

Troubled State

Civil War Journals *of*
Franklin Archibald/Dick

GARI CARTER

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Preface

Years ago in the 1960s, my mother said she had something special for me. She handed me a white cardboard gift box with gold scrolls up and down the top, in the middle of which was printed HBCO and Hutzlers... Baltimore. Strangely, it had no department store ribbon around it. My mother was known for wrapping presents in the funny papers and tying them up with paper ribbon with the ends carefully curled. I thought she was giving me a scarf, but the box felt heavier. Inside, wrapped in white tissue paper, were two old fragile books—one leather-bound and the other an old-fashioned school copybook with a cardboard cover. The box and the books gave off a sharp, musty smell. I gently opened the leather one and saw faded brown Spenserian script on yellowed pages. I asked whose it was. She said they were the Civil War journals of my great-great-grandfather, Franklin Archibald Dick, who had served as provost marshal in St. Louis, and she wanted to pass them on to me. My mother told me she had saved the journals from her grandfather's things. I remembered her grandfather, who pounded on the floor with his bamboo cane with an ivory handle. He made a terrifyingly loud noise with it in his fits of temper.

As an only child, I have been the caretaker of family things for my generation, which my mother says is both a gift and a burden. I was newly married and I thought of these journals as something interesting to keep for my future children. I leafed through the books, reading a few words here and there, but never sat down and read them. Over the years, I acquired more assorted possessions of ancestors. I have Franklin Dick's campaign chest, which held his clothes as he traveled around Missouri as provost marshal general. It is a tall, dark, wooden box, about the size of a small table, with iron bands around it. There are two hinged handles with

square holes, which lift above its top. A post was inserted through these holes, and the chest was carried on the back of a mule. It is lined in silk and has about the same amount of room as an airline carry-on bag. My mother used it as an end table and I do the same, but I have now covered the top with glass for protection. My mother also gave me two swords, both looking to be Civil War era, but did not know whose they were. She remembered a photograph of Mira Alexander that used to hang in her grandfather's bedroom. On the back was a note that Mira's dress and carriage were used to spy during the Civil War. The photograph was lost in a later move.

Another cousin has Franklin Dick's youthful portrait. His eyes look seriously at the artist, the long straight Dick nose (which I see in my mother) is evident, and he has pink cheeks and a pleasant look. His wavy light brown hair is parted on the side and he is wearing a stylish black suit, pleated white shirt, and an elaborate black tie. His solid body is seated bolt upright on a red armchair and he holds a piece of paper in his right hand. A gold wall is behind him with a glimpse of nature to the side—sky, clouds, and trees. My mother thinks the portrait Franklin Dick mentions that was made of his son Otis may have been taken to Paris by his mother, Myra, when she moved there to be with her daughter; it has since disappeared.

I had heard many stories about my great-great-grandfather, but I knew almost nothing about the war he wrote about in these journals. When I had studied the Civil War at Randolph-Macon Women's College in Virginia, we had focused on the East Coast battles. I knew little of Missouri, where Franklin Dick had lived. I was not especially interested in that war, which I had been taught had to do with money, Northern industry, and an attack on the Southern way of life with slaves and cotton. My mother said her grandmother had told her that conditions were really difficult for the family during the war in St. Louis and that several of their children had died. I was only able to find information about the death of their son Otis. My mother also heard that they had carried the childrens' coffins back to Philadelphia for burial, but she never saw the graves.

I kept the journals in the white Hutzler's Department Store gift box and, over the years, moved them with me all over Virginia, to Colorado, to Florida, and finally to North Carolina. After the publication of my first

book, *Healing Myself*, the story of my ten-year reconstruction within and without after a devastating car accident, I thought about doing some detective work with the old journals. I went to the library and traced the family genealogy. I had a copy of an old family history my great-grandfather had commissioned, but it ended in 1940. In my research about Franklin Dick's life and his family, I discovered a hidden family scandal and was unable to track the descendants of one son. I discovered much more about my great-great-grandfather from books, papers, and the Internet. My cousin, Betty Garesché Torno, gave me information about St. Louis in the 1850s through 1870s and explained the local families' histories. I found letters written to my mother from a relative writing a book about the Alexanders—the family of Myra Dick—but found no record of the book ever being published. There were letters at Princeton University Library and the Library of Congress, which would be a second volume in themselves. There was more to this story than just the journals.

Stuck in the journals I found an old envelope addressed “The Hon. Frank P. Blair, Jr., M.C. [Member of Congress], Washington City, D. C.” Where the stamp would be, the envelope was stamped “free.” On the outside was a penciled note about a \$2,000 stock certificate in the Bank of the Old Dominion owned by Mrs. Mira M. Alexander (the mother of Myra Dick), which must have been stored inside the envelope at some point. Inside the envelope, I found a letter written by Dick to his uncle Evans Rogers on June 12, 1857, about family financial dealings.

Slowly, I began transcribing Franklin Dick's writing from the journals onto the computer. I had to use a magnifying glass to decipher some difficult words, and tried different types of lights to see more clearly. At times, I still had trouble telling what he was writing. He mainly used pen, which was easier for me to decipher. Occasionally he ran out of ink or made a small blot, and on some pages the ink had faded. Sporadically he switched to pencil, which was lighter and smudged easily. Concerned about protecting the original journals, I took them out of the faithful Hutzler's box and put them in a waterproof, fireproof safe. After a while, I became accustomed to Dick's style and thinking, and could tell what a word should be if it were scribbled in faint ink. It felt as if I were his secretary, transcribing his dictation. When I finished, I had to make sure the transcription was accurate, so friends helped me go over it word by word,

comparing the two versions.

I have endeavored to preserve the integrity of Franklin Dick's journals. His original text is transcribed as exactly as possible, retaining his frequent use of abbreviations and occasional variations in spelling and capitalization. Dick followed the nineteenth-century ubiquitous use of the dash for many forms of punctuation used by modern writers (commas, periods, colons, and semicolons). These have been retained and have been formatted as a long dash followed by a space. Dick occasionally underlined words or phrases lightly or heavily for emphasis; these underlines have been retained in the text.

Any editorial additions are placed within brackets: parentheses indicate text Dick himself placed within parentheses. He typically wrote without paragraph breaks; I have taken the liberty of introducing paragraphing along topical lines for easier reading. People, places, and many events mentioned in the journals are identified in brief annotations to the text. In addition, I have provided brief explanations or background of the events to which Dick refers in his journals.

My mother had rescued journals one and ten. The journals from the period of April 1862 through September 1864 have been lost. However, Dick wrote many letters to President Lincoln, his colleagues, and his relatives. A number of these are included in the section from that time period.



We are now several generations away from the Civil War. It is harder to understand how life was for people then without hearing it firsthand. Family stories usually last three generations. A man serves in a war and tells his child and his grandchild of his experiences, but the fourth generation will not hear it directly from him and the reality of the story is lost. It is incredibly important to preserve that quality before it disappears. Growing up, I was given the gift of family stories about ancestors who had lived in this country since the 1600s. Steeped in oral history, I gained a unique perspective as I listened to the tales of my ancestors who held offices under the king before the Revolution, and Tench Tilghman, who was George Washington's secretary, and Elisha Cullen Dick, who was one

of Washington's doctors. Francis Scott Key, author of the national anthem, had passed down his grandfather clock and chair to my father.

It was exciting for me to read Franklin Dick's journals after hearing family stories about him. I now had a glimpse of what his life was like in his own words, with his thoughts, feelings, and observations of events as they evolved. My admiration and respect grew as I read his candid assessments of famous people, his concern about the South, and his feelings about his beloved Union. His perspective changed as the Civil War uprooted his carefully planned legal career on the frontier. Even though I knew what would happen, I felt compelled to keep reading to see how he reacted to events. It was a real page-turner. Franklin Dick, through his journals, provides us with an irreplaceable new perspective on the impact of history in our lives.

Introduction

The Dick family was descended from William de Dick, who became the first magistrate of Edinburgh in 1296. The center of the family crest shows a sailing ship and the motto, “At spes infracta, via tuta virtus” meaning “But hope is unbroken, virtue is a safe path.” Generations later, Archibald Dick, who was born in 1715 in Edinburgh, immigrated to America and bought an estate in Chichester, Chester County, Pennsylvania in 1771 for 456 pounds. He was a wealthy businessman who served in the Revolutionary War as a major. In his will, he freed all but one of his slaves, leaving each a legacy. “Cuff,” who must have been elderly, was to be kept on the place and cared for the rest of his life. One of his sons, Elisha



Dick family crest. Photo by R. L. Geyer © 2007.

Cullen Dick, was a friend of George Washington's and the only doctor attending Washington's last illness who disagreed with the diagnosis and spoke against using leeches. The second son, Thomas Barnard Dick, a lawyer who also lived in Chester, drowned while fishing at age forty-five. His son, Archibald Thomas Dick, practiced law in Chester and served in the War of 1812. His only son was Franklin Archibald Dick (1823–85), the writer of these journals.

In the mid-nineteenth century, when Franklin Archibald Dick lived, the world was awash with ideas of independence, nationalism, and social reform. Spain and Portugal had lost control of their colonies in South America, Louis Napoleon was elected president of the French Republic, Italy was united under Sardinian king Victor Emmanuel II, Greece won its independence from Turkey, Belgium separated from the Netherlands, and the serfs were emancipated in Russia. Concertgoers enjoyed the music of Beethoven, Schubert, and Wagner; and Manet, Degas, and Corot were painting in Paris. The poetry of Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, and Alfred, Lord Tennyson was popular; Henry David Thoreau published *Walden*; and the novels of Charles Dickens were widely circulated, including his *American Notes*, in which he criticized the institution of slavery, which had been abolished in the British Empire in 1833. Louis Pasteur announced a germ theory of fermentation, the first horse-drawn trams appeared in London, and Samuel Morse patented the telegraph. In the United States, the Supreme Court ruled that a slave was not a citizen in the Dred Scott decision, the women's suffrage movement grew out of the anti-slavery movement, Frederick Douglass launched his abolitionist newspaper, and Harriet Tubman fled from Maryland to become a conductor on the Underground Railroad. Immigrants from Europe swelled the population and the new settlers, along with Americans from eastern states, flooded the new territories as the nation expanded westward.

Franklin Archibald Dick was born on May 2, 1834, in Philadelphia, the only son of Archibald Thomas Dick and Hannah Rogers. He had three sisters: Mary E., who married Peter Hill Engle; Phebe Ann, who married James H. Castle; and Emma L., who married Professor E. Otis Kendall. He mentions each sister in his journals. In 1839, sixteen-year-old Franklin Dick entered the University of Pennsylvania as a law student

and became a member of the Philomathean Society. It had been founded in 1813 to create leaders in society and to emphasize rhetoric, oratory, and writing.¹ Franklin Dick graduated in 1842 and moved from Philadelphia to the frontier town of St. Louis, Missouri, where he set up a law practice in a building built by Montgomery Blair at Third and Chestnut streets. Blair had come to St. Louis to practice law with Senator Thomas Hart Benton, a friend of the family. He had been made U.S. attorney for Missouri and had recently been elected mayor of St. Louis. Blair's youngest brother, Frank, joined his law practice in 1843, and the three men became friends and close associates. Frank Blair and Franklin Dick later became law partners and political allies.

At the time, St. Louis was the largest city in the new state. Missouri had become a state in 1821, entering the Union as a slave state as a result of the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which allowed slavery in Missouri, but prohibited slavery from then on in territories north of Missouri's southern border. Although the compromise seemed to settle the issue of the spread of slavery to new territories, it also highlighted how divisive the issue of slavery had become. The debate over the spread of slavery came up again after the Mexican-American War (1846–48) when Congress attempted to exclude slavery from territories acquired as a result of that war. The proposal passed in the House, but was defeated in the Senate, causing bitterness on both sides of the issue.²

In Missouri, Governor Sterling Price, who was both pro-slavery and pro-Union, attempted to keep the peace, but the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, authorizing residents of the Kansas and Nebraska Territories to determine the status of slavery within their territory, led to violence. Men with violently disparate views on slavery had settled along the border between the two states, and pro-slavery groups from Missouri clashed with anti-slavery emigrants from the North as each struggled for control of the territory. Reporters from Eastern newspapers wrote disparagingly of the Missourians as "Slavocrats" and "Border Ruffians" after one

¹The Philomathean Society is still active today at the University of Pennsylvania as the oldest continually existing literary society. Their website says, "In two words, Philo is a breath mint." http://www.philomathean.org/About_Philos.

²For events in Missouri throughout the Civil War, see the Civil War St. Louis timeline found online at <http://www.civilwarstlouis.com/timeline/index.htm>.

of them punched the governor of the Kansas Territory in the face.³ In the Kansas territorial elections, counted by voice, many pro-slavery Missouri men rode into Kansas and voted illegally. The pro-slavery candidates won and approved a constitution including slavery, angering the northern Free-Soilers. This laid the foundation for those men living along the border to mistrust each other and observe their own code of justice. Violence continued until 1862, when Kansas was admitted to the Union as a free state.

The Louisiana Purchase greatly expanded America's western frontier. St. Louis, situated at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, was a gateway to the West. The western frontier was vast, wild, and sparsely settled. Missouri was a frontier state mostly populated by pioneers who moved from the South in the 1830s and 1840s. Some owned one or two slaves to work their small farms along the large rivers and lived a simple, conservative, typically rural Southern life. Others had large land holdings in the rich farm areas in central and western Missouri, and owned many slaves who worked vast plantations growing hemp, tobacco, or other agricultural products.⁴ Settlers also came to Missouri from New England, Ohio, and Indiana, bringing their own cultural values, which included a strong anti-slavery sentiment. After 1816, waves of immigrants began flooding the new territories. Many were seeking refuge from the difficult economic and political times in Europe caused by changing weather patterns that resulted from the 1815 eruption of Mt. Tambora,⁵ and later from the Irish potato famine. In 1850, almost half of the population of St. Louis had been born in Ireland or Germany. Of American-born residents of St. Louis at the time, 70 percent were from Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, or Virginia.⁶ Immigrants from Europe were generally strongly opposed to slavery. Most Germans arriving after 1850 were strongly abolitionist and nationalist, while many Irish immigrants were pro-slavery, seeing free blacks as competition for jobs.

When Franklin Dick arrived there in 1844, St. Louis was a rough frontier town; it was also a major center for overland and river trade from

³Meyer, *Heritage of Missouri*, 339.

⁴Freehling, *Road to Disunion*, 1:5–6; and Parrish, *History of Missouri*, 3:7.

⁵Fagan, *Little Ice Age*, 170–74.

⁶"Peopling St. Louis: The Immigration Experience." stlouis.missouri.org/government/heritage/history/immigrant.

the East coast to the South, West, and Southwest. St. Louis's main trade route had been southbound on the Missouri River to New Orleans. As railroads were built across Illinois, more freight went east to Chicago, turning St. Louis into a rugged boomtown, while the rest of Missouri was concentrated on farming and ranching. The Rock Island Railroad bridged the Mississippi River in 1856 near Davenport, Iowa, and, in 1858, the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad was completed across northern Missouri, opening new trade routes in the state.⁷

It was during this time of economic and population growth, and of conflict between pro-slavery and anti-slavery groups, between pro-Union and secessionist views, and between immigrants to Missouri from the South, the North, and Europe that Franklin Dick practiced law in St. Louis. He worked with his friend and colleague, Frank Blair, to help organize the Free Soil Party in Missouri, which, while not opposed to the idea of slavery, opposed the spread of slavery into territories, arguing that the new lands should be free of slaves.

On November 25, 1851, Franklin Dick married Myra Madison Alexander (January 12, 1832–December 22, 1919), the sister of Frank Blair's wife, Apolline. Myra was nineteen years old and Franklin was twenty-nine. The marriage catapulted Dick into the world of the Alexanders—another typical close-knit nineteenth-century family. In addition, by becoming Frank Blair's brother-in-law, Dick intensified his political, social, and emotional alliance with the extended Blair family, which included a number of prominent American men.

Frank Blair was the son of Francis Preston Blair Sr., who had been influential in national politics for years. The Blairs lived in Washington DC across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House. Francis Blair Sr. became a good friend and advisor of President Andrew Jackson's, and hosted meetings of the "kitchen cabinet" in his house. Since Jackson's wife had died, Blair, his wife, and their four children (James, Montgomery, Frank Jr., and Elizabeth) became the president's new family. Frank Jr. was groomed to be a politician by his family and was introduced to those in power by his father. He studied at Yale, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Princeton, from which he graduated in 1841; he

⁷Parrish, *History of Missouri*, 3:8.

About the Author

Gari Carter was given her great-great-grandfather's journals from the Civil War era and spent years deciphering his handwriting and researching his life. These writings of Franklin Archibald Dick awakened Carter's deep respect and appreciation for the adversity he dealt with and the wisdom it offered her in dealing with her own journey. Her first book, *Healing Myself*, was written after her life-changing auto accident. She is a dynamic public speaker and lives in North Carolina.

Carter can be reached through her website at <http://garicarter.com>.

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