

# Frances Dallam Peter



Only Known Photograph, age 3

Frances Dallam Peter was born in Lexington on January 28, 1843. She was 18 when the War Between the States began.

An epileptic, she was confined to the home of her parents, Dr. Robert Peter and Frances Paca Dallam Peter. The family lived at the southeast corner of Market Street and Mechanics Alley, facing “little college lot” (Gratz Park).

Frances was described as “a talented charming girl”. Frank, as her family called her, enjoyed drawing, reading, and writing. She was educated at the Sayre Female Institute, founded as part of Transylvania University, and is today’s Sayre School. She was a good student who obtained high marks in reading, writing, and composition, as well as arithmetic and history. Although afflicted with an illness that was only beginning to be understood, she bore no hint of self-pity. Frances was highly interested in Kentucky politics. She was a Unionist who did not always agree with or support President Lincoln. She also objected to the Emancipation Proclamation, but her opinion changed over time.

Her diary was handmade from sheets of military hospital supply paper stitched together to fashion volumes. Frances faithfully reported on the war, using all of the sources of information available to her: newspapers, local gossip, information from the soldiers stationed in College Lot, and her own first hand observations. Her view of the war is unique as she did not have any relatives in combat and, thus, was not constantly concerned for a loved one’s welfare. Her diary also contains a great deal of information about the Morgan family, who had been close family friends before the war.

Frances died of a seizure on August 5, 1864. She was 21.