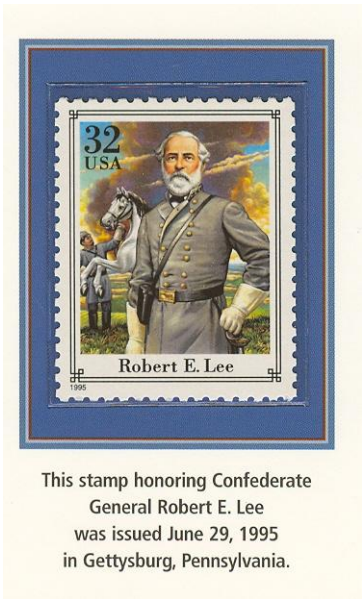


# 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Civil War



Treasurer: Jim Marshall  
202 Bartram Ln., Ocean City, NJ 08226  
609-602-3243  
[jim@jimocnj.com](mailto:jim@jimocnj.com)

## Minutes of the Business Meeting 21 Aug 2014

President Runner called the meeting to order. We saluted the flag and held a moment of silence for those who put their lives in harm's way in order to protect our country.

Secretary Munson-Siter announced to those who had not seen the write up in the August newsletter information about the death of John McDonough and the illnesses suffered by Howard and Carol Ruhl. A get well letter was sent to the Ruhls and a sympathy card sent to John's family.

### Old Business:

The Gettysburg trip has been cancelled. We needed 40 participants and only 12 people signed up.

New Business: Eddy O'Malley had an ancestor involved in the Civil War, and there was an article about her thru the Museum of the Confederacy. We will reprint the article in the newsletter.

Treasurer: Report made, motion made to accept and file for audit; seconded and approved. Treasurer Marshall has not sent out \$ for Lee's HQ in Gettysburg as it has been discovered that with a \$100 the name of our group will appear on a plaque naming supporters. Motion made to increase the donation amount to this cause from \$50 to \$100; seconded and approved.

There being no further business, the business meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Munson-Siter

### Civil War Events October 1860 – 1864

**1861**  
21 Battle of Ball's Bluff (VA)

**1862**  
4 Battle of Corinth (MS)  
8 Battle of Perryville (KY)

**1863**  
Nothing of Major Importance

**1864**  
19 Battle of Cedar Creek (VA)  
23 Battle of Westport (MO)

## Cape May County Civil War Round Table Newsletter September 2014

### Meeting Schedule

**18 September:** Tracy Evans of the National Park Service will be lecturing on the Battle of Monocacy. **Refreshments:** Carol Ruhl/Marty Runner

**16 October:** Possibly a presentation on the Battle of New Market. **Refreshments:** John Burke

**20 November:** John Burke will be lecturing on the subject of the Battle of Franklin **Refreshments:** Mike & Barbara Golla  
**?? December:**

**Reminder:** If possible, it's best to have TWO folks providing refreshments. Anyone care to volunteer to help out any of the folks who have already signed up for refreshments?

### Round Table Officers

President: Marty Runner  
1402 Rt 9 South, Lot 193, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210  
609-536-8235  
[pat\\_mar1136@yahoo.com](mailto:pat_mar1136@yahoo.com)

Vice President: Lou Bishop Jr.  
21 Schoolhouse Ln, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210  
609-463-9277 or 741-5438  
[southwilriseagain@aol.com](mailto:southwilriseagain@aol.com)

Secretary: Pat Munson-Siter  
42 Franklin Ave., Villas, NJ 08251-2407  
609-287-5097  
[patms1766@outlook.com](mailto:patms1766@outlook.com)

## Civil War Related Events in October 2014



Sheridan's Ride during the Battle of Cedar Creek (VA)

- |       |                        |   |
|-------|------------------------|---|
| 1-5   | <b>VA</b>              | Living history and live-fire competitions at the North-South Skirmish Association's Fall Nationals at Fort Shenandoah near Winchester. Free. See <a href="http://n-ssa.org">n-ssa.org</a> for complete info.  |
| 2     | <b>VA</b>              | Lecture, "Did the Valley Re-elect Abraham Lincoln?" at the Old Courthouse Civil War Museum, 26 Loudoun St., in Winchester. 7 pm. Free. <a href="http://nps.gov/cebe">nps.gov/cebe</a>   |
| 3-5   | <b>VA</b>              | Conference, "The First Day at Gettysburg," annual Art of Command conference in Middleburg. <a href="http://mosbyheritagearea.org">mosbyheritagearea.org</a>   |
| 4     | <b>VA</b>              | Walking tour, "Battle of Smithfield," meets at the Isle of Wight Museum in Smithfield. 2 pm. Free. <a href="http://historicisleofwight.com">historicisleofwight.com</a>   |
| 4     | <b>VA</b>              | Guided walking tour of Fort Huger, 15080 Talcott Terrace, on the James River near Smithfield. 10 am. Free. 757-357-0115.  |
| 4     | <b>VA</b>              | Living history/walking tour, "Hard Liquor and Women," begins at the Farmer's Market, 9 Old St in downtown Petersburg. 10:30 am, 1, 3:15 and 2:30 pm. Free. <a href="http://nps.gov/pete">nps.gov/pete</a>   |
| 4-5   | <b>VA</b>              | Reenactment and living history weekend at Laurel Hill, J.E.B. Stuart Birthplace near Ararat. Camps open 9 am both days with battles each day. <a href="http://jebstuart.org">jebstuart.org</a>  |
| 4-11  | <b>PA</b><br><b>DC</b> | Bus tour, "Fields of Valor" begins in Philadelphia, ends in Washington DC. Includes Gettysburg, Harpers Ferry, Antietam, Richmond   |
|       | <b>VA</b>              | and Fredericksburg area sites and more. From \$1,889. <a href="http://shebbyleetours.com">shebbyleetours.com</a>  |
| 5-12  | <b>VA</b>              | Bus tour, "Two Decisive Campaigns: Jackson & Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley." \$2,750/person single occupancy includes accommodations, admissions, some meals, historian guide. <a href="http://historyamerica.com/tours/14-Jackson-Sheridan.html">historyamerica.com/tours/14-Jackson-Sheridan.html</a> |
| 6     | <b>VA</b>              | Film/discussion, "The Abolitionists," at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond. 6:30 pm. Free. <a href="http://vahistorical.org">vahistorical.org</a>   |
| 8     | <b>VA</b>              | Talk, "Danville in the Civil War," at the Museum of the Confederacy in Appomattox. 12:15 pm. Free with museum admission. <a href="http://moc.org">moc.org</a>   |
| 9     | <b>VA</b>              | Anniversary car-caravan tour, "Battle of Tom's Brook," meets at the Shenandoah County Park, 380 Park Lane, Mauertown. 4 pm. Free. <a href="http://nps.gov/cebe">nps.gov/cebe</a>  |
| 10-11 | <b>VA</b>              | Seminar, "Two Roads: The Wilderness and Fredericksburg," lectures and tours at Longstreet Society conference. Headquarters in Fredericksburg. <a href="http://longstreet.org">longstreet.org</a>  |
| 10-12 | <b>VA</b>              | Seminar, "Image of War," annual Center for Civil War Photography event in Fredericksburg this year. Talks and tours of local battlefields. \$290-\$355. <a href="http://imageofwar.org">imageofwar.org</a>  |
| 11    | <b>VA</b>              | Living history, "Medical Reenactor John Pelletier" at Ellwood, a Union headquarters during the Battle of the Wilderness just off Route 20 near Route 3 west of Fredericksburg. 10 am-5 pm. Free. <a href="http://fowb.org">fowb.org</a>   |
| 11    | <b>VA</b>              | Lecture, "Civil War Propaganda," at the Petersburg National Battlefield visitor center. 2 pm. Free with park admission. <a href="http://nps.gov/pete">nps.gov/pete</a>  |
| 11    | <b>PA</b>              | "An Evening with the Painting," after-hours extended look at the Gettysburg Cyclorama at the Gettysburg NMP visitor center. 6 pm. \$20. <a href="http://gettysburgfoundation.org">gettysburgfoundation.org</a>  |
| 11-12 | <b>VA</b>              | Anniversary living history, special tours,  |

- "Bristoe Station Weekend," at the Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park, near Iron Brigade Unit Ave, in Bristow. 11 am-4 pm. \$5. 703-366-3049.
- 17 **VA**  Guided hike to Signal Knob, overlooking the Shenandoah Valley near Strasburg. 10 am-4 pm. Free. 540-869-3015.
- 17 **VA** Walking tour, "The Historic Heater Farm, A House Divided," on the Cedar Creek battlefield. Meets at 8437 Valley Pike, south of Middletown. 5 pm. Free. [nps.gov/cebe](http://nps.gov/cebe)
- 17 **VA** Talk, "Point Lookout," at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond. Noon. Free with museum admission. [moc.org](http://moc.org)
- 17-19 **VA**  Reenactment and related activities, "Battle of Cedar Creek," annual reenactment features camps and demonstrations south of Middletown. Anniversary ranger tours offered by the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove NHP. Fee for reenactment, free for NPS activities. See [ccbf.us](http://ccbf.us) (reenactment) and [nps.gov/cebe](http://nps.gov/cebe) for ranger activities.
- 17-19 **VA** Symposium, "The Civil War in 1864," seven well-known scholars at Pamplin Historical Park near Petersburg. \$259. Registration: [pamplinpark.org](http://pamplinpark.org)
- 23 **VA**  Lecture, "Rediscovering the James E. Taylor Sketchbook," images of the Shenandoah Valley in 1864, at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley in Winchester. 7 pm. Free. [themsv.org](http://themsv.org)
- 24 **VA**  Car-caravan tour, "Cedar Creek: The Aftermath," meets at Belle Grove, 336 Belle Grove Road, south of Middletown. 4 pm Free. [nps.gov/cebe](http://nps.gov/cebe)
- 25 **VA**  Living history at the site of Sheridan's Field Hospital in Winchester. 10 am-4 pm. Free. [ShenandoahatWar.org](http://ShenandoahatWar.org)
- 25 **VA** Lecture, "The Little Women of Virginia: The Adventures of a Navy Widow and Her Daughters during the Civil War," at Historic Blenheim, 3610 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. 2 pm. Free. 703-591-0560.
- 26 **VA** Lecture, "A Contrast: Cavalry and Brandy Station, Cavalry at Five Forks," at the Graffiti House visitor center in Brandy Station. 2 pm. Donations welcome. [brandystationfoundation.com](http://brandystationfoundation.com)
- 26 **VA** Living history tours, "Eyewitness to War," at Historic Mount Zion Church, 40309 John Mosby Highway, Aldie. Donations accepted. 1-5 pm. 540-687-6681.

### Cape May County Museum

The Nov 2014 issue of *America's Civil War* magazine, on page 18, mentions the Cape May County Historical Museum:

#### MORE WAR FLAGS PRESERVED:

After spending the last 76 years or so stowed away in the Cape May County (NJ) Historical Museum, an 1861 flag has been restored and soon will be displayed to the public.

"It was in storage in the attic," Donna Matalucci, vice president of the Cape May County Historical and Genealogical Society told shorennews.com. "It was rolled up in a box. It is so thin, it almost felt like gauze."

John and Sara Turner donated the \$8,000 fee for restoration by textile conservationist Janet VanGilder.

The ladies of Cape Island presented the flag to 24 local soldiers when they mustered into the army on August 22, 1861, according to the notes found with it.

Matalucci indicated the flag would be displayed at the Cresse-Holmes house in Cape May Court House.



## From The Museum of the Confederacy Magazine

### *Mary O'Melia: Irish Immigrant, Confederate Housekeeper*

By Cathy Wright, Curator

In March 2014, Eddy O'Malley, an Irishwoman currently living and working in New Jersey called the Museum of the Confederacy with a genealogical question and her call was transferred to me. She explained that the family of her late husband, James Joseph O'Malley Jr, claimed to be related to an Irish immigrant named Mary O'Melia, who had gone to the United States in the 1850s and subsequently worked for 'the president.'

Through her own investigations, Mrs. O'Malley had discovered that the alleged president was Jefferson Davis, and the place where Mary O'Melia had worked was none other than the White House of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia. Could that be true?

"Yes, Mrs. O'Melia worked at the White House of the Confederacy," I explained. "In fact, she was the housekeeper for the duration of the American Civil War. We have a set of china in the collection that Mrs. Varina Davis gave to her at the end of the war."

Mrs. O'Malley could scarcely believe her luck, and immediately scheduled an appointment to come to the Museum and learn more about her husband's storied ancestor.

She then remarked offhandedly: "I have necklace that Mrs. Davis gave to her, and a photograph of her. I'll bring them when I come to Richmond." I could scarcely believe our luck.

#### A SEA CAPTAIN'S WIDOW:

Mary Larkin was born on April 7, 1822 in western Ireland, near Galway, to Thomas Larkin and Eliza Sollers Larkin. They moved to the town of Ennis, where she was educated at a convent and learned such refined skills as needlework.

As a young woman, she met Matthias O'Melia (also variously spelled as "O'Malley," "O'Melea," and "O'Malla"), a ship captain who was a native of Clare Island. They were married at St. Nicholas Church in Galway, and resided in that city, although they frequently visited Dublin for business. According to a letter written by her granddaughter, Kate Doyle, in 1907, "When only about 25 years of age, Grandma was left a widow with three small children, through the death of her husband, a Captain who was lost at sea."

The precise circumstances under which Mary O'Melia immigrated to the United States are unknown. She arrived about 1850 and settled in Baltimore, Maryland – which was the third most common point of entry for European

immigration, behind New York and Boston, and may have been her port of entry. Her granddaughter wrote that Mary was accompanied by several relatives.

In early 1861, Mary left her children in the care of relatives and went to visit friends in Richmond – never realizing that it would be more than four years until she would see them again.

Once the secession crisis erupted and Virginia left the Union, Mary discovered that she required a pass to cross into Union territory. Informed by friends that the best way to obtain a pass was to contact Varina Davis, Mary secured a letter of introduction from Bishop John McGill and set out to meet the First Lady of the Confederacy.

Despite the vast differences in background and social standing, the two women found common ground in discussing their children. When Mary explained that she was eager to return to her children in order to provide for them, her granddaughter said Varina 'took a different view of the matter and remarked that if she, my grandmother, was that valuable to her children she was equally so to her, as she was greatly in need of a housekeeper but wanted a person above the ordinary as she would also be a companion to her.'

Mary initially declined, not wishing to be parted from her family for any length of time. As she waited in hopes that her friends might yet obtain a pass for her, she volunteered at a local hospital. 'She was there only a short while when she was greatly surprised one day to receive a visit from Mrs. Davis, and after a long controversy she left with Mrs. Davis in her carriage for the Davis Mansion,' her granddaughter wrote.

Little is known about Mary's day-to-day life at the White House of the Confederacy. Varina met with her most days, doubtless conferring on the tasks to be performed and any special instructions. She may have been responsible for managing some of the other twenty servants who worked in the house – a blend of white European immigrants, slaves, and free people of color.

Mary had many opportunities to meet an array of famous Confederate personages while living in Richmond and working in the executive mansion. A reporter wrote after her death, 'Besides her acquaintance with President Davis, Mrs. O'Melia also had seen many of the other leaders of the Confederacy and could tell of exciting conferences that were held among them.' Modern-day family oral history indicates that Mary was particularly enamored with Irish-American general Patrick Cleburne.

The evacuation of Richmond in April 1865 signaled the beginning of the end of many things, not the least of which was Mary's time in Richmond. As Varina prepared to depart the city with her children on the evening of March 31, she told Mary 'to take whatever she could but she was so scared that she took very little.' Her granddaughter continued to note that 'although she gave four years of her time to the Confederate Cause, [Mary] never received anything from them in that she was paid in Confederate money of which she had two barrels



after the war,' of which she gave away all but \$65 to friends as souvenirs.

Jefferson Davis and the Confederate Cabinet departed the city on April 2, but he left parting instructions to Mary: 'The furniture in the executive mansion it would well to pack and store as your discretion may indicated and if any one should dispute your authority this will be your warrant – the Mayor will give you aid and protection.' On a second page addressed to Mayor Joseph Mayo, Davis wrote, 'His honor the Mayor will find on the previous page that I have referred my house keeper to him, and will I hope allow me to commend her specially to his kind care.'

Writing from Danville three days later, Davis told his wife, 'Mrs. Omelia behaved just as you described her, but seemed anxious to serve and promised to take care of everything which may mean some things.'

Mary remained in the house until after the arrival of Federal troops. On April 3, Maj. Gen. Godfrey Weitzel became the first Union commander to enter the house, and he wrote that 'the housekeeper, under instructions from Mr. Jefferson Davis, had surrendered it for the occupancy of the commanding officer of the federal troops which might occupy the city.'

Major General Edward O. C. Ord arrived ten days later and relieved Weitzel of command of the occupying forces. Mary's granddaughter said Mary hoped 'she could save some of the belongings of the Davis family and return same to them if they so desired. However, she was not given this opportunity as she often stated that one of the most heartrending scenes she ever witnessed was the manner in which everything including Mrs. Davis's private apartments were ransacked and her clothes taken by the Northern General Ord's wife, whom Grandma described as a most unladylike vulgar woman.'

Mary returned to Baltimore in the late spring of 1865, and remained there for the rest of her life. Various Baltimore city directories consistently list her from 1870 through 1904. For nearly 30 years she operated boarding houses at four different addresses. These boarding houses are invariably described as 'large and fashionable,' clean, and well-managed.

Mary stayed in touch with her Richmond acquaintances throughout the postwar years, particularly the Davis family. She corresponded with Jefferson, Varina, and Varina Anne "Winnie" Davis, and treasured their letters, along with many other 'relics of the war.' She and Varina were the only white people in attendance at the 1867 wedding of Ellen Barnes, a free person of color during the war who had served as a nurse and maidservant in the Confederate White House.

When Jefferson Davis died in 1889, Mary attended a memorial meeting held at the Fifth Regiment Armory in Baltimore. A reporter noted that she 'attracted considerable attention in one of the front seats. She is a well-preserved old lady, and her still dark hair was brushed tightly down under the shadows of a beaded black bonnet.'

The 1898 directory is the first where no occupation is listed for Mary, and her address is listed as 115 N Front Street. The final two city directories in which she makes an appearance – 1902 and 1904 – give her address as 402 E North Avenue, where she was living with her daughter, Elizabeth O'Melia Doyle, and her family. When the Doyles moved to a new home at 1709 Guilford Avenue, the octogenarian Mary went with them.

The 1900 US Census is the only census in which Mary O'Melia has been located. It provides a slew of potential biographical information, but unfortunately some of it is contradictory. It lists her birth month and year as April 1820; her death certificate indicates her birth year as 1822.

The census form that year asked respondents whether they were immigrants, and if so, when they'd arrived: Mary indicated that she had immigrated from Ireland in 1842. Interestingly, her daughter Elizabeth (with whom she was living in 1900) responded that she had immigrated from Ireland around 1849, and furthermore claims that she was born at sea. The form also inquired of female respondents how many children they had total, and how many were surviving. O'Melia is listed as being mother to five children, only two of whom are living in 1900.

Mary died on February 20, 1907, aged 84 years. Her cause of death is not known, but her health seems to have been quite poor: her granddaughter later noted that Mary was bed ridden for the last 8 years of her life. Her funeral service was held at St Ignatius' Church (despite the fact that she had regularly attended St Vincent's), and she was buried at Bonnie Brae Cemetery (now known as New Cathedral Cemetery).

Her obituaries never fail to mention her connection to the Davis family during the war. One identified her as 'the companion of Mrs. Jefferson Davis,' although it mistakenly noted that they had been friends during the antebellum period. Another, published in the *Baltimore Sun*, correctly identified her postwar boarding houses, and her piety: 'In the trying days in Richmond [she] used to pray for the success of the Confederacy. Her love of the cause endeared her to President Davis as much as her painstaking care of his household.'

#### KEEPSAKES FROM A WARTIME FRIENDSHIP

Less than two months after Mary's death, Baltimore resident Kate F Doyle wrote to the Museum, stating that she had recently inherited 'some beautiful china that was in use in the Davis Mansion during the Civil War. This china was personally given to a relative of mine by Mrs. Davis, and while it is very valuable for its beauty and rarity it is especially so owing to its historic value.' If the Museum were to acquire the china, 'all that I would wish withheld would be the names of myself and relative, and I do not suppose this would be of great interest as the first owners were the Davis family.'

While a copy of the Museum's response to this letter is not on file, Doyle's follow-up letter of May 6, 1907

indicates that the reply was lukewarm, if not outright skeptical. "I do not think I made it clear to you as to how I came in possession of the china. It was given by Mrs. Davis to my grandmother the night she was compelled to leave her home..." She went on to explain that the china was among the items Mary had taken (with Varina's blessing) from the White House of the Confederacy just before the evacuation of Richmond. "General Lee frequently admired the china... and it was in use in Mrs. Davis's private dining room. It was mostly because of the admiration of the General for this china and the fact that it was used exclusively by the family and their dearest friends that Grandma wanted it."

In late July 1907, Doyle took the train to Virginia to attend the Jamestown Exposition (a world's fair type commemoration of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Jamestown settlement), and brought the china with her. She arrived in Richmond by August 5, 1907, as she provided a sworn deposition regarding the china's authenticity: "This is Canton china very rare – it is I am informed and believe one hundred years old and was used by President Davis and his family in this house during the Civil War and since that time has been in the possession of Mrs. Mary O'Melia who was with the family during this period." On that same day, Doyle met with Mrs T Archibald (Maria Abert) Cary, the Vice Regent of the Mississippi Room, who paid Doyle \$50 for the china.

More than a century later, on March 30, 2014, Mrs Eddy O'Malley arrived at the Museum. I took her to the Collections research area, where she produced the two promised artifacts from her purse: a necklace and a small tintype photograph.

The necklace consists of a metal link-and-bar chain interspersed with six square pieces of dark blue glass. According to family oral history, the necklace was given to Mary in 1865 by Varina Davis. It is possible that Varina give the necklace to Mary under the same circumstances by which Mary acquired the china set; or perhaps Varina gave it to her in the postwar years, as a remembrance of her.

The sixteenth-plate tintype depicts a woman wearing a necktie, a bodice with dome-shaped buttons down the front, and relatively narrow sleeves. Her dark hair is cut short, with curls (probably natural) protruding from beneath her pillbox hat, and her cheeks are tinted.

An analysis of various stylistic details suggest the image was made in the mid- to late-1860s. The pillbox style hat became popular by the mid-1860s. The narrow sleeves on the bodice, coupled with the visible buttonholes, are indicative of fashion from the immediate postwar years. While neckties were worn by women during the Civil War, the decorative emphasis at the nape of the neck in this image is more suggestive of postwar fashion.

Collections staff believe the tintype could depict a youthful-looking Mary O'Melia in the immediate postwar period. Family oral history holds that the tintype was made in Baltimore, and it is feasible that Mary sent it back to Ireland to

show her relatives that she had survived her years in the war-torn South. It is also possible that the tintype is of Mary's daughter, Elizabeth, who was married just after the war – but this conflicts with the family oral history, which definitely identifies the photographic subject as Mary, whom the family still refers to as 'the dear girl.'

After reveling in the thrill of gazing upon the hitherto-unseen face of Mary O'Melia, I took Mrs. O'Malley into the White House of the Confederacy. Standing in the West Parlour, I directed her attention to a tea table in the southwest corner, upon which were arrayed numerous pieces of what the Museum refers to as the "O'Melia china." O'Malley's eyes teared up a bit as she considered the vast differences between Mary's humble Irish origins, and the opulence of the mansion in which she spent four eventful years during the American Civil War.

--The Museum would like to thank Elizabeth Watkins-Morris and Juanita Leisch Jensen for their research assistance.

### ***More From "Children on the Home Front"***



*"Brooklyn Sanitary Fair 1864 - the Academy of Music, as seen from the dress circle." (Library of Congress)*

While books were the primary forms of entertainment at home, children could venture outside of the home for public shows and events, many of which revolved around the subject of the war. Children and their families often frequented plays, concerts, photography displays, magic lantern shows, martial parades, traveling panorama shows, and, in the North, Sanitary Fairs. The US Sanitary Commission allowed communities to directly support the war effort. Dan Beard recalled "every home and every school, parents, teachers and children were picking lint [for the Sanitary Commission] which was carefully placed on a clean piece of paper and used by the field surgeons to stanch the blood." Held from late 1863 through 1865, Sanitary Fairs, sponsored by the Commission, raised more than four million dollars and provided some much needed levity and entertainment. After paying a small entrance fee, families could purchase donated goods, homemade pastries, locally grown crops, souvenirs, attend concerts and

speeches, and gawk at war relics from the Revolution as well as captured Confederate armaments, trophies, and flags. Children would contribute their own handmade crafts to the fairs to be sold. "I made a model of a saddlebag loghouse which was very realistic," wrote Dan Beard "I proudly carried that all the way to the Sanitary Fair. It was sold for seven dollars and a half, which was a severe blow to my artistic soul, because I really thought it was worth about fifty dollars."

Chicago closed its schools during the fairs of 1863 and 1865 so children could attend and support this patriotic event, and newspapers from the time depict children around the country running to see the Fair's "treasury of useful articles, toys and knickknacks" as well as magic shows, ventriloquists, a "Gipseyp tent", and "a very remarkable animal called the Gorilla."

## THE WAR COMES HOME



*A young girl in mourning dress with a portrait of her father on her lap. (Library of Congress)*

The "home front", however, especially in the South, was constantly under threat. Many of the battles were named after the towns that witnessed them, guerrilla raids harassed non-combatants, troops were garrisoned in houses and barns, and both armies left homes in ruins and fields littered with the dead and dying. In besieged cities, the situation for children and their families became desperate as the weeks turned into months of shelling. In **Vicksburg**, frightened citizens sought refuge in basements and even in caves. One young girl, Lucy McCrae, was almost hit by a shell and buried under flying rocks and dirt. "The blood was gushing from my nose, eyes, ears, and mouth," she wrote "but no bones were broken." On November 16, 1864, ten year old Carrie Berry huddled with his family as occupied Atlanta burned around them: "They came burning the store house and about night it looked like the whole town was on fire. We all set up all night. If we had not sat up our house would have been burnt up for the fire was very near and the soldiers were going around setting houses on fire where they were not watched. They behaved very badly [...] nobody knows what we have suffered since they came in." Smaller southern cities and towns fared no better. In Winnsboro, North Carolina, a young girl witnessed "streets and vacant lots filled with homeless families [...]" when

bringing bedding, raiment or provisions out of their burning homes, these were destroyed by the brutal soldiers. They stole much that was useless to them, for even Bibles were taken."

A seventeen year old widowed mother from Sandersville, Georgia lamented as soldiers "would walk up the steps of the back veranda on which we stood, and throwing down the hams and shoulders of our meat would cut them up in our very faces." After the soldiers left with the rest of their belongings, she "knew that now our last hope for food was gone. I went to bed supperless [...] sadder now was the thought, 'The cows are killed. I will be so hungry I cannot nurse Baby.'"

The northern home front also came face to face with the horrors of war, especially when armies collided in the town of **Gettysburg**, Pennsylvania. On the first day of the fighting, fifteen year old Albertus McCreary watched from his porch as the street filled with "Union soldiers, running and pushing each other, sweaty and black from powder and dust. They called to us for water. While we were carrying water to the soldiers, a small drummer boy ran up the porch, and handing me his drum, said 'Keep this for me.' We were so busy that we did not notice how close the fighting was until, about a half a block away, we saw hand-to-hand conflict. An officer rode his horse up on the pavement and said 'All you good people go down in your cellars or you will all be killed.'" Even when the fighting ceased, townspeople were still left to pick up the pieces of their lives and care for the wounded thrust into their care.



*This photo of Frank, Frederick, and Alice Humiston was in their father, Sgt. Amos Huminston's hand when he was found dead on the Gettysburg battlefield. (Library of Congress)*

Charles McCurdy, ten years old at the battle of Gettysburg, watched as the wounded in his barn "lay on the threshing floor [...] they had received no care and were a pitiful and dreadful sight." Fifteen year old Tillie Pierce's house was repurposed as hospital for the wounded of Gettysburg and when she returned home she "fairly shrank back the awful sight presented. The approaches were crowded with wounded, dying and dead. By this time amputating benches had been placed about the house [...] I saw the wounded throwing themselves wildly about, and shrieking with pain while the operation was going on. Just outside the yard I noticed a pile of limbs higher than the fence. It was a ghastly sight." Albertus McCreary's sister, seventeen year old Jennie, was tasked with rolling bandages. She and her next door neighbors "had not rolled many before we saw the street filled with



wounded men. I never thought I could do anything about a wounded man but I find I had a little more nerve than I thought I had. [The first soldier] had walked from the field and was almost exhausted. He threw himself in the chair and said, 'O girls, I have as good a home as you. If I were only there!' He fainted directly afterward. That was the only time I cried."

## CONTRABAND CAMPS



*An escaped slave family arrives within the safety of the Union lines, January 1863 (Library of Congress)*

Cape May County Civil War Round Table  
[www.cmccwrt.com](http://www.cmccwrt.com)

Perhaps the lives most put in jeopardy by the Civil War were those of former **slaves** and their children. As news of the Confiscation Act of 1861 and the employment of 'contraband' (escaped slaves) by the **U.S Navy** and U.S Army spread, escaped slaves and their families began to congregate at places like **Fort Monroe** to appeal to become contraband. More than one hundred camps formed around Union held forts or encampments to house the escaped slaves. Despite being a welcome refuge for many, the camps often became overcrowded, and illnesses such as smallpox became endemic in the more makeshift sites. Children maintained an overwhelming numerical majority in the camp and, despite the varied conditions, all camps had a school. Most refugee children and many adults were able to spend at least some of their time in school, often managed by white northern missionaries. The rest of the hours were used to work in the fields to earn enough money to eat, and children as young as ten were send out to labor beside adults and typically given "one-quarter pay." These camps were the center of the home front experience for escaped slaves, and presented a world of great contrast: they provided a glimpse of freedom, but poor living conditions and disease often ended the dream before it could truly begin.

