

# Blood Among the Tulip Trees

In "Blood Among the Tulip Trees," the chapter unfolds the harrowing tale of Edmund Ruffin and his family's turmoil during the Civil War as Union forces forced them to abandon their Marlbourne and Beechwood plantations. With the Union soldiers made their grievances known against Ruffin for instigating secession and firing the first shot at Fort Sumter, Beechwood particularly became a point of hostility. When Ruffin and his son Edmund, Jr., returned to their plantation, they discovered a scene of devastation: feathers littered the lawn, the interior was vandalized, and personal belongings were stolen, leaving them with a haunting sense of violation.

The soldiers' disdain manifested in their graffiti, signing names and leaving obscenities on the walls, with one soldier explicitly demonstrating his contempt for Ruffin's actions. The emotional toll intensified for Ruffin on January 5, 1863, as he learned of his daughter Mildred's death, further deepening his sense of isolation and unrecognized contributions to the Confederate cause. Despite being lauded as a hero, he reflected on how his life might have been forgotten without this notoriety.

As the war took a devastating turn, Ruffin suffered another personal blow with the death of his son Julian in battle. By this point, living in a refuge provided by his son Edmund, Jr., Ruffin was weary and burdened by age and loneliness. He expressed a longing for death, stating that he sought to end his own life, fueled by a boiling resentment against Union rule and the perceived betrayal of his fellow Virginians.

On June 18, 1865, after maintaining a diary for over seven years filled with his strident anti-Union sentiments, he prepared to take his own life. He meticulously set up his musket but faced a failed attempt at first. However, persevering, Ruffin ultimately succeeded, resulting in a tragic end to a life steeped in controversy and regret, marked by the grim aftermath described in a contemporary newspaper account .