblings, she felt immense pressure to leave home, and had a passion to live disguised as a man. She originally dreamed of becoming a foreign missionary, however when the War Department began enlisting troops, Edmonds felt that it was her duty and calling to be enlisted in the war. She did whatever she could to become the Fanny Campbell she had only read about in the book.

The idea of becoming like Fanny Campbell was very attractive to Edmonds. Just like Campbell, Edmonds did not want to conform to the expectations of women during her time. She believed she was capable of accomplishing so much more than what she was told she could do. According to Gansler, Edmonds "relished the freedom it gave her to go where she wanted, do what she wanted, earn what she could, without the nagging restraints society placed on unrestrained women."⁴⁶ In becoming a man and joining the military at the country's greatest time of need, Edmonds was able to give herself what she was looking for- an escape from her reality. In the military, Edmonds stayed motivated through the people she met, the lives she saved, and the new identities she was able to become. In an

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Abbott, 103.

⁴⁶ Gansler, 12.

interview with *Fort Scott Monitor*, published on January 17, 1884, she said she believed “there was a ‘magnetic power’ in her hands to ‘soothe the delirium’.”⁴⁷ Those are the motives Edmonds had.

Van Lew had great dedication and commitment to the Union. Despite being raised in the South, her parents had strong Northern roots, and she was even educated in the North. Through the experiences her parents were able to give her due to their wealth and social status, Van Lew was able to make the decision to openly support the Union, and therefore do whatever she could to assist Union soldiers who were in need in her city of Richmond. She once told a Confederate guard “‘Love was the fulfilling of the law, and if we wish *our cause* to succeed, we must begin with charity to the thankless and unworthy’.”⁴⁸ She only said this in order to be allowed to volunteer as a nurses aid for Union soldiers, but knew deep down that to help her cause succeed, she would need to help the, in her eyes, *thankful* and *worthy* Union soldiers. Van Lew was motivated to be a spy and protect the Union soldiers the way she did because of her belief in *doing* for her cause.

In recounting her childhood, Van Lew attributes her actions to the feelings she had. In the *Elizabeth Van Lew Papers* “Notes on her Ancestry” (Frames 240-45), Elizabeth recalls “‘From the time I knew right from wrong, it was my sad privilege to differ in many things from the perceived opinions in my locality. This has made my life intensely sad and earnest...”⁴⁹ Due to her difference of opinion, Van Lew was a very lonely girl. This continued from her childhood into adulthood, and can be attributed to the fact she was

⁴⁷ Gansler, 16.

⁴⁸ Abbott, 44.

⁴⁹ Varon, 9.

never married. According to Varon, “it was her tragic destiny to play the role of outside.”⁵⁰ Because of her feelings of desertion in her childhood, Van Lew held on to this through her adulthood, but used it as motivation stay true to her beliefs and support the Union.

Greenhow, Boyd, Edmonds, and Van Lew all varied in their motives for becoming a spy. Whether it be political, social, or personal factors, they each found it in themselves to push through expectations and do what they did for their respective cause.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

FAMILIAL IMPACT

Family and children are always a very important part of a person's life and personal story. It is from your family and children that you gain experience and wisdom, and (for the most part) have the closest connection with. During the war, families were split up, many family members even killed, and were greatly impacted. Northern families with relatives in the South were not as connected with them as they were before the war, and vice versa. Family played a vital role in the lives of Greenhow, Boyd, and Van Lew, and for Edmonds in a different way.

Although very family-oriented, Greenhow experienced a lot of trauma with her family. She had a total of eight children, five of whom died in their childhood. Her fifth daughter, Gertrude, died at the young age of twenty-three due to typhoid fever.⁵¹ Her youngest child, Little Rose, was the third daughter she had named after herself, the previous three dying young. Her husband died before Little Rose was even born, resulting in her not knowing her father. Greenhow, being an orphan and never knowing her parents herself, knew how important it was for her to be close to Little Rose. Little Rose "worshipped her mother, internalizing Rose's opinions, mimicking her words."⁵² Because of her dedication to her mother, and being only eight years old (in 1861), Little Rose was willing to do anything she could for her mother. Greenhow had her daughter carry intel in her dresses, and allowed her to know information most eight year olds probably should not know.

⁵¹ Abbott, 21.

⁵² Abbott, 112.

When Greenhow was arrested in 1861, Little Rose witnessed the whole event, which occurred in their home. Upon seeing Allan Pinkerton's men approach her, Little Rose climbed up a tree in the background and screamed "the worst sound Rose had ever heard."⁵³ While in jail, Little Rose got very sick, and Greenhow requested to see the family



"Rose O'Neal Greenhow with daughter Rose", 1862.

Source: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institute
awarded time to play in the prison courtyard. However, Greenhow firmly believed that "her

doctor. The guards declined her request, and offered her their physician, who she "declined to receive, preferring to trust her life to the care of the good Providence which had so often befriended me."⁵⁴ For a child to be sick is one thing, but for the parent to decline care due to her beliefs is another. Greenhow put her beliefs before her child's well being, not giving into the guard's denial of her own doctor. Although Little Rose survived the incarceration, it still had a great impact on her life. Her days were spent in a small cell with her mother, and she rarely was daughter would be in greater danger if she gave up entirely, if she stood by and let the North win the war."⁵⁵ This is an instance where a child's life was greatly impacted due to the acts of espionage during the Civil War.

Because she was so young at the time, Boyd depended on her family for almost everything. She came from a wealthy family where both parents were always together. She was the oldest child, and was very family-oriented. Boyd's father was an Officer in Stonewall Jackson's brigade, and her mother was left an orphan at a very young age. Before

⁵³ Abbott, 107.

⁵⁴ Greenhow, 94.

⁵⁵ Abbott, 112.

the war, Boyd's parents had never been apart, so this was a new experience for them. Boyd was able to have the many opportunities to act for the Confederacy due to the numerous members of her family who lived all around the South. Because Boyd was very outgoing, her mother feared she would get in trouble. However, Boyd very much took after her mother. In her memoir, Boyd wrote that once when Union soldiers tried to raise a federal flag over her house, her mother said to them "Men, every member of my household will die before that flag shall be raised over us."⁵⁶ Knowing this is something Boyd would do and had previously said, we can see that she was clearly influenced by her mother's strength in standing up for her family. Boyd's father's involvement in Jackson's brigade allowed Boyd to make the connections she needed to spy for the Confederacy, and be given opportunities others did not have.

Due to family wealth and connections, Boyd was able to go to different locations in the South. The only reason Boyd was in Fort Royal at the time of the battle (the one that



The Boyd Family.
Source: "Beyond the Mansion"

gave her her fame) was due to her mother's worry that she would get herself involved in things an eighteen-year-old girl should not get involved in. Little did her mother know, she would become one of the most well-known spies, and given credit for the Confederacy's success in the Battle of Front

Royal. While Boyd did not have an impact on her family as a result of her actions, her family clearly had an impact on her, giving her motive to do what she did.

⁵⁶ Boyd, 82.

Van Lew came from a family that she depended greatly on. She was “aware that her family’s position would be crucial to her success.”⁵⁷ Due to this dependence, her work greatly impacted their lives, both socially and economically. Her parents, originally from the North, only had slaves in order to better assimilate into Richmond society. Once her father died and war was inevitable, Van Lew, her mother, and her brother had a goal of freeing their slaves. Her sister lived in Philadelphia, and did not have the same impact as their brother John would. Van Lew’s goal also included helping and protecting Union soldiers, which put her family in great risk. John was married to a woman named Mary who had strong Southern ties, and wanted their young children, Eliza and Annie, to have the same beliefs. The difference in opinion between Van Lew and her sister-in-law caused the end of the marriage between her brother and his wife. Due to crude comments passed by Mary regarding the war, John kicked her out of the house, and as a result, she kidnapped the kids. John was able to save the daughters from their irresponsible mother, who had a wild night out, but tensions continued to exist within the family. Van Lew, mortified at this event, felt for her nieces, and aimed to “return some peace and routine to the girl’s lives, in so much as peace and routine were possible during a war.”⁵⁸ However hard it was, Van Lew tried her best to distract the girls as much as possible, especially the times when the girls saw the secret door where she hid Union soldiers.

Van Lew’s involvement in espionage took a great toll on her family. According to Abbott, “She had never meant for her little brother to become so enmeshed in her operations to risk his own life.”⁵⁹ As a result of her actions, Van Lew ruined her family

⁵⁷ Abbott, 42.

⁵⁸ Abbott, 228.

⁵⁹ Abbott, 257.



"Elizabeth with her brother John, nieces Eliza and Annie, and their servant", ca. 1862.

Source: New York Public Library Digital Collections.

name, and their bank account. In assisting Union soldiers and helping them escape from Confederate prison, Van Lew spent almost all of the family's fortune. In aiding slaves, Van Lew and her brother would always buy an entire family if they saw they would possibly be split up.⁶⁰ Although she never meant to get her family involved, Van Lew's work greatly impacted their lives, and their entire reputation.

Edmonds' family story is wildly different from that of Greenhow, Boyd, and Van Lew. The reason Edmonds moved to the States and joined the military was because of her family. Edmonds' family was never a united one, due to her father's violent personality. However, her actions in the military had no direct impact on her family, as she had not had contact with them since the last time she saw them in 1861. Edmonds returned home at this time to check in with the family, but from the perspective of Frank Thompson. She was very happy to see her mother, sister, and brother, and they were equally as happy to see her, all fearing that their father would walk in at any moment. As much as she despised her father, much of what she knew (hunting, fishing, etc.) was all learned from him. He indirectly taught her how to be strong and independent, which allowed her to succeed in being a spy.

Family plays a huge role in everyone's lives, whether they support or degrade you. Anything you do will impact your family and their name in some way, whether good or bad.

⁶⁰ "The Unlikely Union Spy- Elizabeth Van Lew Developed an Extensive Spy Ring during the Civil War." The Vintage News. February 10, 2016.

<https://www.thevintagenews.com/2016/02/10/elizabeth-van-lew-the-lady-who-developed-the-extensive-spy-ring-during-the-civil-war/2>.

This goes for the women spies of the Civil War. There was a trend in age and impact on one's family. Boyd and Edmonds were younger during the war, and their family had an impact on their motives to spy. On the other hand, Greenhow and Van Lew were older, thus having an impact on the lives of their children, nieces, in-laws, etc. These impacts were long-term, and greatly changed the family's lives and reputation forever.

LOVE LIVES

During the Civil War, there was endless love and tragic heartbreak. The 1850s and 1860s were a time where, most often, young women married older men, who were either on their first or second marriage. Women were raised to always look for a potential suitor in order to play their role in the home as a wife and mother. Greenhow, Boyd, Edmonds, and Van Lew each were on the lookout for potential suitors, but not for the benefits that other women looked for. These women used their beauty and charm in order to seduce men, powerful or not, in order to gain intelligence for their cause. They knew how men admired them, and used it to their advantage.

Of these four women, Greenhow was the most “willing” when it came to men. She had a countless record of trysts with men of the rich and powerful, and even their assistants. She was willing to do and say anything to gain intelligence for the Union. Senators and Union officials alike all jumped at the chance to converse or to be intimate with the beautiful Greenhow. “The men noticed Rose, too, with her black eyes and sleek skein of hair, her figure that curved like a vase...She had...cultivated an air both regal and flirtatious.”⁶¹ Greenhow knew exactly how to work these men, knowing what they wanted to see and hear. Senator Joseph Lane, who came to be very sick, wrote to her frequently, one note saying, “Believe me, my dear, I am not able to move as a young man should...Please answer.”⁶² This is just one example of many love letters received and written by Greenhow. In another letter to Greenhow from a Mr. Isaac Touccy, he wrote to her, “My dear Mrs. Greenhow, I will call on you tomorrow morning with very great pleasure

⁶¹ Abbott, 144.

⁶² Abbott, 24. Source is a letter from Lane to Greenhow that was seized when Greenhow was arrested. The date of the source is unknown.

as I come to the Department.”⁶³ It is unknown what the “Department” may be, but it is clear there were no limits in the romanticism of letters, whether official business or not. Many of these letters, seized by Alan Pinkerton in her arrest, are available on the National Archives website

(<https://catalog.archives.gov/search?q=Rose%20Greenhow%20OR%20Rose%20Neal%20AND%20love%20letter>).

Greenhow’s most notable rendezvous was rumored to be with Senator Henry Wilson, Lincoln’s Chairman of Committee on Military Affairs, and, eventually, Ulysses S. Grant’s Vice President. Wilson, aware of Greenhow’s purpose and doings, chose to ignore that fact and pursue her. Countless letters were exchanged between Wilson and Greenhow. One letter wrote, “In fact I am sick physically and mentally and know nothing that would soothe me as much as an hour with you. And tonight, at whatever cost, I will see you.”⁶⁴ This “relationship” is one of the most debated among historians, due to the fact the letters were signed “H” and not by an entire name. This led historians to believe it was not Wilson, and other sources led them to believe it could have been Horace White, an official clerk of the Military Affairs Committee. Nonetheless, the difference in positions between the Senator and the official clerk shows how “willing” Greenhow was in her relationships.

Being as young as she was, Boyd was always on the lookout for potential suitors, and thinking of the possible relationships she could have with the men she encountered. It did not matter if they were Yankee or Confederate; if they appealed to Boyd, she would go after them. However, she knew the difference from when she was actually falling for these

⁶³ Letter to Rose Greenhow. 1861. In *Letter from Isaac Touccy to Rose Greenhow*. College Park: National Archives at College Park. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/1634125>.

⁶⁴ Abbott, 24. Source is a letter from “H” to Greenhow that was seized when Greenhow was arrested. The date of the source is unknown.

men and when she just needed them for their intelligence. She knew how to work them, but they did not know what to make of her.⁶⁵ At one point, she had fallen for Stonewall Jackson, knowing him through her father (he was a member of his brigade). She once was overheard “giving vent to romantic desires to occupy his tent and share his dangers.”⁶⁶ Boyd was not shy in turning away men. According to Abbott, “It seemed the girl was willing to engage with any man in uniform, so long as he told her what she wanted to hear.”⁶⁷ She knew she was beautiful and powerful, and she thought she could do or say whatever she wanted. She once said, “I must avow the flowers and the poetry were comparatively valueless in my eyes; but let Captain K be consoled: these were days of war, not of love, and there are still other ladies in the world besides the ‘rebel spy’.”⁶⁸

Later in her life, Boyd married three times. When she met her first husband, Lieutenant Samuel Hardinge, a Federal officer, “She forgot every previous flirtation with a Union soldier, making room in her mind for what was to come.”⁶⁹ It is unclear as to whether or not Boyd went along with this relationship in order to be released from Federal control, or if she truly loved him. When Hardinge went to Washington to lobby for her release, he was taken into a Federal prison and accused of aiding in the escape of another officer. Boyd realized her behavior (being a spy) was the reason why Hardinge was in this problem, but still vowed to marry him when he returned.⁷⁰ This was only one of her three complicated marriages.

⁶⁵ Abbott, 97.

⁶⁶ Abbott, 134.

⁶⁷ Abbott, 221.

⁶⁸ Boyd, 96

⁶⁹ Abbott, 354.

⁷⁰ Abbott, 376.

Despite being disguised as a man, Edmonds still managed to have relationships. Although she had vowed to follow Fanny Campbell's idea of "becoming a man in order to avoid one", she had about two serious relationships during the war.⁷¹ The first relationship was with Jerome Robbins, a medical steward and assistant surgeon in the same Infantry as Edmonds. Edmonds saw the relationship as romantic, but Robbins did not go further than a friendship, and did not have mutual feelings with her even after Edmonds shared her secret. According to Abbott, Robbins "wanted no more--but not less-- than this strange, furtive thing they had."⁷² Robbins once wrote in a journal, "'though foolish as it may seem, a mystery appears to be connected with him which it is impossible for me to fathom.'"⁷³ This journal and a few other letters exchanged between Robbins and Edmonds are available by the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan in *Jerome J. Robbins Papers (1861-1913)*. Despite not working out, Robbins and Edmonds (not Thompson) continued to exchange letters throughout the war. The second relationship was with Lieutenant James Reid of the 79th New York. The two had met earlier in the war, but their first true encounter was during the Battle of Fredericksburg when an injured Reid was saved by Edmonds. She still communicated with Robbins during her relationship with Reid, which was unconventional. In signing "Emma" in a letter to Robbins, Edmonds began to realize how mixed her lives were. According to Abbott, "She had allowed herself to imagine an honest life with Jerome, but this "love scheme" with Reid was a dead-end sin, bringing her equal measures of joy and misery, leaving both her and Frank with nowhere to go."⁷⁴ It was

⁷¹ Abbott, 93.

⁷² Abbott, 265.

⁷³ Abbott, 94.

⁷⁴ Abbott, 277.

because of her relationships that Edmonds realized she needed to make a decision of either living as Emma or as Frank.

Van Lew was about forty-three years old when the war broke out. At this point in her life, she had only had one true relationship that almost led to a marriage. Although she was described as “‘a maiden she possessed a delicate physique. Her form was sylph-like, her stature was small,’ and she possessed fine ‘social qualities,’” Van Lew was not able to find a suitor.⁷⁵ She did not have a line of men waiting for her like Greenhow and (sometimes) Boyd, but still managed. Van Lew grew up in a home where her parents truly loved each other, and learned from one another. While this was out of the ordinary for a marriage during this time, Van Lew still yearned for this for herself one day. However, her father died young, and so did the one suitor who she saw her future with. These deaths impacted Van Lew’s view of a marriage, and made her close up to any relationship. According to Varon, “she had extremely high expectations, a legacy of her upbringing, of what marriage should be. Perhaps she found it easier to fantasize about her lost suitor than she did to take a chance on a lesser man.”⁷⁶ In addition, Varon points out that Van Lew dedicated herself to her work at an early age, and was always involved in some project that prevented her from having a courtship like other women had. This closed personality and strong dedication Van Lew had from an early age carried on with her throughout her life, which prevented her from ever marrying.

It is evident that although each woman had different experiences with relationships, they still nonetheless all engaged in some sort of romantic relationship at some point in the

⁷⁵ Varon, 20.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

war. These were beautiful, confident women who knew how to work what they had, and succeeded in doing so.

BIG FIVE STUDY

The four women focused on in this study experienced many things most women, or even men, had never experienced in the Civil War. These adventures took a toll on their personalities and overall being. Change in personality has a great impact on the overall being of a person, and can ultimately change how their brain functions.

Specht, J., Egloff, B., and Schmukle, S.C. conducted research on the stability and change of personality across a lifespan, where they studied 14,718 Germans throughout their adulthood. Changes in personality occur because of either intrinsic maturation or major life experiences. Specht, Egloff, and Schmukle found that “personality can change due to factors other than intrinsic maturation.”⁷⁷ They also found that age plays a factor in psychological change of personality. The five main personality traits, known as the Big Five, or OCEAN are Openness, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism. Specht, Egloff, and Schmukle found that these traits appear at different ages among one’s lifespan, and conscientiousness is found throughout one’s entire life.

Greenhow, Boyd, Edmonds, and Van Lew each had a psychological change or impact due to the actions they took to support their respective causes. Each experience they had led to a change in their personality, or they had to change their personality in order to achieve their goal. Not only did these women have a physical disguise, but they also had a psychological disguise. Greenhow and Boyd constantly had a change in personality depending on who they were talking to. They both knew exactly what to say to get information out of people, whether they wanted to converse with these people or not.

⁷⁷ Specht, Julie, Boris Egloff, and Schmukle C. Stefan. "Stability and Change of Personality across the Life Course: The Impact of Age and Major Life Events on Mean-level and Ranking-order Stability of the Big Five." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101, no. 4 (October 2011): 862-82. Accessed April 2017. doi:10.1037/a0024950.

Edmonds was constantly changing who she was disguised as: overall, she was disguised as a man, yet at one point she was disguised as a slave, another time a man, and even a woman. This took a toll on her own psyche and personality; in the end, she struggled to determine exactly who she was- Emma or Frank. Van Lew did not have a major a psychological change as the others had, but she constantly had an internal struggle within herself. Living in Virginia, she loved where she was from, but was not loyal to their cause. Growing up, Van Lew was always closed and to herself; when the war broke out, she knew there was more she could do, and break out of her shell. These different events these women experienced led to a change in their personality, which ultimately caused a psychological change.

The Big Five personality traits are used to describe a person's personality. Within each trait are various facets that further describe one's personality. For example, someone who takes care of others and gets along with people would be considered agreeable. Greenhow, Boyd, Edmonds, and Van Lew each had unique traits that we can see over the course of studying their history. Edmonds lived her childhood and early teenage years as closed and reserved, traits that are associated with introversion. When she finally got out of her home and joined the military, she became more assertive and excitement seeking, traits associated with extraversion (the opposite of introversion). In addition, as Edmonds aged, she became more conscientious, meaning she became more self-disciplined and achievement-striving.⁷⁸ These all coincide with the findings of Specht, Egloff, and Schmukle, proving that age and experience impact one's personality and psychology.

⁷⁸ Campbell, W. Keith, and Jean M. Twenge. *Personality Psychology: Understanding Yourself and Others*. Boston: Pearson, 2017, 57.

POST-WAR

Everything these four courageous women did during the war impacted their lives for the future. From new relationships, to new identities, to even death, these women went through various changes, all due to their actions and decisions made during the war.

Greenhow died in an unfortunate way, and did not get to see the end of the war. Upon returning to America from being sent to Europe by Jefferson Davis in order to gain support for the Confederacy, her boat, *The Condor*, was trailed by the Federal boat *Niphon*, became stuck on rocks, and capsized. Greenhow, knowing the Yankees would certainly capture her again, jumped off the boat into a lifeboat, but did not survive; her body was found washed up on the shore of Wilmington, North Carolina. Although she died before the end of the war, her legacy remained. Thomas Taylor, captain of another stuck blockade runner, found Greenhow's body. In his book, entitled *Running the Blockade: A Personal Narrative of Adventures, Risks, and Escapes During the American Civil War*, Taylor wrote, "A remarkably handsome woman she was, with features which showed much character. Although one cannot altogether admire the profession of a spy, still there was no doubt that she imagined herself in following a profession to be serving her country in the only way open to her."⁷⁹ This was the lasting impact Greenhow had on people: they did not care that she was a spy, but were impressed in the fact that she was so dedicated to her cause. She

⁷⁹ Taylor, Thomas E. *Running the Blockade: A Personal Narrative of Adventures, Risks, and Escapes During the American Civil War*. London: John Murray, 1896, 128-129. Accessed April 2017.
<https://ia902308.us.archive.org/2/items/runningblockade01taylgoog/runningblockade01taylgoog.pdf>.

was compared to Joan of Arc, and, according to Abbott, those who attended her funeral “were still mostly strangers, mourning a symbol more than a person.”⁸⁰

Greenhow’s obituary was published in various newspapers. In a clipping titled “The Funeral of Mrs. Rose Greenhow” published October 1, 1864, approximately one week after her death, the author describes her survivors, her funeral, and where she is buried. Provided in the Alexander Robinson Boteler Papers of the Special Collections Library of Duke University, Greenhow’s funeral was described as ““a solemn and imposing spectacle’.”⁸¹ Flowers and candles surrounded her coffin, and her body was wrapped in the Confederate flag. No family attended her funeral, as most family members died or lived too far, and Little Rose was left orphaned in Paris.

Boyd continued to strive to be the center of attention, something she aimed to do her whole life. When the war ended, she married three times, once to Lieutenant Samuel Hardinge, then to John Swainston Hammond (a Yankee originally from England), and then to Nathaniel Rue High (a fellow actor who was sixteen years younger than her).⁸² She became a mother at the end of 1865, the father being Hardinge. She realized becoming a mother would mean giving up everything she had done the past four years, “those four ferocious, thrilling years that had raised her and given her a name.”⁸³ In 1865, with the end of the war near and her pregnancy progressing, she decided to write her memoir, *Belle Boyd in Camp and Prison*, which was originally published by Blelock & Co. in New York City.

⁸⁰ Abbott, 390.

⁸¹ "The Funeral of Mrs. Rose Greenhow." October 1864. Accessed March 2017. <https://www.fold3.com/image/18651342>.

⁸² Abbott, 422.

⁸³ Abbott, 404.

This memoir served as her evidence and memory of what she accomplished during the war, also serving as a source for future readers to understand her side of the story.

Boyd lived the rest of her life giving speeches, and even worked as an actress, dressing up in Confederate clothing and recreating the scenes she lived first hand. People in various states went to her lectures, where she would talk about her past. According to newspaper articles, such as *The Hartford Courant* June 26, 1891 article, "She will wear a suit of Confederate gray...the suit the famous rebel spy always wears."⁸⁴ Another article published in *The Hartford Courant* on June 29, 1891, Boyd had "interesting things to say and she says them in a delightful and entertaining manner."⁸⁵ These articles show how proud Boyd was of herself for everything she did, despite her cause not winning the war. She held on to what she lived and experienced, and brought that excitement she always had with her even to her death in 1900.

By 1862, Edmonds was unsure of who she truly was: was she Franklin Thompson or Sarah Emma Edmonds? This became a great crisis in her life, and she sought to escape the life of Franklin Thompson. April 1863 was when Edmonds ran away from the life she knew for the past few years. In a letter to Robbins in May 1863, which was found with his journals' when he died, Edmonds wrote, "My intention is to go at once into the missionary work notwithstanding the protestations of my friends to the contrary. I will write you from New York as soon as I make arrangements there..."⁸⁶ Despite writing this to Robbins,

⁸⁴ "Lecture by Belle Boyd." *The Hartford Courant* (1887-1922), June 26, 1891. Accessed October 5, 2016. <http://0-search.proquest.com.shulsso.sacredheart.edu/docview/193754053?accountid=28645>.

⁸⁵ "Belle Boyd, the Rebel Spy." *The Hartford Courant* (1887-1922), June 29, 1891. Accessed October 5, 2016. <http://0-search.proquest.com.shulsso.sacredheart.edu/docview/554448456?accountid=28645>.

⁸⁶ Gansler, 177.

Edmonds did not go down this path, and actually struggled in her years after the war. She spent most of her time writing a memoir, titled *Nurse and Spy in the Union Army*, one that consisted of part fact and part fiction. Due to her history as a book salesman before the war, she knew exactly what people wanted to read, and aimed to get her story out at any cost.⁸⁷ In her memoir, she discusses her times being a spy- “first trip behind enemy lines at Yorktown, her exploits while dressed as an Irish peddler woman, her successful reconnaissance while disguised as a female slave during the Second Battle of Bull Run, and her dramatic escape from the Confederate cavalry in Kentucky.”⁸⁸ Some of these stories may not be true, yet it is sometimes hard to decipher the difference between truth and tale. However, the stories Edmonds wrote about left a great impact on the history of the Civil War, and of who she was. Despite the controversy in the truth of her writing, her memoir sold over 175,000 copies, a still large number even compared to the 300,000 copies sold of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

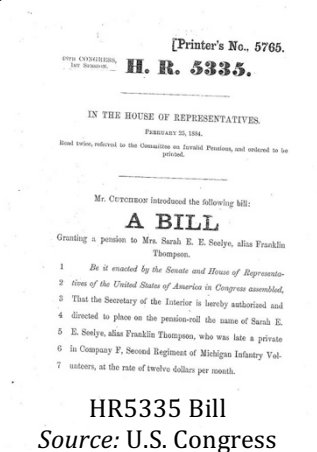
After leaving her regiment, Edmonds returned home to Canada, where she lived with her brother. Her mother and father both died during the war. Family tale has it that her father sat waiting at the window for his daughter to return, but there is no knowing if that is true or not.⁸⁹ She married Linus Seelye, a fellow Canadian who also served in the Civil War. She had three children of her own, all who died within eleven years of each other, and adopted two others, and even managed an orphanage to keep herself busy. After learning of the government giving pensions to those who were injured in the line of duty, Edmonds recalled her recurring cases of malaria, her aching legs, and other injuries she

⁸⁷ Gansler, 181.

⁸⁸ Gansler, 182.

⁸⁹ Abbott, 415.

endured in the war. She officially aligned herself with Franklin Thompson, and was awarded Thompson's pension. Enacted as Bill H.R. 5335 on February 25, 1884, Sarah E. E. Seelye was awarded the pension of Franklin Thompson at a rate of twelve dollars a month.⁹⁰ The awarding of this pension proves that Edmonds, disguised as Thompson, did in fact suffer in the Civil War, and gives credit to her stories.



The Van Lew family did not have it as easy after the war. Van Lew proudly raised her Union flag over her house after the Confederate soldiers left Richmond. The people, especially women, of Richmond looked down on the Van Lews, and had feelings of abandonment from them. Although not able to access the papers, Abbott provides a quote from the *William Gilmore Beymer Papers*, where one Richmond woman wrote:

She had no moral right to speak of the people of the South as "our people" and as "we."...She had separated herself from us. And, the women of the South being so loyal, so self-sacrificing, so devoted, she made herself not only notorious but offensive. She was vain enough to imagine that she was called upon to make herself vicarious sacrifice.⁹¹

⁹⁰ U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Invalid Pensions. *A Bill: Granting a Pension to Mrs. Sarah E. E. Seelye, Alias Franklin Thompson*. 48th Cong., 1st sess. H. HR5335. Accessed January 2017. <http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/primarysources/sarah-emma-edmonds-pension.html>.

⁹¹ Abbott, 424.

This was the opinion of the Van Lews for many. Her brother was not able to find work, and Van Lew herself used her connections in order to get him a job. However, she did not have the friends and connections that she thought she had before. She lost not only her position of power, but her money. She had spent all of her family's fortune in order to aid the escaped Union soldiers, leaving her in a difficult position come the end of the war. In contrast to Boyd, who aimed to live in the spotlight the remainder of her life, Van Lew removed herself from the public, and essentially lived behind the comfort of her house walls for the rest of her life. After her death in September 1900, the people of Richmond, according to Abbott, reported seeing Van Lew's ghost, showing she had a lasting impact on her city.⁹²

⁹² Abbott, 428.

CONCLUSION

There were many courageous women in the Civil War who took action instead of sitting back and falling into stereotypes and typical expectations of women. These women, Rose O'Neal Greenhow, Belle Boyd, Sarah Emma Edmonds, and Elizabeth Van Lew, did things that many would not think of doing. There is a difference between doing for your cause, in terms of fundraisers, sewing, etc., and *doing* for your cause, in terms of going onto the battlefield, passing on correspondence, etc.

It is hard to evaluate the truth of the stories these women shared with the world. How could one disregard the stories written by these women who put their lives on the line for something they believed so strongly in? As previously stated with Edmonds, these women knew, for the most part, what the American public wanted to read. In their memoirs, they wrote what people wanted to hear, some of it fact and some of it fiction. However true the stories were, the American public was interested in them and cared about their stories. It is due to time that their stories have been lost and are not as cherished as they were once before. It is up to historians and scholars to revive the stories of these women and share them with society, as they played a huge impact on not only the Civil War, but the evolution of women's roles.

One question that comes to mind when reading about these women is who acted least like a spy. Originally, I believed Edmonds acted least like a spy. She did not run a spy ring or pass information like Greenhow, Boyd, or Van Lew, but after reading more about her history, she is absolutely one of the most spy-like of the women. I would have to say Van Lew was the one who acted least like a spy. Boyd and Edmonds both acted just as spies are perceived- they went undercover and used different identities (Edmonds more than

Boyd). Greenhow used her charm to seduce men in order to gain vital information.

Although Van Lew worked similarly to how Greenhow did, in the sense of running a successful spy ring right under Richmond's nose, there is something about her story that does not resonate "spy". She worked closely with Union soldiers in Libby Prison, and passed on vital information to them, but on the other hand, she kept very secluded to her home and did not raise as many questions as the other women did.

Greenhow, Boyd, Edmonds and Van Lew each had an impact on society and their causes, but they ultimately had impacts on their own lives. Their family life, love life, and personality/well-being were all impacted in some way. Every action they took impacted one of the following categories, which is evident through their stories. These women were courageous and domineering, and this showed in the history of their lives.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Belle Boyd*. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institute. Accessed April 2017.
http://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.96.78?destination=portraits/search%3Fedan_fq%5B1%5D%3Dp.edanmdm.descriptivenonrepeating.unit_code%253A%2522NPG%2522%26edan_fq%5B2%5D%3Donline_visual_material%253Atrue%26edan_q%3Dold%2520capitol%2520prison%26edan_local%3D1%26op%3DSearch.
- "Belle Boyd, the Rebel Spy." *The Hartford Courant (1887-1922)*, June 29, 1891. Accessed October 5, 2016. <http://0-search.proquest.com.shulsso.sacredheart.edu/docview/554448456?accountid=28645>.
- Boyd, Belle. *Belle Boyd: In Camp and Prison*. Edited by Drew Gilpin Faust and Sharon Kennedy-Nolle. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998.
- The Boyd Family. April 14, 2014. Beyond the Mansion*. Accessed April 2017.
<http://blountmansion.blogspot.com/2014/04/belle-boyd-her-visit-to-knoxville-and.html>.
- Elizabeth Van Lew with Her Nieces, Brother John, and Servant on Main Mansion Grounds*. 1862. Elizabeth Van Lew Papers, New York Public Library. Compiled by Elizabeth Van Lew. Accessed April 2017. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-4433-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.
- Franklin Flint Thompson*. National Archives. Accessed April 2017.
<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1993/spring/women-in-the-civil-war-2.html>.
- "The Funeral of Mrs. Rose Greenhow." October 1864. Accessed March 2017.
<https://www.fold3.com/image/18651342>.
- Gardner, Alexander. *Rose and Rose O'Neal Greenhow*. 1862. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, DC. Accessed April 2017.
http://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.96.78?destination=portraits/search%3Fedan_fq%5B1%5D%3Dp.edanmdm.descriptivenonrepeating.unit_code%253A%2522NPG%2522%26edan_fq%5B2%5D%3Donline_visual_material%253Atrue%26edan_q%3Dold%2520capitol%2520prison%26edan_local%3D1%26op%3DSearch.
- Greenhow, Rose O'Neal. *My Imprisonment and the First Year of Abolition Rule at Washington*. Vol. 1. London: Spottiswoode and, 1863.
- "Lecture by Belle Boyd." *The Hartford Courant (1887-1922)*, June 26, 1891. Accessed October 5, 2016. <http://0-search.proquest.com.shulsso.sacredheart.edu/docview/554448456?accountid=28645>.

search.proquest.com.shulsso.sacredheart.edu/docview/193754053?accountid=28645.

Letter to Rose Greenhow. 1861. In *Letter from Isaac Touccy to Rose Greenhow*. College Park: National Archives at College Park. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/1634125>.

"Rights and Wrongs of Women." *Harper's New Monthly*, June 1854, 76-78. Accessed March 2017. <http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=harp;cc=harp;view=toc;subview=short;idno=harp0009-1>.

"Rose O'Neal Greenhow (1817-1864) and Her Daughter Rose by the Mathew Brady Studio." Smithsonian Institution. Accessed February 2017. http://www.civilwar.si.edu/leaders_greenhow.html.

Sarah Emma Edmonds Seelye. National Archives. Accessed April 2017. <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1993/spring/women-in-the-civil-war-2.html>.

"Seized Correspondence of Rose O'Neal Greenhow." National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed April 2017. <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/civil-war/greenhow>.

Taylor, Thomas E. *Running the Blockade: A Personal Narrative of Adventures, Risks, and Escapes During the American Civil War*. London: John Murray, 1896. Accessed April 2017. <https://ia902308.us.archive.org/2/items/runningblockade01taylgoog/runningblockade01taylgoog.pdf>.

U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Invalid Pensions. *A Bill: Granting a Pension to Mrs. Sarah E. E. Seelye, Alias Franklin Thompson*. 48th Cong., 1st sess. H. HR5335. Accessed January 2017. <http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/primarysources/sarah-emma-edmonds-pension.html>.

Secondary Sources

Brooks, Rebecca Beatrice. "Elizabeth Van Lew: Spymaster." Civil War Saga. November 9, 2012. Accessed March 2017. <http://civilwarsaga.com/elizabeth-van-lew-spymaster/>.

Campbell, W. Keith, and Jean M. Twenge. *Personality Psychology: Understanding Yourself and Others*. Boston: Pearson, 2017.

"Civil War Timeline." National Parks Service. Accessed April 2017. <https://www.nps.gov/gett/learn/historyculture/civil-war-timeline.htm>.

The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Rose O'Neal Greenhow." Encyclopædia Britannica. December 01, 1999. Accessed March 2017.
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Rose-ONeal-Greenhow>.

"Elizabeth Van Lew." National Parks Service. Accessed March 2017.
<https://www.nps.gov/people/elizabeth-van-lew.htm>.

Groh, Mary Lou. "Maria "Belle" Boyd." Civil War Trust. 2014. Accessed November 2016.
<http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/biographies/maria-belle-boyd.html?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>.

Largent, Kimberly J. "Elizabeth Van Lew: "Crazy Bet" Brings Down Richmond." Elizabeth Van Lew: "Crazy Bet" Brings Down Richmond. Accessed March 2017.
<https://ehistory.osu.edu/articles/elizabeth-van-lew-%E2%80%9Ccrazy-bet%E2%80%9D-brings-down-richmond>.

"Rose O'Neal Greenhow." American Civil War Stories. Accessed February 2017.
<http://www.americancivilwarstory.com/rose-oneal-greenhow.html>.

"Sarah Emma Edmonds." Civil War Trust. 2014. Accessed November 2016.
<http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/biographies/sarah-emma-edmonds.html?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>.

Tendrich Frank, Lisa. "Women." In *The Civil War in Georgia: A New Georgia Encyclopedia Companion*, edited by John C. Iscoe, 164-70. University of Georgia Press, 2011.

"The Unlikely Union Spy- Elizabeth Van Lew Developed an Extensive Spy Ring during the Civil War." The Vintage News. February 10, 2016.
<https://www.thevintagenews.com/2016/02/10/elizabeth-van-lew-the-lady-who-developed-the-extensive-spy-ring-during-the-civil-war/2>.

Monographs

Abbott, Karen. *Liar Temptress Soldier Spy: Four Women Undercover In The Civil War*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014.

Blackman, Ann. *Wild Rose: The True Story of a Civil War Spy*. New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005.

Faust, Drew Gilpin. *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*. Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies. New York: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Gansler, Laura Leedy. *The Mysterious Private Thompson: The Double Life of Sarah Emma Edmonds, Civil War Soldier*. New York: Free Press, 2005.

Leonard, Elizabeth D. *Yankee Women: Gender Battles In The Civil War*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994.

Varon, Elizabeth R., *Southern Lady, Yankee Spy: The True Story of Elizabeth Van Lew, A Union Agent in the Heart of the Confederacy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Journals

Silber, Nina. "'A Woman's War:' Gender and Civil War Studies." *OAH Magazine of History, The Civil War*, 8, no. 1 (Fall 1993): 11-13. Accessed September 28, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/sacredheart.idm.oclc.org/stable/25162919>.

Specht, Julie, Boris Egloff, and Schmukle C. Stefan. "Stability and Change of Personality across the Life Course: The Impact of Age and Major Life Events on Mean-level and Ranking-order Stability of the Big Five." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101, no. 4 (October 2011): 862-82. Accessed April 2017. doi:10.1037/a0024950.