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Richmond's Miss Van Lew

Allan H. Lane, Jr.
Richmond's Miss Van Lew

Foreword

Probably one of the most mysterious stories connected with the War Between the States, is that of Miss Elizabeth Van Lew. Although born and reared in the South, in fact in Richmond itself, Miss Van Lew, as would not naturally be supposed, dedicated her services to the cause of the Union. Being a woman, she of course could not offer herself to the probability of death in actual combat, but the task she undertook exposed her to dangers far greater than she herself perhaps realized, if she had been detected.

Legend has it that Miss Van Lew was a spy, but there has always been a reasonable amount of doubt as to the correctness of this statement. Investigations into the sources of these rumors have been few, and then, considering the fact that Miss Van Lew was very secretive about her actions during the War Between the States, there is not much material left at this late date to reconstruct the story of her operations. However, from what material could be located, several points have been brought to light which should prove conclusively that Miss Van Lew was an agent of the Union and furnished the Federal Army information, the damaging extent of which to the Confederacy, will probably never be known.
Richmond's Miss Van Lew

In order to more perfectly understand the case of Elizabeth Van Lew, perhaps it would be better to review in some slight manner, the story of her life, or her heritage. Born in 1818, Miss Van Lew was the daughter of John Van Lew, a New Yorker of Dutch descent, who came to Richmond, and was connected with the hardware firm of Van Lew and Taylor. On her mother's side, Miss Van Lew was descended from the Baker family, of German extraction, long prominent in the functions of the city of Philadelphia. John Van Lew, her father, was an old Whig, and was held in the highest esteem by the people of Richmond. His death came in 1860.

The firm of Van Lew and Taylor must have been very prosperous, for innumerable stories are told of the great wealth of the Van Lew family. Trips to White Sulphur Springs were not uncommon, and Miss Van Lew herself is known to have made several visits to the continent of Europe.

1 William Gilmore Beymer, On Hazardous Service, p. 64. (Hereafter cited as: Beymer)
2 The Richmond Dispatch, September 25, 1900.
3 The Evening Leader, (Richmond and Manchester, Va.) Sept. 25, 1900; Miss Annie Whitlock.
Evidence in itself of the great wealth of the family, was their residence on Church Hill, in the more historic part of old Richmond. The mansion was a large, square, brick building, just one block from well known old Saint John's Church, where Patrick Henry made his famous speech. The exact location of the house was on Grace Street, between Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Streets. In front, facing the North, was a high porch, with four pillars and curving steps leading down on each side. The rear of the house was the most attractive, however, for here one could look down over grassy terraces, to the waters of the James. In the garden were long rows of box-wood, bordering the walkways which were shaded by drooping magnolia trees. Inside, the house was like a palace. The rooms were large and magnificently furnished with mahogany pieces. Silverware was abundant, and was displayed everywhere. Leading upward were broad and winding stairways, such as one associates with the older Southern mansions.

Before the start of the war, the Van Lews' entertained here some of the most prominent people ever to pay visits to the city of Richmond. In the great parlor, at the height of her career, sang Jenny Lind, and again the old walls echoed to Edgar Allan Poe's reading of "The Raven".

4 The Richmond Dispatch, September 25, 1900.
5 Miss Whitlock.
6 Beymer, p. 66.
Up until the time of her death on September 25, 1900, Miss Van Lew was a very active woman. She always dressed in the style of ante-bellum days, wearing mostly black satin dresses with puffed sleeves. On her head was a bonnet, held in place by ribbons running around the back of her head and caught in a bow under her chin. Her hair, originally black, but later turned to grey, was arranged in little curls, which hung along her neck and cheeks. Marking a thin nervous face was a sharp nose, but most striking of her features were her eyes, which even in her photographs seem to stare and shine with a piercing look.

Probably on account of her mother's connections in the city of Philadelphia, Miss Van Lew was sent to that city to acquire her schooling. This early contact with the North and its condemnations of slavery, possibly helped influence her as the stand she later adopted when Virginia seceded from the Union.

In observing Miss Van Lew's character, one can not keep from noticing the peculiarities that she held. It is related that when she paid visits to any of her relatives in Richmond, the first thing that she would do was to call for a cup of tea. Then after nibbling a few sponge cakes with

7 The Richmond Dispatch, September 25, 1900.
8 Miss Whitlock.
9 The Evening Leader, (Richmond and Manchester, Va.) Sept. 25, 1900.
her beverage, she would remark that she was drowsy, and would proceed to lie on any of the beds in the house and go soundly to sleep. The strange thing was that she would not remove any of her clothing, not even her bonnet, but would stretch out in her street attire. Another of her peculiarities was a very pronounced objection to paying taxes. This was in the days before the ladies of our fair land had been invested with the power of the vote. Miss Van Lew contended that as she had no voice in the government, she, or her property could not constitutionally be taxed. Every year, her tax fee was sent to the city collector along with a written protest to that effect.

Once when the Confederate government was in need of horses, and was confiscating all that could be found, Miss Van Lew, in some manner, managed to have one of her ponies taken to the upper floor of her house, and here she hid it successfully. Perhaps this instance should not be noted as a peculiarity, but should be placed here as an item of wise forethought.

When the war came, and Virginia seceded from the Union, Miss Van Lew made no pretense of hiding her sympathies, but was outspoken in favor of the Union. Although her friends, as

10 Miss Whitlock, The Richmond Dispatch, September 25, 1900. The Evening Leader, (Richmond and Manchester, Va.) Sept. 25, 1900.

11 The Richmond News, September 25, 1900.
many of her relatives, chose what later proved to be the lost hope of the Confederacy, she, as ever opposite to those around her, kept it no secret that she favored the North, telling the Confederates that they were fighting against a good cause. Many things in addition to those already mentioned may have attributed to this attitude. There was the slavery question. Apparently Miss Van Lew was violently opposed to slavery. Speaking of the negro, she said, "They have black faces, but white principles."

The Van Lew family owned a number of slaves, and some of these were given their freedom. In addition, Miss Van Lew lost no effort in trying to uplift or teach the negro, the education of one of her favorites later standing her in good stead, as we shall see. However, for all her good will toward the black race, she believed that the negro had his place, and should be taught to keep it. Thus it seems that she held a rather inconsistent attitude, a fact that marked many of her other activities.

A prominent citizen of Richmond, in speaking to a former Federal officer, once remarked:

"I suppose you folks think Betty Van Lew was a Union woman purely from conviction and high principles."

"Certainly we do."

"Well, that's where you are mistaken. I have known Miss Whitlock."

13 The Evening Leader, (Richmond and Manchester, Va.) Sept. 25, 1900.
14 Beymer, p. 66.
15 Miss Whitlock.
her all her life, and her father was one of my best friends and one of the best men in Richmond, but it is sheer contrariness on her part. If she was to fall off Mayo's bridge into the river and drown, her body would float up the rapids to Lynchburg instead of down river to Norfolk.....". 17

Whatever the cause for the stand she took, there must have been a rather sudden expression of her views at the outbreak of the war. A kinsman of hers, a Southerner by birth, had been residing in the North, and when the call came for troops, he immediately returned to Richmond to join the Confederate Army. As was to be supposed, all travellers from the North were questioned closely by Confederate agents upon arrival. On being told that he would have to have someone to vouch for him, he immediately thought of Miss Van Lew, remembering that hers was one of the most influential families in Richmond. The mere mention of her name acted as a bombshell, but produced an effect exactly opposite from the desired one. In the greatest of bewilderment, he found himself taken in charge by the provost guard, and in whose custody he was forced to remain overnight. It was not until the next day that he learned of the stand taken by Miss Van Lew. Surely, if not even a close relative knew of her views as to secession, and the cause of the South in general, she must not have made known her feelings until after the storm clouds had gathered. 18

17 David B. Parker, A Chautauqua Boy in '61 and Afterward, p. 63. (Hereafter cited as: Parker)
18 Dr. Harry B. Baker.
Now comes a part of this story which, frankly, is not clear. Since the war, many rumors have been circulated to the effect that Miss Van Lew was a Union spy. The next question would seem to be, why did not the Confederate government take notice of this situation? As widespread as were her beliefs, Miss Van Lew must have been a very capable and intelligent person, to keep secret such activities as she surely did engage in.

How she became involved in this sort of work is not known. Perhaps it was because of her great patriotism, but considering the great risk involved by possible discovery, this reason seems illogical. A better assumption would seem to be that she was approached by some agent of the North, who knew of her Union sympathies and abolitionist tendencies, and asked to aid the states remaining in the Union. However, as has been stated, this is merely an assumption, and there is no evidence to support the claim. It is doubtful that without the aid of some such party, Miss Van Lew could have made the connections with Union officials that she possessed.

After the first battle of Manassas, the city of Richmond was filled with wounded men of both armies. Then Miss Van Lew made numerous applications to the Confederate officials, requesting that she be allowed to nurse the injured Union prisoners. At last, from General Winder, Provost-Marshall-General of Richmond, she obtained "permission to visit the prisoners and to send them books, luxuries, and what she may wish." 19

Beymer, p. 68-69.
Thus her four years of service began.

Libby Prison, situated within easy walking distance of her home, was Miss Van Lew's special care. In command there at the start of the war was Lieutenant Todd, brother of Mrs. Lincoln, and Miss Van Lew won his kind feelings by gifts of buttermilk and gingerbread. Later on, when feeling in Richmond against her was running high because of her suspected activities, she took Captain George Gibbs, who had succeeded Todd, and his family to board with her. Gibbs proved to be a great protection.

For the gifts of food, money, clothes, etc., furnished the men confined in old Libby, Miss Van Lew was amply repaid in the form of information concerning certain Confederate activities. From the many windows, the Federal prisoners could accurately estimate the strength of the passing troops, and could guess as to their probable destinations by the roads which they took on leaving the city. Also there were many scraps of conversation to be overheard between the prison guards and surgeons. Such scraps of information as these were given to Miss Van Lew by the men, when she paid them her visits.

On February 10, 1864, over a hundred men made a mass escape from this same Libby Prison, which was situated at Twentieth and Cary Streets. The Confederate authorities

20 Beymer, p. 68-69.
21 Ibid., p. 91.
22 Ibid., p. 69.
were amazed at this outbreak and termed it as miraculous, until it was discovered that a tunnel had been dug by the men, from the cellar of the prison to a vacant yard some seventy feet distant. One of the leaders of this dash for freedom, Major Hamilton, was sheltered by Miss Van Lew, as were likewise some of the others. However, this fact was not brought to light until after the war.

For years, residents of Richmond have heard the story of a secret tunnel running from the prison to the Van Lew mansion. However, the existence of this passageway has never been established. The fact that Miss Van Lew harbored some of the men who escaped from Libby Prison by means of a tunnel, probably accounts for this confused report. Nevertheless, there was in the Van Lew home a hidden room, which was so concealed as to be hard to discover. Dr. William H. Parker, a later occupant of the building, states that this room was in the attic, between the eves of the house. Its entrance was a square opening, which could be closed by a slab covered with plaster, as was the rest of the wall. A picture fitting the description given above, and purporting to be a photograph of the entrance to the secret chamber, is in existence today.

Colonel Parker, an aide-de-camp of General Grant, who was sent to Richmond when the city was evacuated to see that Miss Van Lew was protected, writes of a dinner at the Van Lew

Richmond Times-Dispatch, February 10, 1924.

This picture was published in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, February 10, 1924, in connection with an article upon Libby Prison.
mansion, which was attended by a man named Ross, clerk of Libby Prison, and several other men who held prominent positions in the departments of the Confederate Government.

In the course of the meal, Ross explained his presence in the Van Lew home by stating that he was afraid to show his person on the streets, for fear that some of the former Union prisoners, now released, would do him bodily harm. Upon hearing this, Miss Van Lew remarked that Ross had been in her employment for years at the prison, as well as had most of the other gentlemen present, whose sympathies had supposedly lain with the Confederate cause.

Years after the war, Colonel Parker met Captain Lownsbury, a former Union officer. The captain asked if Colonel Parker knew Ross, and receiving an answer in the affirmative, he related the following incident:

"I was a prisoner in Libby, and Ross was the clerk who called the rolls and superintended the prison under Major Turner. He never called the rolls without swearing at us and calling us Yankees, etc. We all hated him, and many a man said that the time might come when he could get even with the little scamp. Our attention had been frequently called to the fact that officers had been called out and never returned. We had no knowledge of what became of them, and one evening at roll call Ross struck me in the stomach and said, 'You blue-bellied Yankee, come down to my office. I have a matter to settle with you.' We were in line at the roll call, and some others whispered, 'Don't go; you don't have to,' but I followed Ross down to his office in the corner of the prison. There was no one in the office, but a guard stood in the front of the door on the sidewalk. Ross pointed behind a counter, this office being a

Parker, p. 56.

Ibid.
counting -room of the old Libby Tobacco Factory. I stepped behind the counter and found a Confederate uniform, and I lost no time in getting into it, although it was too small for me. Then I walked out the door. It was just after dark, and Ross and the sentry were walking down the sidewalk. I ran across the street to a vacant lot which had brush growing on it. As I did so, a colored man stepped out and said, 'Come with me, sah, I know who you is, and he took me to Miss Van Lew's house on Church Hill. Miss Van Lew told me the roads and where to take to the woods to escape the pickets and to go down the James River, and I could perhaps, before morning reach a place of safety where I could escape to our troops....." 28

The story of Rose is offered to show how far reaching was Miss Van Lew's power. But even more daring was the placing of one of her former slaves in the very home of the Confederate Government, the White House of the Confederacy.

The Van Lew's had owned a negro girl of unusual intelligence, and several years before the war she had been freed and had been sent North to be educated. Sometime later, the young negress was again retained by Miss Van Lew, and after a short training, was placed in the White House as a waitress. It is related that during her rounds of general housework, she would often run across information which she would copy and give to Miss Van Lew so that it might be transmitted to the Federal authorities.

Just how much intelligence the Union lady was able to furnish through this source is not known, but the very audaciousness of the scheme leaves one breathless. How Miss Van Lew was able to manage the placing of her agent in such a 28

Parker, p. 57-58.

29

Beymer, p. 75.
The Evening Leader, (Richmond and Manchester, Va.) Sept. 25, 1900. Dr. Harry B. Baker.
position as the one described is only to be guessed, and the incident noted as another example of her amazing accomplishments.

The methods employed by Miss Van Lew in communicating with the Union forces were very unique. Possibly it was sometimes a departing Federal prisoner, sheltered in the Van Lew mansion, who conveyed the desired message. At others it was a seamstress whose patterns held in disguised form, a dispatch for the Northern Army.

But more often it was liable to be one of her faithful slaves who probably never realized the great importance of his act, in successfully transmitting the information through the lines. It seems that the Van Lew family owned a farm situated upon the James River below Richmond. Upon this farm were kept some negro slaves who did all of the necessary work. Because of their unsuspecting appearance, it was comparatively easy for these men to make trips back and forth from the farm to Richmond. Whenever the lady wished to send a message to General Grant, she would entrust the missive to one of these old colored men, and he, placing it in a slit in the sole of one of his shoes, would go trudging back to the farm.

Contact with the Federal forces was finally completed at this place, for nightly an officer of the Provost Marshall General's Department, crossed the river and visited the farm, so that full information reached General Grant daily of all

30 Beymer, p. 76.
31 Ibid.
The Richmond News, September 25, 1900.
the news that could be obtained from Richmond. It is re-
lated that flowers cut in Miss Van Lew's garden in the morning
found their way to Grant's table at City Point before nightfall.

Of the many dispatches sent through the Confederate lines
by Miss Van Lew, it seems that there would be some in existance
today. However, one is surprised to learn that only a single
message has survived the years. On December 12, 1866, all the
papers in the files of the War Department of the United States
relating to Miss Van Lew were given to her. We have now
only one letter which was in some manner overlooked at this
time. The remainder must have been immediately destroyed by
Miss Van Lew, for no trace can be found of them.

This missive, and General Butler's letter in connection
with it, are as follows:

Headquarters Eighteenth Army Corps
Fortress Monroe, February 5, 1864.

Honorable E. M. Stanton,
Secretary of War

Sir: I send for your perusal the information I
have acquired of the enemy's forces and dispo-
sitions about Richmond. The letter commencing
"Dear Sir," on the first page, is a cipher letter
to me from a lady in Richmond, with whom I am in
correspondence. The bearer of the letter brought
me a private token, showing that he was to be

Parker, p. 56.
The Richmond Dispatch, September 25, 1900.
Beymer, p. 86.
Ibid.
trusted. There are not now in Lee's army or about Richmond 30,000 men. I can get no cooperation from Sedgwick. Forty thousand men on the South side of the James would be sufficient for the object of taking and permanently holding Richmond. The roads have been good up to to-day. You will see that the prisoners are to be sent away to Georgia. Now, or never, is the time to strike. On Sunday I shall make a dash with 6,000 men, all I have that can possibly be spared. If we win, it will pay the cost; if we fail, it will at least be in an attempt to do our duty and rescue our friends. New Berne is relieved, and, I believe permanently.

I have marked this "Private and immediate," so that it shall at once come into your hands.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

BENJ. F. Butler
Major-General, Commanding

(Inclinations)

January 30, 1864

Dear Sir; It is intended to remove to Georgia very soon all the Federal prisoners, butchers and bakers to go at once. They are already notified and selected. Quaker (a Union man whom I know—B.F.B.) knows this to be true. Are building batteries on the Danville road.

This from Quaker: Beware of new and rash council! Beware! This I send you by direction of all your friends. No attempt should be made with less than 30,000 cavalry, from 10,000 to 15,000 infantry to support them, amounting in all to 40,000 or 45,000 troops. Do not underrate their strength and desperation. Forces could probably be called into action in from five to ten days; 25,000, mostly artillery. Hoke's and Kemper's brigades gone to North Carolina; Pickett's in or about Petersburg. Three regiments of cavalry disbanded by General Lee for want of horses. Morgan is applying for 1,000 choice men for a raid.

February 4, 1864.

General: Well, my boy, where did you get that letter from?
Miss Van Lew gave it to me. I stayed a week
with Miss Van Lew before I came away. Miss Lizzie said she wanted to send you a letter, and I said I would take it. Miss Lizzie said you would take care of me. I left there last Saturday night. Miss Lizzie told me what to tell you.

General: Well what did she tell you to say? You need have no fear here.

(The messenger's reply was no more than a verbal report of the information given in the cipher dispatch. This information was probably given to him, in case necessity forced him to destroy the written document. So, in order to relieve this paper of unnecessary details, much of the boy's conversation with the General is omitted. ---Author's note.)

.....Miss Van Lew said that all the women ought to be kept from passing from Baltimore to Richmond. She said they did a great deal of harm. She also said there was a Mrs. Graves who carried a mail through to Portsmouth. She hoped you would catch her. The last time she brought a mail into Portsmouth she came in a wagon selling corn. 36

As can be seen, General Butler mentions a lady in Richmond as the one who supplied the information. Next, in the form of an inclosure, is the actual letter in its decoded shape. Then comes a transcript in narrative form of the conversation between the General and the bearer. Here it is definitely stated that the lady in Richmond was none other than Miss Van Lew. The man referred to as "Quaker" was evidently a Union agent closely connected with Miss Van Lew, and known to Gen. Butler.

The probable fate of Mrs. Graves we do not know, but the hope that she would be apprehended is a good example of how

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whole-heartedly the Union woman gave herself to her cause. Mrs. Graves, although probably a spy, was nevertheless engaged in the same sort of work as was Miss Van Lew. It must have been a strong and courageous woman who could make a wish of this sort in the face of not knowing when she herself might be discovered.

During the early part of March, the month following the writing of the missive quoted above, Colonel Dahlgren made his terrifying but unsuccessful attempt to capture the city of Richmond. It was not until after Colonel Dahlgren's body was searched and his orders to his men read, that it was found that his object was to release the prisoners of war held in the city, with the intention of burning the town.

Considering the contents of the letter from Miss Van Lew, is it possible to believe that she may have been, or the information that she furnished have been, the primary impetus behind the raid? One authority seems to think thus. If such were the case, and the fact had been known to the people of Richmond at the time, considering the great amount of feeling abroad when the purpose of the attack became known, one hates to think what would have happened to the person of Miss Van Lew.

To further support the claim that she felt responsible for what proved to be the disastrous adventure, is given the fact that Miss Van Lew engineered the theft of Dahlgren's body from

38 Beymer, p. 90.
its resting place in Oakwood Cemetery, and had it carried to a
safe place beyond the lines. The story of how the father,
Admiral Dahlgren, asked President Davis of the Confederacy that
the remains be sent to him, is a well known one. Upon the dis-
covery of the empty grave, the Admiral believed that some Southern
sympathizer had done away with the corpse, but his fears were
soon calmed when he received a letter written by Miss Van Lew,
and in some manner conveyed through the lines.

It seems that too great stress may be put upon this point.
There is to account for, the lapse of a month between the
writing of the letter by Miss Van Lew and the time of Dahlgren's
raid. And also, what became of the projected attack upon
Richmond as planned by General Butler?

With these last few thoughts in mind, here we must leave
the matter suspended, for the question is debatable and could
be argued indefinitely without reaching any conclusion.

The point to remember is, however, this one letter is
enough evidence to brand Miss Van Lew as a spy, or in more
refined language, a secret operative of the Union forces.

When word came to City Point of the evacuation and burning
of Richmond, Colonel Parker, an aide-de-camp of General Grant,
was sent ahead to the city to look after the Confederate post-
office, and was also ordered to go to Elizabeth Van Lew's
house on Grace Street, to see that she had protection and

Beymer, p. 89.

The Richmond Dispatch, September 25, 1900.
anything that she might need.

Upon reaching his destination, Parker went to the Van Lew home and was received by Miss Van Lew. When told of General Grant's instructions regarding her, she said, "I want nothing now. I would scorn to have a guard now that my friends are here."

The evacuation of Richmond and its subsequent occupation by the Federal troops, of course marked the end of Miss Van Lew's activities as directed against the Confederate cause. However, in the years that were to follow she was to receive remuneration for the hardships she endured and the risks that she took, by being appointed to the position of Postmistress of Richmond.

When General Grant became President of the United States, the post-office in Richmond was in charge of Alexander Sharp, and as his assistant was C. Jay French. When it became apparent that Mr. Sharp was to be appointed United States Marshall for the District of Columbia, a petition was circulated in Richmond asking that Mr. French be placed in the vacancy. However, it was soon reported that a lady was applying for the position.

On March 19, 1869, fifteen days after his inauguration, President Grant silenced all rumors as to the identity of the appointee, by tendering the office to Miss Van Lew.
This act created a great amount of criticism of a very unfavorable nature. The local newspapers of the time denounced it forcibly. The Daily Dispatch had the following to say:

The President has appointed, unwittingly we hope, a Miss Van Lew postmistress at Richmond, Va. The Tribune says this is "cold comfort for the Virginians"—meaning probably, that it is meant to be specially offensive. It may be doubted whether any one could have been appointed who is more offensive to the people of Richmond, or in whose character they would have less confidence than this person....

Without doubt, Miss Van Lew was given the desired position because of the aid she furnished the Union Army during the war. In making the appointment, President Grant is supposed to have stated that Miss Van Lew lost all the property she possessed, and ran the risk of losing her life, in behalf of the Union cause during the rebellion.

Though it was through General Grant that Miss Elizabeth acquired her office, this same man sometime later threatened to remove her if she did not make certain changes in the operation of the post-office affairs. It seems that she had reduced the pay of the mailing clerks in the office, in order to give increased pay to some clerks appointed by her who were her old friends.

The very contrariness of her character, shall we say, made her refuse to remedy this situation when ordered to do so.

47 *Daily Dispatch*, (Richmond, Va.) March 19, 1869.
48 Ibid., March 18, 1869.
49 Parker, p. 59.
by a Special Agent of the Post-Office Department. So
Colonel Parker, then United States Marshall for Virginia,
was appointed as arbitrator in the case.

A few days afterward, Miss Van Lew came to Parker’s
office and brought her pay rolls with her, saying:

"General Grant insists that I must fix these
pay rolls of clerks as you direct, and that if I
won’t do it, I must give up the post-office, which
I don’t want to do. It is a great humiliation to
me to have to come to you with them, but you tell
me what I must do and I will do it." 52

She was told to restore the correct pay to the men whose
salaries had been reduced, and that this would be sufficient.

Upon receiving this information, she stated that she
would comply with the orders, but the very nature of her reply
showed her feelings on the subject.

"I will do it," she said, "I have to do it.
No thanks to you. Good day." 54

From that time on, the work of Miss Van Lew must have
brought satisfaction to General Grant, for he reappointed her
four years later, yet she went out of office at the end of her
second term, being succeeded by W. W. Forbes, selected by
President Hayes.

50  Parker, p. 59.
51  Ibid., p. 60.
52  Ibid.
53  Ibid.
54  Ibid., p. 61.
55  Ibid.
After remaining out of office for a while, and having been her fortune dwindle as a result of several bad investments, Miss Van Lew sought and secured a position in the Post-Office Department in Washington, as a clerk. This place she held until the Cleveland administration.

The declining years of Miss Van Lew's life were spent at her old home in Richmond. Here she was surrounded by a small circle of friends, and here she died on September 25, 1900.

Finally, we bring to an end the story of Elizabeth Van Lew. In life she was not understood by those who came in contact with her. In death she took with her the secrets of her behavior. Although many of us may condemn her for the acts that earned her the name of spy, we cannot help but praise the courage which made the performance of these deeds possible.

56
Parker, p. 61-63.

57
The Richmond Dispatch, September 25, 1900.
The Evening Leader, (Richmond and Manchester, Va.) Sept. 25, 1900.
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**Richmond Times-Dispatch** (February 10, 1924)

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The author also owes special tribute to the following persons, all located in Richmond, Virginia, who aided greatly in the furnishing of data for the preparation of this paper.

Dr. Harry B. Baker, a distant cousin of Miss Van Lew.

Dr. William H. Parker, who occupied the Van Lew home after the death of Miss Van Lew.

Miss Annie Whitlock, a relative and neighbor of Miss Van Lew.