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Persephone in the River Phlegethon; or, the Women at Gettysburg
By Brenda Ayres

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The heroine in my paper is Persephone. In Greek mythology, the story of Persephone (per séffenee) is a fable that attempts to explain why the earth experiences winter. The myth goes like this. Zeus (the king of the gods who ruled from Mount Olympus) fell in love with Demeter (dih-MEE-tur) or Mother-Earth, or the goddess of grain and fertility, also the goddess that preserves marriage and sacred law. From their union came Persephone. As her daughter grew up, Demeter protected her from the lust and influence of other gods, and thus she developed into a beautiful, unspoiled, and fresh young lady, the very embodiment of spring.

One day Persephone was picking flowers when the god of the evil underworld, Hades (hay'-deez), abducted her. Her mother was so distraught, that the earth ceased to produce life and began dying. Zeus was incensed and demanded that Hades return Persephone, and he agreed, as long as Persephone had not consumed anything in hell that would tie her eternally to that place. He tricked her into eating four pomegranate seeds, and because of that, she was required to spend four months each year ruling with Hades in hell, which so distressed her mother, that for those four months, no green thing would grow; however, the seeds planted in the deep earth would develop deep roots. Come spring, Persephone would return to the earth and she with her mother would cause all living things to flourish.

My title also refers to the River of Phelgethon. It is found in Virgil's *Aenid* (ā-‘ē-nēd) and later in Dantë's *Inferno*. Supposedly one of the five rivers in hell, its waters are actually boiling blood. Most paintings depict it as a massive river with body parts bobbing here and there.

Phelgethon is the major river in what was considered the Seventh Circle of hell, where people were sent who committed acts of violence (Canto XI, 34-39).

Hence, like Persephone gathering flowers on a peaceful sunny day, oblivious to any impending evil, women in Gettysburg were going about their business that summer of 1863, maybe even some of them picking flowers too, when suddenly they found themselves in Hades, floundering along with some 172,000 soldiers in a river of boiling blood.

The strawberries would have already been eaten or made into jam. By late June, the Pennsylvanians of Adams County would have been enjoying a breakfast of cherry pudding in fresh milk from nearby dairies. The corn stalks would have been about six feet high with ears not yet full. Tiny apples and peaches would have been hanging in the orchards, but it would be another good month until they would be ready for harvest. The wheat, though, would have been nearly as high as a man's chest.

Gettysburg, by 1863, was a thriving little community with 2,400 inhabitants (190 of them African-American) and 450 buildings (Sheldon 23). It was the county seat for Adams County (named for John Adams) in 618 square miles of fertile south-central Pennsylvania farmland, appraised at nine million dollars (24). The farmers owned about $100,000 of livestock such as horses, cattle, sheep, and pigs (23). Throughout the county were 16 lumber mills, 40 flour mills, 9 lime kilns, 23 leather tanneries, and 4 sheet iron and copper works. Fifteen companies made horse carts, carriages, and wagons (24). Although there was no shoe factory, twenty-two men made their living from shoes because of the tanneries (23). There were several hotels and taverns, a prison, the Lutheran Theological Seminary, a railroad depot, and the Pennsylvania College, (Gallman 144). By the way it might be of interest for you to know that Pennsylvania

College, now known as Gettysburg College, was founded in 1832 by the anti-slavery theologian Samuel Simon Schmaker and built on land donated by abolitionist Thaddeus Stevens who would later author the 14th Amendment, legalizing the rights of former slaves ("College History"). The McAllister's Mills were way stations for the Underground Railroad ("McAllister Sisters").

Eleven roads nearly converged in Gettysburg. Six of them came from the north, east, and west, but the other five are from the south, from Maryland. Literally and symbolically, unintentionally but seemingly ordained, these roads funneled the war right on top of this little town.

I grew up in York, Pennsylvania, just twenty-six miles east of Gettysburg. In fact, one of the major roads that ran from the town square in Gettysburg, known as the Diamond, is called York St. or Route 30 or what once was named the Lincoln Highway. As a child, I heard stories of the Battle of Gettysburg, and a good portion of Pennsylvania history that I took in the ninth grade focused on that battle. I was told many a time that the reason that the rebels invaded Gettysburg was for its shoes.

Indeed, that's exactly what happened.

On June 30, most of the citizens—and the majority of them women and children—turned out to welcome John Buford and his 3,500 troops as they marched through Gettysburg on the prowl for Rebels. The fine folk of Gettysburg were feeling a brief respite of elation. They had received several alarms over the past few weeks that the Rebels were planning to invade Pennsylvania. And thus they welcomed Buford with bugle corps and a full parade turnout.

Little did they know that Confederate Major General Henry Heth was encamped just eight miles northwest of Gettysburg in Cashtown. He was reading the *Gettysburg Compiler*, one of the three Gettysburg newspapers, when he happened upon an advertisement for McIlheny's

dry-goods store. Based on that ad, he ordered Brigadier General James Johnston Pettigrew to go into town to buy, steal, or borrow shoes for the troops.

And so he did, only to espy Buford's soldiers. Ambrose Powell Hill of the Third Corps, who was over Heth, was told by Lee to not engage the enemy until Lee's army arrived in Pennyslvania, but Hill thought Buford's soldiers were only scouts and therefore told Heth to seize the shoes (Schultz 197).

Thus to town went Heth’s 53rd Virginia Calvary (Sheldon 42), followed by Jubal Early who had just defeated the Pennsylvania Emergency Volunteers just three miles outside of town (41). Richard Ewell's Second Corps was coming down from Carlisle (Schultz 201). He was followed by 3,000 troops from Georgia, many of them looking like the walking dead without shoes (43).

They sang *Dixie* in the Diamond (Sheldon 46).

Then they plundered and ate everything they could find while the civilians of Gettysburg hid in their basements. Earlier, on June 27, at 8 in the morning, the Confederates headed for York but were suddenly met by Buford's Union Calvary and quickly returned to Gettysburg. Major General John Reynolds, only six miles south of Gettysburg, came to Buford's aid while summoning General Meade at Taneytown.

Lee's army was close behind, spurred by its recent victory at Chancellorsville and even more recently, the seizure of the Federal garrison at Winchester. Lee rode to Cashtown and then onto Gettysburg, thinking that the entire Army of the Potomac was assembling there.

Following him were miles of troops, wagons, and horses of the Northern Virginian Army, pouring into the valley. Lee stood atop Seminary Ridge that oversaw the town on the north. He saw Cemetery Ridge, the site of the town's Evergreen Cemetery; and he saw the peach orchard

on the left and the massive rolling hills of corn and wheat fields in between and decided that this was a good place to have a war. He purposed to deplete the Army of the Potomac of its resources and thereby unable to protect the Northern states. A crushing victory would not only ensure a debilitating blow to the North, it would also result in Europe's recognition of the Confederacy as a sovereign nation in its own right and therefore receive aid and support from it (Sheldon 31)

The rest is history. In a twenty-five square mile area, 172,000 men and 500 cannons (Sheldon 205), in three days, from July 1-3, left nearly 60,000 casualties, the highest number of any single engagement in American history. The Confederate dead was estimated at 4,500 with a reported missing of 5,250 and 18,750 wounded. The Union dead was 3,155 with 5,365 missing, and 14, 530 wounded (Sheldon 206). Besides this, each side took about 5,100 prisoners (Sheldon 187), many of them wounded.

The Army of Northern Virginia, having lost over one-third of its troops, now made a hasty retreat to Winchester. Its 1200 wagons of wounded trudged over muddy and washed- out roads, a train that stretched for 34 miles. Yet, it left behind 7,000 wounded that had to be cared for. There were over 30,000 in total wounded men that not only needed medical care, they needed bathed and fed by a tiny town comprised mostly of women.

Gettysburg women, without exception, became nurses. The 75 churches in Adams County, and indeed, every building there was, was turned into a makeshift hospital. Agnes Barr cooked around the clock to feed the wounded that poured into the first hospital created on Baltimore Street. Nancy Wiekert and Mary McAllister, who had been shopkeepers, worked for days in caring for the sick. And as is well known, for every wounded soldier who died of battle wounds, two died of typhoid or dysentery. However, due to the care of Gettysburg women, the

nurses that came from all over the union, and the 650 surgeons, 75% of the wounded survived at Gettysburg (Sheldon 185). Nevertheless, 70% of all of the injuries were in the extremities caused by minié (min-ee-ay) balls that shattered the bones (126-7). Tillie Pierce, just a young girl, wrote that she "noticed a pile of limbs higher than the fence. It was a ghastly sight! Gazing upon these, too often the trophies of the amputating bench, I could have no other feeling, than that the whole scene was one of cruel butchery."

Mary McAllister, whose detailed narrative appeared in the Philadelphia *Inquirer* in 1938, recounted how exhausting, grueling, and gruesome the ordeal was. Working in a church where pews became beds, she watched surgeons amputate legs and arms and then throw them out the windows. A young man asked her help because of four of his fingers were nearly severed. When she got a surgeon, he whipped out a knife and cut off the fingers, leaving them where they had dropped. Before long, shells started hitting the church and she was so scared, she wanted to go home:

> Well, they begged me not to go, but I went out and there the high church steps were full of wounded men and they begged me not to try to cross the street. Our men were retreating up the street. Many wounded ones who could walk carried the worst ones on their backs. I said, “Oh, I want to go home.” So they let me go at last. I struggled through the wounded and the dead and forgot the horror in the fright. (qtd. in Conklin 42)

When she came to her house, though, the front steps were covered with blood, and every room, every space was filled with the wounded (42). Knowing that they were going to be taken prisoners as the Confederates were entering the town, one soldier asked her to conceal a sword

which she did by concealing it in the wood pile, another asked her to hide his diary, which she did under her skirt, and another asked her to conceal his pocketbook (43-44).

Driven by compassion, Harriet Bayly took a basket of bread, butter, wine, and bandages into the field and tended to wounded Confederate soldiers who had been baking under the sun for more than twenty-four hours (Schultz 201). She dressed their wounds and turned her wrath on the Rebels by saying: “is it possible that none of you will bring water to these poor fellows?” An officer heard her and ordered men to help, but they replied that the wells in the nearest houses had been pumped out. Harriet led them to a nearby stream (Conklin 61).

One cannot understate how valuable the women were at Gettysburg to those thousands of men who lay searing in the July son, when women like Josephine Miller and Susan Rogers, baked and baked bread (Conklin 132). One young girl refused to abandon her break-making for the cellar where she would have been safe (Conklin 281 and Moore 139). Although shot and shell flew throughout her kitchen, she kept working, knowing that her bread would mean life to those on the field.

Another Gettysburg woman performed a different act of heroism. This was Julia Jacobs who, after many of the Rebel troops had left, cried out a warning that there were Confederate snipers at Seminary Ridge, poised to shoot Union troops who thought the town was clear. She shouted, "Look out! Pickets below! They'll fire on you!" (Qtd. in Conklin 164), which saved several lives, all the while the sharpshooters sent a volley of fire on her but hit only the doorframe.

Sallie Myers spent day and night at the St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church to nurse the wounded. She asked Sgt. Alexander Stewart what she could do for him. He let her know that he was going to die. Distraught, she ran outside, puller herself together, and then returned to his side

when he told her about his family in western Pennsylvania. He asked her to read the fourteenth chapter of John, a passage that his family had read when he and his brother left for the war: "Peace I leave with you. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you…. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (Schultz 241-42).

Beginning with Sophronia E. Bucklin of New York (Hall 118), several experienced nurses began arriving at the field hospitals. Bucklin was followed by Georgeanna Woolsey and Helen L. Gilson, Hospital Transport Service Nurses (Hall 263 and 238); Cornelia Hancock, a young Quaker who traveled with the troops and quartered with them during winters (Hall 239); Mrs. Mary W. Lee from Britain (Hall 243); Mrs. Ruth S. Mayhew (Hall 247); Mary Alice Smith from Greencastle, P.A. who served at age 18 (Hall 257); Judith and Susan Plummer from Maine (Hall 252-53); and Sarah Smith Samson, also from Maine, who was serving with her husband, and would be buried later in Arlington (Hall 255). Their service was not only invaluable; it was praiseworthy. They truly were God’s arms of comfort and were often the last face on earth that many soldiers saw. One described Helen Gilson in this way: “She sang for them, and, kneeling beside them, where they lay amidst all the agonizing sights and sounds of the hospital wards, and even upon the field of carnage, her voice would ascend in petition, for peace, for relief, for sustaining grace in the brief journey to the other world, carrying with it their souls into the realms of an exalted faith” (qtd. in Conklin 151).

Another nurse came from Maine with the 6th Infantry. Like several other nurses during the war, Isabella came mostly to look after her son. Despite that most Mainers were husky lumberjacks, Hugh Fogg was only a 5-foot-4-1/2, nineteen year old. She went where he went which meant that she came under heavy artillery fire at Chancellorsville, after which she was

recognized for her "hazardous, arduous and untiring services" to men on the field (Hall 40). She arrived in Gettysburg on the fourth and remained there for two weeks. Later her son's leg would be amputated at Cedar Creek. She herself had fallen on a hospital boat and injured her spine which crippled her for life, and from this she earned a government pension (40-41).

Gettysburg was a place for many different kinds of heroines. Mrs. Charlotte McKay, a widow from Massachusetts, stayed there for two months to tend to the wounded and sick. She won the Kearny Cross for Valour, and after the war she treated and taught freed slaves (Hall 248). Mrs. Mary A. Brady, founder of the Soldier's Aid Association of Philadelphia, also came to Gettysburg. The work literally killed her. She died of a heart attack on May 27, 1864 (Hall 228). Sarah Broadhead's diary was printed in 500 cc to be distributed to friends and 75 cc at the Great Central Fair in Philadelphia to aid the Sanitary Commission:

> July 5.—What a beautiful morning! It seems as though Nature was smiling on thousands suffering. One might think, if they saw only the sky, and earth, and trees, that every one must be happy; but just look around and behold the misery made in so short time by man. Early this morning I went out to the Seminary, just outside of town, and which, until the retreat, was in the hands of the enemy. What horrible sights present themselves on every side, the roads being strewn with dead horses and the bodies of some men, though the dead have nearly all been buried, and every step of the way giving evidence of the dreadful context. Shall we—for I was not alone—enter the building or return home? Can we endure the spectacle of hundreds of men wounded in every conceivable manner, some in the head and limbs, here an arm off and there a leg, and just inside a poor fellow with both legs shot away? It is dreadful to behold, and, to add to the misery, no food has been

> served for several days. The little we have will not go far with so many What can we do? Is the only question, and the little we brought ws distributed. It is heart-sickening to think of these noble fellows sacrificing everything for us, and saving us, and it out of our power to render any assistance of consequence. I turned away and cried. (16-17)

Afterward she baked cakes, but the soldiers were so hungry, they could hardly wait for them to be done. Back at the hospital, she helped clean and dress rounds and found a man whose leg was covered with worms. He had been wounded on the first day, and the surgeons weren't enough to get to him (18).

July 8 she and a worker from the Sanitary Commission evacuated 100 soldiers from the basement, put there because of the shelling, but now it was flooded (19-20). Two women lifted each man by toting a litter.

While nursing three men in her own home, she wrote on July 11: "The atmosphere is loaded with the horrid smell of decaying horses and the remains of slaughtered animals, and, it is said, from the bodies of men imperfectly buried. I fear we shall be visited with pestilence, for ever breath we draw is made ugly by the stench" (Broadhead 23). Nellie Aughinbaugh could never forget the "wretched" orders: "We could not open our windows for weeks because of the terrible stench."

Not all of the women of Gettysburg were so obliging. Some of them had guards posted at their pumps because, somewhat understandably, they did not want their wells to be pumped dry. Nevertheless, Amanda Farnham, who had traveled with the Vermont Unit, VI Corps for two years, now on day two of Gettysburg, confronted one of the guards who stepped aside and let her

have as much water as was needed for the soldiers. When the women in the town complained, the guard said that his orders did not include women.

Arabella Griffith Barlow had ridden with her husband, Brigadier General Barlow of the 2nd Corps of the Army of the Potomac. On July 2 she heard that he was wounded, so she galloped to Culp's Hill from the enemy's side to the other, with both sides firing at her (Conklin 17). She was able to get him transported into town where she cared for him and tirelessly nursed others, not only there in Gettysburg, but throughout the war until she contracted a fever a died.

Another nurse who traveled with a regiment was Mrs. H. R. Spencer. She was actually on the battlefield on July 1 and attending to the wounded while under fire (Conklin 52). She helped at a tiny church just four miles from Gettysburg that held sixty wounded who were laid upon the pews now covered with straw. She and the surgeons tried to do what they could, but the train with instruments, chloroform, and other medical supplies on July 4 were still fourteen miles away (qtd. in Brockett and Vaughan 408). Even after the General Hospital was dismantled in Gettysburg, she traveled with New York men from her husband's corps, caring for them on the cars (Conklin 54).

Harriet P. Dame came from Portsmouth of the Second New Hampshire Infantry (Hall 41). A chaplain described the nobility of Mrs. Dame:

> I have heard them all tell how she toiled day after day on the bloody field of Gettysburg, sometimes during the battle, between the lines…absorbed and self-forgetful, devoting herself to the relief of our wounded men. And when the darkness of night, and the exhaustion of her energies made rest imperative, she would pillow her head on the gory field, and sleep amid the dead and wounded scattered around her. (qtd. in Conklin 69)

The Kearny Cross was usually awarded for meritorious and distinguished service by non-commissioned officers and privates. It was awarded to Annie Etheridge, a nurse of the 3rd Michigan. She came to Gettysburg with her regiment. A soldier recalled:

> I remember her moving softly amongst the wounded kneeling upon the ground beside them and tenderly bathing and dressing their wounds. Her low woman's voice was music to their ears and her kind words of sympathy and encouragement and gentle reproof for undue and dangerous restlessness seemed almost angelic to the sufferers whose eyes followed her from place to place as she went from one to another. Her presence along was of incalculable benefit…she filled a place there that no man could fill…. (qtd. in Conklin 98).

Another Kearny Cross recipient at Gettysburg was the well-known Mary Tepe of the 114th Pennsylvania or the famed Collis' Zouaves. She worked in a field hospital behind the "Round Tops" on Taneytown Road. She is photographed here on Cemetery Hill a few days after the battle.

Camp women were very important for work besides nursing (and cooking). Rose Quinn Rooney came with the dreaded "Louisiana Tigers" to Gettysburg as their laundress; however,

> She was no hanger-on about camp, but in everything but actual fighting was as useful as any of the boys she loved with all her big, warm Irish heart, and served with undaunted bravery which led her to risk the dangers of every battle-field where the regiment was engaged, unheeding the sip of the mines, the shock of shells, or the horrible havoc made by the solid shot, so that she might have timely succor to the wounded or comfort to the dying. When in camp she looked after the

> comfort of the regiment, both sick and well, and many a one escaped being sent to the hospital because Rose attend to him so well. (qtd. in Conklin 112-13).

Some Southern women came too, such as Ms. Euphemia Goldsborough from Baltimore. Even though she was not treated well by the Yankees, she arrived at Gettysburg on July 12 and worked for nine weeks caring. After returning to Baltimore, her sister said that "she was never the same joyous girl again." To make matters worse, she was arrested shortly after her return for treason because of her nursing at Gettysburg and for smuggling food to Confederate prisoners at Fort McHenry. After being released, she was told to leave Baltimore and if she was discovered again, she would be shot as a spy (Schutlz 385).

Three other Southerners arrived from Baltimore to care for the injured. Two were sisters, Mary and Sally Witherow. Jane Boswell Moore, also nurse, later published her written account of her experiences (Hall 249; Moore). In addition, two doctors remained to also help, and one, John R. Bodly of Georgia, it is believed was really a “woman doctor” (Conklin 160).

Besides working as nurses, the women worked with exhaustion at burying the dead that was strewn everywhere. Elizabeth Masser Thorn, whose husband was away in the 13th Pennsylvania Infantry, was six months pregnant, but she was left in charge of the Evergreen Cemetery, which, after the war, besides the makeshift hospitals, became the busiest site in Adams County. The women were constantly scrubbing blood and gore from the town as well, using water that was already red with blood.

Many women did more than be nurses to the wounded, cooks for the starving, Bible readers for the broken in spirit, and letter writers for those who feared they would never go home again. They wrote about the battle, and it is from them that we have detailed records of one of the most horrific wars of all time. Told from the perspective of a woman, these texts gave no

credence to the glory of the battlefield. Even if very few women were actually killed or wounded during the war, they knew its terrible price, perhaps better than did men. After the men left the battlefield, the women had to clean up the mess, deal with the destruction left behind, and allay the physical, mental, and spiritual suffering of those left in its wake. They also were left at home to fend for themselves at a time when they had been told that they were the weaker vessel and should depend on men to run the government, businesses, and homes. Suddenly, though, their communities were emptied of men. In Gettysburg, the opposite occurred: men poured into a town that had had very few men at home because they had left earlier to form emergency infantry for Pennsylvania (Creighton 77). Whether Confederate or Union, these men posed a real threat to women. Not all of them many of them had no scruples. Besides fear of sexual attack, women also were torn between wanting to feed the starving and hiding food for their own family. The most immediate threat in Gettysburg, though, was the actual fighting that occurred in town, and women desperately strove to protect their children from flying bullets. One woman demanded, "Why do you come to town to have a fight? There are some old fields out there. Why don't you go out there?" (Creighton 99).

So when one reads the letters, diaries, and books by women who were at Gettysburg, one views the battle through anguish, anger, disgust, and despair. Sara Broadhead wrote her observations of June 15-July 15, a firsthand account of what led to the battle, the battle itself, then the aftermath, which reads like Dante's *Divine Comedy*, his and Virgil's descent into hell:

> Can we endure the spectacle of hundreds of men wounded in every conceivable manner, some in the head and limbs, here an arm off and there a leg, and just inside a poor fellow with both legs shot away? It is dreadful to behold, and, to add to the misery, no food has been served for several days. The little we have will not

> go far with so many. What can we do? Is the only question, and the little we brought was distributed. It is heart-sickening to think of these noble fellows sacrificing everything for us, and saving us, and it out of our power to render any assistance of consequence. I turned away and cried. (Brodhead 17)

Fannie Bueher told of “the dreadful slaughter of human life, the roar of the artillery and musketry, with the groans of the wounded and dying, baffled all description. At one time it was all so near to us that we closed our ears [and] crouched into a corner, not knowing how to endure it. The ground trembled, on which our house stood" (22).

Tillie Pierce was only 15 when the battle occurred, but her eyewitness accounts of the horrors of war are shocking. She was staying with a neighbor near Big Round Top, when soldiers brought a man to the house for aid. She wrote: "As they pass by I see his eyes are blown out and his whole person seems to be on black mass. The first words I hear him say is 'Oh dear! I forgot to read my Bible today! What will my poor wife and children say?'" (qtd. in Schultz 217).

Later she would comment: "surrounded by the wrecks of battle, we gazed upon the valley of death beneath. The view there spread out before us was terrible to contemplate! It was an awful spectacle! Dead soldiers, bloated horses, shattered cannon and caissons, thousands of small arms. In fact everything belonging to army equipments was there in one confused and indescribable mass" (Alleman 81).

Graphic details emerged from these narratives, similar to Fannie Buehler’s:

> The sights and sounds at the Court House for a week after the battle are too horrible to describe. Limbs were amputated amid the cries and groans of suffering humanity and often have I stopped my ears that I might not hear the groans of those poor unfortunate men, whom I could not relieve. Loads of arms and legs of

those poor soldiers, that were amputated, and—possibly under other circumstances might have been saved—were carried outside of the town and were either burned or buried. (Buehler 26)

Women did not simply report what they saw and felt; they wrote with a conviction that their narratives will deter future war. Emily Bliss Souder's *Leaves from the Battlefield of Gettysburg* reads: "All day long we found the Union soldiers side by side with the rebels…. The Union soldiers and the rebels, so long at variance, are here quite friendly. They have fought their last battle…how sorely stricken and wounded our noble soldiers are, and how grievously these rebel wounded are suffering and both lying side by side, like brothers" (17-25). The battle stripped men of their fight, reducing them to the brothers that they had been all along.

Women at Gettysburg were impacted by the battle in another way. There were 190 African Americans who lived in Adams County (Creighton 51). Many of them escaped or hid during the invasion, but many were not so fortunate and were taken captive by the Confederates. Albertus McCreary recounted: "A number of colored people lived in the western part of town and when on the first day a great many of them were gathered together and marched out of town. As they passed our house, our old washerwoman called out 'Goodbye, we are going back to slavery.' Most of them were crying and moaning."

These are tales that are rarely told about Gettysburg. The battle was horrendous, but the full measure of horror cannot be appreciated without factoring in the price it extracted on not only the men on the field, but also on the women in the town.

Furthermore, not only men were killed. There were at least two female fatalities. The first is the well-known death of Ginnie Wade. Her full name was Mary Virginia Wade. She was 21 and engaged to Cpl. Johnston H. "Jack" Skelly Jr. of the 87th Pennsylvania Infantry. She had

spent three days of the battle filling canteens of water and baking bread for soldiers, while tending to a disabled six-year old child and her sister who had just given birth. On July 3, she was up at 4:30 A.M. to work with the bread, and at 8 A.M. a Confederate bullet entered through the kitchen door, struck her in the back, and pierced her heart (Sheldon 94). She died with dough on her fingers, evidence of her service to soldiers.

A female Confederate who took part in Pickett's Charge, was found dead in uniform at Cemetery Ridge (Hall 151). When hearing someone estimating that there were about 400 women fighting on both sides, Mary Livermore, a Sanitary Commission worker, said she could not confirm the count, but she was convinced from her experiences in field hospitals that there was a larger number. E. F. Conklin, who wrote *Women at Gettysburg*, could verify sixty that she found in her own research (135).

After an investigation of rosters, scholars have determined that there were indeed several women, disguised as men, who fought at Gettysburg. One was Elizabeth Niles, aka Martin C. Niles of Company K of the 14th Vermont (Hall 61). Mrs. Abrev. Kamoo, known as Tommy Kamoo or Thomas H. Kamouse) was in Gettysburg disguised as a male nurse and drummer boy and was slightly injured. Her/his gender was never discovered. He/she died in Boston at the age of 89 (Hall 245).

After the battle, the women had to endure another invasion. On July 13 the town filled with about 25, 000 visitors: families looking for their beloved dead or injured, souvenir hunters, people who robbed the bodies, thrill seekers who came to witness the gore, fortune hunters come to make money from disinterring the dead to be relocated to their hometowns and others to gather up lead to be sold back to ammunition manufacturers. Who was going to feed this onslaught? Who would house them?

Although supplies poured into Gettysburg for the wounded, the townspeople who lost everything they had to feed the armies, were not allowed any of the incoming food without pay. They were left with millions of flies and polluted water and the sound of screams that would haunt them for the rest of their lives. Thirty-four thousand wounded men needed care; seven thousand needed burying; ten thousand would be sent to prisons (Conklin 206). Six hundred fifty surgeons arrived, and they needed to be fed. Some 12,000 injured would have to be transported onto railroad cars. The air was nauseating, the water contaminated, flies and maggots everywhere, one cannot comprehend. Anna Holstein, one civilian whose family had vacated Gettysburg at the early signs of battle, wrote about what she saw upon her return:

> The green sod everywhere stained with the life-blood of dying men: the course of the fearful struggle marked by the "ridges" which furrowed the ground unto one *great* hillock would be pointed out where *hundreds*, perhaps, had sternly fought and bravely fallen. To persons unfamiliar with such things, as sad a sight any are the heaps of cannon and caissons, and the innumerable heaps of slain horses which literally covered the hard-fought hill. (qted. in Conklin 258)

After the war, women traveled afar after the war to reinter the dead in cemeteries that would honor them. That led many of them to a gruesome task in Gettysburg. Although the South had very little money and resources even to feed itself after the War, many women raised money in order to raise monuments to their men. This was another form of healing they brought about. Drew Gilpin Faust, without a doubt the most well-known scholar of women's involvement in the Civil War, theorized that one reason women did this was to glorify what men did in battle, so that when they came home having failed to win the victory of the war and home that had been ransacked by the devastation of war, they were told that they won a greater victory, one of glory,

valor, historical reverence, devotion to a holy cause, and eternal gratitude from the South that could never die (252). Hence, in one way the women, at least the Southern women, glorified war. However, the monuments to women, were quite different. The faces register pain, exhaustion, silent courage, fortitude, horror, compassion, and all of them, deep, deep sorrow, the kind the women at Gettysburg would take to their graves.

It is necessary to hear a woman tell what happened at Gettysburg. It is necessary to see the agony etched for all times in pictures, painting, and statuary. Although more than 120,000 men—the men who survived—would never forget those three fatal days in Gettysburg in the year of 1863, it was the women who told history what not to forget. The River Phegethon is no myth; Dante was right: there is an actual river where people are sent who commit acts of violence, even if for noble causes. With thousands of severed arms, legs, heads, fingers, yes, and definitely hearts, they were seen everywhere in Gettysburg. The women told us that it was indeed, hell on earth.

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