**Title: “Choosing Books Over the Silver: Gertrude Clanton Thomas’ Reading, Writing, & Coping in Civil War Georgia”**

Gertrude Clanton Thomas’ diary spanning 40+ years remains one of the most frequently-cited journals of the entire Civil War. Thomas writes on the “Cause,” her husband’s service as well as her own on the homefront, and the crumbling of the Confederacy with engaging and seemingly candid prose. Few, however, have explored her literary habits in depth. Beyond just being “well read,” Gertrude Thomas treasured texts and often used them to understand her circumstances, her “self,” and the vast sea of change occurring around her. In fact, when forced to choose between material possessions and her books and diary volumes, Thomas chose the latter. This paper will focus on Clanton’s reading habits, her writing about those habits, and about how both of those endeavors helped her to cope with violence, loss (both financial and physical), and the death of the Confederacy. Clanton’s case provides just one example of many southern, white, middle-and-upper-class women’s efforts to process their triumphs and tragedies through the written word.

**Author Bio**:

Dr. Katherine Brackett is an Assistant Research Professor in History & General Education at Middle Tennessee State University. She graduated from the University of Georgia with B.A.s in English and History, received her M.A. in History from West Virginia University, and earned her Ph.D. from the University of Georgia in 2018. Her interests include history of the book and literacy, women’s history, intellectual history, and Southern history. Brackett’s research centers on the emotional and intellectual connections women in the nineteenth-century South fostered with the written word and how these connections provided new possibilities for expression, relationships, and self-understanding.