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Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins. *Love and Duty: Amelia and Josiah Gorgas and Their Family.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005. xv + 110 pp. $19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8173-5294-3.

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A Southern Family in the Civil War Era: The Family life of Josiah and Amelia Gorges

The growing historiography on social aspects of the Civil War has produced a host of valuable studies that greatly add to the understanding of the war and its effect on common people throughout the North and the South. While some historians have focused on broad sweeping studies that provide an overall view of the effect of the war on Southern women, others have devoted their attention to editing and publishing memoirs, correspondence, or studies of individual families. Sarah Woolfolk Wiggins's, *Love and Duty: Amelia and Josiah Gorgas and Their Family*, is one such addition to this latter category of scholarship.

The Gorgas family is best known for two reasons; namely, Josiah's role as the chief of the Confederate Ordinance Bureau during the war, and the notoriety of Josiah and Amelia's son, William Crawford Gorgas, who became the U.S. surgeon general "whose efforts to improve sanitation made possible the building of the Panama Canal" (p. xiv). Yet, as Wiggins demonstrates, it is important to explore Josiah and his wife Amelia's family life because it helps illuminate various themes common in Victorian America. Indeed, Wiggins claims that "the intent of these essays is to focus on the personalities of Amelia and Josiah that generally have escaped our grasp and to enable a reader to gain a sense of the relationships of the Gorgas family members to each other" (p. xiii). In this Wiggins has succeeded masterfully.

This collection of essays examines, topically, subjects that range from the marriage of Josiah Gorgas to Amelia Gayle on December 29, 1853, to the unreconstructed Confederate that Amelia became and remained until her death. Chapters are devoted to the marriage, the role of Josiah as a Victorian father, and Amelia's position as a wife and mother. An introduction and prologue provide an excellent overview of the Gorgas family's fascinating chronology. At the same time, themes that were common to families throughout the South are duly noted throughout the book. Indeed, the Gorgas family serves to illustrate issues discussed by many different historians. The closely linked family ties that were evident throughout Amelia's life illustrate the arguments made by historians such as Sally McMillen and Jane Turner Censer that kinship ties were essential in the antebellum South.[1] The manner in which Josiah and Amelia raised their children agrees with Censer's findings that antebellum Southern families raised their children to be strong independent individuals. Josiah and Amelia's marriage clearly augments the argument by historians that the nineteenth century saw the rise of companionate marriages. At the same time, Amelia's devotion to her family and her acceptance of her traditional gender role agrees with the findings of historians such as George Rable, Drew Gilpin Faust, and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, who concluded that women were generally content in their traditional subordinate gender positions in the patriarchal society of the antebellum South.[2]

At the same time, Amelia's life also agrees with Rable's, Faust's, and Laura Edwards's argument that the Civil War was not a watershed in gender relations for Southern women.[3] Indeed, the reality was that, for Amelia, any substantial changes that took place in her gender position occurred after the war and as a result of her husband's stroke and death. It was after the war that she took a position outside of her home and worked to help support her family. Even with these changes she continued to identify herself with her family and not as a professional. Unquestionably, Amelia's family provided her with her identity, "an identity with which she was entirely comfortable" (p. 64). She did not identify herself as a professional woman, but rather as a wife and mother.

While her husband played an important role in the Confederacy, Amelia was also deeply attached to the Confederacy and in many ways it was her loyalty to the South that initially persuaded her husband to place his lot with the Confederacy. Amelia's other family members

were intricately connected to the Confederacy as well. One of her brothers was a surgeon and another was a blockade-runner. She actively participated in soldiers' relief organizations during the war and after the Confederate defeat contributed to the memorialization of the Confederacy. As an ardent supporter of the Lost Cause her life provides a "glimpse of what many anonymous women did," both during and after the Civil War, to express their devotion to the Confederacy (p. 75). Indeed, Amelia's life, experiences, and sentiments illustrate that the Civil War was a "woman's war" (p. 66).

Josiah's career was no less fascinating. After serving in the U.S. Army he became the chief of the Confederate Ordnance Bureau. After the collapse of the Confederacy he failed in an attempt to run Brierfield Ironworks. He later served as the president of the University of the South as the school faced severe economic hardships. In 1878 he became the president of the University of Alabama. He concluded his career as the librarian of the University of Alabama, a position that was really filled by Amelia after Josiah suffered a stroke in 1879, from which he never fully recovered. After his death in 1883, Amelia took over his position as librarian and continued to live in the house provided by the University of Alabama.

This book, a compilation of revised essays or portions of previously published essays, provides a succinct overview of the family life of Josiah and Amelia Gorgas. The only negative aspect is that the chronology of the Gorgas's lives is repeated in each chapter. On the other hand, each chapter is self contained and could be used in an upper level Civil War class as a reading assignment or drawn upon for other academic purposes.

Overall, this book successfully fulfills the goals that Wiggins set out to achieve. Based on extensive research of both primary and secondary sources, this book provides an insightful view of the Gorgas family throughout their fascinating lives that spanned the tumultuous Civil War and Reconstruction era.

Notes

[1]. Sally G. McMillen, *Motherhood in the Old South: Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Infant Rearing* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990); and Jane Turner Censer, *North Carolina Planters and Their Children, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984).

[2]. George Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

[3]. Laura F. Edwards, *Scarlet Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

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