

Rosanna Blake

From Jack Dickinson, *Civil War Paper Items*, pp. vi-ixx

ROSANNA BLAKE was born July 16, 1912, in Proctorville, Ohio, the daughter of Marian A. and Merrill Clifford Blake. Due to Rosanna's frail health, her mother home-schooled her for a few years. The family later moved to Huntington, West Virginia, where Rosanna's father became circuit clerk for Cabell County. Rosanna graduated from Huntington High School in 1930. At Huntington High, she was president of the Debating Club, member of the Latin Club, and several others. She was an honors graduate (summa cum laude) of Marshall College, (now Marshall University) in the Class of 1934. Her mother also graduated from Marshall College. In 1938 Rosanna received a Master of Arts Degree from the Ohio University at Athens, Ohio. From 1938 to 1942, Rosanna taught history and government at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina. During those years she accumulated enough money to be able to attend law school. She received her law degree from the College of Law at the University of Kentucky in 1945, and in that year she was elected to the Order of the Coif. She also taught both graduate and undergraduate courses in political science at the University of Kentucky prior to 1945. In 1949 Rosanna was accepted as a member of the bar in Kentucky, and was approved to practice in the Kentucky Court of Appeals.

From 1945 to 1948, Dr. Blake was employed by the court review branch of the Office of the General Counsel in Washington, DC. She first was an associate attorney in the Office of Price Administration, which was dissolved soon after the end of World War II. Dr. Blake was employed as a trial attorney in the appellate court branch of the Office of the General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) starting in 1948. In that capacity she prepared pleadings and briefs to be filed in the various circuit courts of appeals. From 1958 to 1960, she served as special assistant to the Associate General Counsel. Before her retirement in 1968, Dr. Blake served as an administrative law judge.

It was during this employment, in a Civil Service evaluation in 1958, that Dr. Blake's supervisor wrote: "[She] has exceptional ability in analyzing complex testimonies and exhibits effectively. In a massive transcript, she can pick out the important facts which other attorneys have overlooked. She is highly skilled in writing complex legal theories in simple and easily comprehended style."

In June of 1965, Marshall University conferred an honorary Doctor of Laws degree on Rosanna Blake.

Dr. Blake began a graduate scholarship at Marshall University with a contribution of \$25,000 in 1985. This graduate scholarship is known as the Rosanna A. Blake and Fred E. Hulse Scholarship in Southern History.

Dr. Blake died on January 16, 1987 at the Washington Hospital Center, of arteriosclerotic cardiovascular disease. She was survived by her husband, Fred Hulse. Under the terms of her will, Dr. Blake's entire Confederate collection was bequeathed to Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia. Also perpetuated by her will was the scholarship in Confederate History in memory of her mother and father.

It all began for Rosanna with a gift from her mother on her tenth birthday of the book *The Heart of Lee* by Wayne Whipple. This book, purchased in the 1920's for .75 cents, initiated an interest in Lee and the South that would last a lifetime. She wrote late in life, "With that book, a Confederate library was started. For a good many years, it was almost entirely a Lee library and to this day, I never fail to buy a Lee item." During her life, she assembled one of the finest private collections of Confederate history in the United States. Southern historians B. A. Botkin and Francis Lord stated in 1965 that the collection was the best single collection of Confederate History materials then in existence. In February of 1988, Dr. Richard B. Harwell, noted Civil War bibliographer, evaluated Rosanna Blake's

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collection to be valued "conservatively" at \$255,000. He stated that he believed the Rosanna A. Blake Library of Confederate History to be one of the best Confederate collections in the country. Rosanna Blake wrote that "I sometimes tease my northern friends that I wish I collected northern material. It is so much cheaper - but not nearly so interesting."

In an undated holographic manuscript among her personal papers at Marshall, Rosanna Blake described how she expanded her collection:

Dr. Blake began collecting cheap editions of biographies of Gen. Lee, the occasional magazine article and any other Lee material she could find. Birthdays and Christmases added more important biographies. After becoming a lawyer, she was able to add gradually to the library and as the Lee material grew until it was difficult to find, she began to branch out into other aspects of Confederate history. She and her husband, Fred E. Hulse, went to Richmond and Washington and Lee on their honeymoon!

Fortunately, her position as a government attorney included the handling of government cases in all the United States Courts of Appeals throughout the entire continental U.S. and she was usually able to use a few days of leave to search for books.

As Gen. Lee material became more difficult to find she branched out to other military manuals and medical and naval material. But she soon began to emphasize material concerning the Confederate civil government such as that recording the activities of the executive branch including such material as reports of the various departments such as the Reports of the Patent Office, the Congress, including the reports of Congressional investigating committees and the Journal of the Confederate Congress, and foreign and diplomatic affairs.

This led to the decision to add material concerning all aspects of the Confederacy such as publishing, including the publishing of Dickens novels, music, school texts including the famous authors.

arrived at Marshall University. Today it is housed in a separate room of the Marshall University Special Collections in the Morrow Library. The collection has now grown to include over 4,000 monographs and 3,000 imprints. The collection also houses a microfilm library of southern Civil War period newspapers. The extensive manuscript collection contains Confederate soldiers' diaries, letters and other holographic manuscript items. There is also a collection of music printed in the South during the Civil War. Some of the most highly valued items in the collection are: a letter written by Gen. Robert E. Lee to Gen. G. T. Beauregard in 1863 and the final payment paperwork and check for the completion of the Confederate warship Alabama. These items are featured in this book.

In delivering the dedicatory speech at the official opening of the collection at Marshall in 1990, Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr. declared that the library would be of "inestimable value to scholarly research and students of the Confederacy." Since its arrival at Marshall University, the collection has actively been enlarged and expanded. Additions include completing the Virginia Regimental Histories Series, and the acquisition of the bound volumes of *The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* and the *Supplement to the Official Records*, as well as books that complete sets and series that had been started by Rosanna Blake. Fifty Confederate government imprints have also been added to that part of the collection.

With the listing of the holdings of the Blake Collection now on Marshall's website (<http://www.marshall.edu/speccoll/blake.asp>) and accessible from anywhere in the world, inquiries come in from all over the United States and foreign countries for some of the rare documents found in the Rosanna Blake Confederate Collection.



In July of 1987, the Confederate collection