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# *The Calling Card*



**The monthly e-newsletter of the  
Society for Women and the Civil War**

<http://www.swcw.org>

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# The 2023 Conference on Women and the Civil War

## Save the Date!

The 2023 Conference on Women in the Civil War, *Women in Government Service*, will be held July 28-30 in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

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## Give the Gift of Membership!

This holiday season, surprise and delight the Civil War enthusiast in your life with a gift membership in the Society for Women and the Civil War. Gifting is fast and easy -- just go to our website:

[Gift Membership - copy \(swcw.org\)](https://www.swcw.org/gift-membership)

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Harper's Weekly, December 1, 1860.

"Thanksgiving Day 1861 - The Two Great Classes of Society"

## News of Note

### **Now Streaming on PBS.**

*Harriet Tubman: Visions of Freedom* is a new documentary from Public Broadcasting, in celebration of the 200th anniversary of her birth.

### **New Honor for Dr. Mary Edwards Walker.**

As part of a re-naming initiative by the Department of Defense, Fort A.P. Hill

in Virginia will be renamed Fort Walker, in honor of the Civil War physician and Medal of Honor recipient.

**Kent State University Press New Book Announcement.**

*No Place for a Woman: Harriet Dame's Civil War* by Mike Pride is now available. Dame was a battlefield nurse with the 2nd New Hampshire Infantry.

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**Research Resource**

***The National Civil War Museum***

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

[National Civil War Museum | Harrisburg, PA Civil War Museum](#)

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The National Civil War Museum incorporates collections of artifacts, manuscripts, documents, photographs, and other printed matter that exceed 24,000 items. The NCWM is one of the largest museums in the world dedicated solely to the American Civil war. The Museum seeks to tell the whole story of this most troubled chapter in American history while focusing on the issues, the people and the lives that were affected. The causes and ramifications of this conflict that divide a Nation are investigated; both Northern and Southern viewpoints are presented; military as well as civilian perspectives are highlighted. The NCWM is a Smithsonian-affiliated institution.

Of special significance to SWCW members, the NCWM devotes an entire gallery to the roles of women during the Civil War.



## **SWCW Regents.**

The SWCW Regents Program is comprised of selected members who assist the board in mission fulfillment, membership support and outreach. As critical members of the SWCW leadership team, regents support membership within their geographic regions and keep the board apprised of issues which should be addressed. Regents also serve as advisors to the board for general matters as well as for those matters which pertain specifically to their regions. For more information about the Regents Program, visit our website at [Regents - Society for Women and the Civil War \(swcw.org\)](http://Regents - Society for Women and the Civil War (swcw.org))

***SWCW is seeking a Regent for the Mid-West US, which includes the states of Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin. If you are interested in the position, contact us at [swcw1865@gmail.com](mailto:swcw1865@gmail.com).***

## **Author Support Committee Chair Needed.**

SWCW member **Lisa Samia** has departed as Chair of the Committee. The Board thanks Lisa for her tireless efforts in this role. The Author Support Committee coordinates mentoring support to SWCW members who are first-time authors as they draft their works, conduct fact-checks and enter the publishing process. The committee connects these authors with SWCW members and associates who are already successfully published authors. If you are interested in the position, contact us at [swcw1865@gmail.com](mailto:swcw1865@gmail.com).

## **Congratulations to SWCW Member Stephen Romaine.**

The Kindle edition of his book, *Secret Army Behind Enemy Lines: The Back Story of How Grant Took Richmond*, recently debuted at #1 for Kindle Unlimited.

## **Members Only Pop-Up Store!**

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The Society has made arrangements with our vendor, Custom Advertising Products, to offer selected SWCW-logo items for sale to our membership. This pop-up sale will run from November 28 - December 12. Members will receive an email on the morning of November 28 with the web link.

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Harper's Weekly, November 26, 1863.  
"Thanksgiving Day - The Union Altar"

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## Woman of the Month

### **Abbie Clifton Fisher**

plantation cook, entrepreneur, author

Born June 1831 in Orangeburg, South Carolina

Died January 9, 1915 in San Francisco, California

Buried at Cyprus Lawn Memorial Park, Colma, California

Thanksgiving is a holiday that evokes thoughts of food and history. One interesting item that captures the intersection between food and history is a cookbook by Mrs. Abby Fisher, a formerly enslaved woman, who during her life received an array of accolades for her culinary creativity.

Abby Clifton was born in 1831 on a plantation in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Her mother, Abbie Clifton, was an enslaved domestic servant and her father, Andrew James, was the French-speaking owner of the plantation. As she grew up, Abby developed and perfected her distinctive southern flavors as an enslaved plantation cook. Her signature recipes combined foods and spices from Africa with Southern American staples.

After the Civil War, she eventually made her way to San Francisco with her husband, Alexander C. Fisher, and four of their 11 children. She used her culinary skills to establish a successful upscale catering business and, with her husband, she created a flourishing pickle, jam and preserve manufacturing business.

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Fisher won the “Diploma,” the highest award possible from the Sacramento State Fair. She also won both a bronze and a silver medal from the San Francisco Mechanics’ Institute Fair. One juror noted, “Her pickles and sauces have a piquancy and flavor seldom equaled, and when once tasted, not soon forgotten.”

Following these accolades, she was commissioned by the Women’s Institute of San Francisco and Oakland to compile her recipes. The goal was to document her style of southern cooking for future generations. This presented a considerable challenge. Even though Abby was a successful entrepreneur, neither she nor her husband could read or write. Being a resourceful person, she enlisted the assistance of her clientele, who recorded her recipes as she dictated them.

Her cookbook, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows about Old Southern Cooking, Soups, Pickles, Preserves, Etc.*, was a pioneering work. It was one of the first cookbooks to provide detailed instructions and precise measurements as Abby wanted to ensure that even a novice cook would have success using her recipes. Her cookbook was also one of the first by an African-American, and the oldest known cookbook by a formerly enslaved person.

It was published by the Women’s Co-operative Printing Union and contained 160 recipes. Included are familiar favorites: sweet potato pie, lemon sherbet, fried chicken and corn bread; African-inspired dishes: corn fritters, black-eyed peas, okra gumbo, and jambalaya; and others that reflect a time gone by -- green turtle, mock turtle, terrapin stew and calf’s head. Abby also provided recipes to improve health: Blackberry Syrup for Dysentery in Children; Tonic Bitters to strengthen and produce appetite; and Pap for Infant Diet.

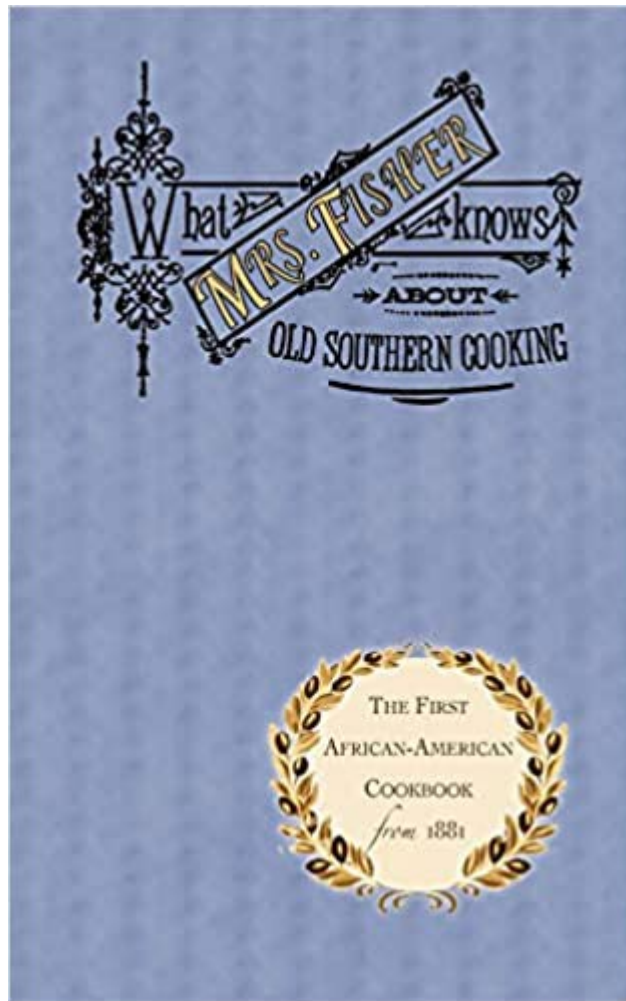
Abby Fisher passed away in 1915 at the age of 82. Thanks to her extraordinary journey from enslaved plantation cook to business owner and author, her culinary excellence lives on.

On June 10, 2003, the Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation in Ann Arbor, Michigan, opened a lunch-style restaurant, Mrs. Fisher’s Southern Cooking,

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created and named in her honor. The menu reflects her specific cuisine and highlights her culinary talents. In addition, reprints of her cookbook are for sale.

Perhaps one reason the museum created this restaurant is so visitors can sample a taste of history. For Thanksgiving and other occasions, you have a similar opportunity as Abby's cookbook is still available both online and as a hardcopy reprint.



Online: [What Mrs. Fisher knows about old southern cooki... \(msu.edu\)](http://msu.edu)

Reprint: [What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking: Fisher, Abby: 9798695643244: Amazon.com: Books](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9798695643244)

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*--Article by SWCW Board Member Lavonda K. Broadnax*



Harper's Weekly, November 29, 1862.

"Thanksgiving in Camp"

## *Solicitations*

We are pleased to share the achievements of our members, and to advertise the activities of the Civil War and Women's History communities. We also

welcome notifications about educational and archival resources.

*The Calling Card* is actively soliciting essays for our Woman of the Month feature.

Please send your submissions to [swcw1865@gmail.com](mailto:swcw1865@gmail.com), with *Calling Card* in the subject field. (Submissions may be edited for brevity or clarity.)

*The Calling Card* is distributed on the 15th of each month, and our deadline for same-month submissions is the 10th.

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[Newsletter Archive - The Calling Card - Society for Women and the Civil War](#)  
([swcw.org](http://swcw.org))

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