



Dr. Alfred: The Life and Letters of Alfred Walker Bethea, a Signer of the Ordinance of Secession of South Carolina from the Union

Lesa Bethea MD

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"I think your idea of leaving if Vicksburg falls is a very good one, for your section of the country will certainly be overrun in that event. Should the necessity arise come out & come out at once & we will do what we can for you. A great many from the exposed sections of Mi and La have already brought their negroes back home." These words were written in a letter dated June 24, 1863 from Dr. Alfred Bethea to his brother from Reedy Creek, S.C. in Dillon County, South Carolina and is one of many passages that will give the reader of this story of Dr. Alfred Bethea's life a window into the thoughts and feelings not only of Dr. Alfred Bethea but of all those who lived ordinary lives in the extremely trying times of years leading up to and including the Civil War Dr. Alfred Bethea was born in 1816 in the Backcountry of South Carolina into a family that had immigrated to the United States in the early 1700s. Alfred's descendants have preserved letters that he wrote beginning in 1834 and ending in 1864 shortly before his untimely death. These letters contain never before published details about what life was like in the Pee Dee area of South Carolina and other places in the South to which Alfred traveled on his many journeys to conduct business and visit his kinsfolks throughout the Deep South. Almost two hundred years after Dr. Alfred lived, his descendant, Dr. Lesa Bethea, has brought these letters to life, weaving their contents into the story of Dr. Alfred's life. From his time as a young man attending boarding school in Fayetteville, North Carolina to his exploits on board the Riverboat H.J. King steaming down the Mississippi to his visits to see the "yankee prisoners" in Columbia, South Carolina when attending a legislative session during the war. Anyone interested in the history of Antebellum South Carolina and the little known and little written of Backcountry of the Pee Dee area of South Carolina will find this story both poignant and fascinating.

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