

THE CALLING CARD – February 15, 2021



## The Calling Card

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

<http://www.swcw.org>

### **2021 Membership Campaign**

Now is the time to join us for the first time,  
or to renew your annual membership.

Just go to our website:

<http://www.swcw.org/join-the-society.html>

**Our membership year runs from January - December\***

*Exclusive benefits of membership include a discounted rate on our*

*annual conference, a members-only page on our website, and access to our quarterly journal, At Home and In the Field.*

The Society for Women and the Civil War is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization. ***Membership dues are tax-deductible, and they enable us to fulfill our mission.*** We are dedicated to recognizing the efforts of women who lived through or participated in the American Civil War, and those who research, reenact or otherwise honor these women of the past.

\*New members who joined from October - December 2020 do not need to renew for 2021.

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## **The Conference on Women and the Civil War**

**Register Now!**

**Our 21st Conference,  
*The Women of the Shenandoah Valley*,  
will be held July 23 - 25, 2021,  
in Harrisonburg, Virginia.**

**For conference details, click here:**

**<http://www.swcw.org/2021-conference-details.html>**

**To register for the conference, click here:**

<http://www.swcw.org/2021-conference-details.html>



### **A Message About Our Covid-19 Protocols**

The health and safety of everyone attending the *Conference on Women and the Civil War* is our highest priority.

The following protocols will be in place during the event:

1. In accordance with a mandate by the State of Virginia, all conference attendees and vendors will be **required** to wear a face mask, covering both mouth and nose, for all conference events and whenever the individual is in a public area, to include outdoor spaces.\*

2. To the extent possible, this will be a socially distanced event. Every effort will be made to provide six feet of space between individuals during indoor activities such as presentations.

3. High-touch areas will be disinfected at regular intervals, and hand-sanitizer will be available at vendor, auction, registration, and lecture tables.

Additionally, our conference venue, The Hotel Madison, is complying with all pandemic protocols established by the American Hotel & Lodging Association.

\*If you are unable to comply with the mask mandate, we respectfully ask that you do not register for the conference. Anyone not wearing a face mask during the conference will be escorted from the premises.

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## News of Note

### **CWRTC Zoom Lecture.**

Author (and SWCW member) **Steve Magnussen** will present a live online lecture, *General Rufus R. Dawes*, to the **CWRT Congress** on **February 24** at 7 p.m. EST. The presentation will also delve into the lives of the Dawes women during the Civil War. For more information, and to register for this free event, go to

[www.cwrtcongress.org/speaker.html](http://www.cwrtcongress.org/speaker.html).

### **GAR Museum Online Program.**

The **GAR Museum and Library** of Philadelphia will host an online program, *Women's Lifestyles of the 1860's*, on **March 7, 2021** at 1:00 p.m. EST. More information about the program, presented by **Jane Peters Estes**, can be obtained from the museum's website at <https://garmuslib.org> or by sending an email to [GARMUSLIB1866@gmail.com](mailto:GARMUSLIB1866@gmail.com).

### **Online Spring Conference.**

The **McCormick Civil War Institute** will present an online conference, *Civil War on the Water*, **March 29 - April 7**. For more information, and to register, go to [www.su.edu/mcwi/upcoming-mccormick-civil-war-institute-events/mccormick-civil-war-institute-spring-conference/](http://www.su.edu/mcwi/upcoming-mccormick-civil-war-institute-events/mccormick-civil-war-institute-spring-conference/)



## **The Reconstruction Era.**

Researchers interested in the Reconstruction Era may wish to check out [The Reconstruction Era - Blog Exploring the World the Civil War Created](#), which explores the history, consequences, and memory of Reconstruction. The blog also includes a helpful Reconstruction timeline, [Reconstruction Timeline - The Reconstruction Era](#).

Of special note is a blog post highlighting the [Best 2020 Books on Black History of Civil War and Reconstruction Eras - The Reconstruction Era](#).

## **The Early American Industries Association.**

Knowledge and understanding of the tools, equipment and technology used by women during the Civil War is essential to understanding their lives and the context in which they were lived. **The**



**Early American Industries Association (EAIA)**, <https://eaiainfo.org>, is one of the prominent nationwide organizations which celebrate trades, crafts, and tools in American history and their impact upon the lives of those who use them. EAIA's blog article on the 18th-19th Century Niddy-Noddy hand reel tool, <https://eaiainfo.org/2020/12/10/the-niddy-noddy/>, is a good example of the useful reference materials from this organization.



### **Images of Civil War-era Children.**

A collection of original Civil War-era cartes de visite showing images of girls, which offer excellent views of clothing, is posted by **Jessica Craig** on Pinterest at

<https://www.pinterest.com/snowcraig/1860s-girls/>. The site also includes color images of original clothing held in museum collections.

## **Research Resource:**

### ***Enslaved: Peoples of the Historic Slave Trade***

**[Enslaved.org](http://Enslaved.org)**

This newly-launched digital database includes more than 600,000 (and growing) interconnected sources and data sets documenting the peoples of the slave trade, allowing researchers to document the lives of the enslaved and their enslavers. Using linked open data, researchers can trace individuals across multiple archival sources.

*Enslaved* is a project of Matrix: The Center for Digital Humanities & Social Sciences at Michigan State University (MSU), in partnership with the MSU Department of History, University of Maryland, and scholars at multiple institutions.

To read more about this groundbreaking resource, click here: [Who Were America's Enslaved? A New Database Humanizes the Names Behind the Numbers | History | Smithsonian Magazine](#)

All data found within *Enslaved: Peoples of the Historical Slave*



*Trade* will be published in the *Journal of Slavery and Data Preservation*, a digital academic journal that publishes original, peer-reviewed datasets about the lives of enslaved Africans and their descendants drawn from documents produced from the fifteenth to the early twentieth centuries. [Journal of Slavery and Data Preservation \(enslaved.org\)](http://enslaved.org)



## Society Notices

[www.swcw.org](http://www.swcw.org)

Our webmistress has been hard at work populating our website with useful educational and outreach materials, as well as pages dedicated to full transparency in the initiatives and operations of the Society. We welcome your participation, and hope you will visit our website often, as we are still adding content.

**Here are some links to our newest public pages:**

- Synopsis of each of our past conference offerings -- [Past Conferences 1997 - 2010 - Society for Women and the Civil War \(swcw.org\)](#) and [Past Conferences 2011- 2020 - Society for Women and the Civil War \(swcw.org\)](#)
- Details about our Committees and Publications -- [Committees & Publications - Society for Women and the Civil War \(swcw.org\)](#)
- Back issues of *The Calling Card* -- [Newsletter Archive - The Calling Card - Society for Women and the Civil War \(swcw.org\)](#)



## **2020 Donor List**

SWCW gratefully acknowledges the following individuals and organizations for their support:

DeAnne Blanton

Susan Cash

Mary Louise Jesek Daley

Bonnie Mangan

Lin Russell

Martha Taylor

Janet Whaley

Alice White

J. White

The Women's Club of Arlington, VA

Individuals wishing to donate to our General Fund, Scholarship Fund, or

the Bonnie Mangan Memorial Fund should visit our website at [Donations - Society for Women and the Civil War \(swcw.org\)](#). SWCW is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and all donations are tax-deductible.

### **New Partnership!**

The Society is proud to introduce the newest participant in our Organizational Partnership program – **Civil War Trails** (<https://www.civilwartrails.org/>). Many of you are familiar with this non-profit organization and their interpretive signage which now spans a network of six states. They have been working since 1994 to share the stories of generals, soldiers, citizens and the enslaved who found themselves in the midst of the Civil War. We are proud to add Civil War Trails to our list of organizational partners, which can be viewed on our web site: <http://www.swcw.org/organizational-partnerships.html>.



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## Suggested Reading

**Another sampling of books written by  
SWCW members and supporters.**

Bierle, Sarah Kay. *Blue, Gray and Crimson: A Story of Civilian Courage at Gettysburg.*

Conklin, Eileen. *Exile to Sweet Dixie: The Story of Euphemia Goldsborough, Confederate Nurse and Smuggler.*

Curran, Thomas F. *Soldiers of Peace: Civil War Pacifism and the Postwar Radical Peace Movement.*

Floyd, Claudia J. *Maryland Women in the Civil War: Unionists, Rebels, Slaves and Spies.*

Magnussen, Steve. *To My Best Girl: Courage, Honor and Love in the Civil War, The Inspiring Life Stories of Rufus Dawes and Mary Gates.*

McKean, Brenda C. *Blood and War at My Doorstep: North Carolina Civilians in the War Between the States, Vols. I and II.*

Schriber, Carolyn P. *Beyond all Price: A Novel Based on the Life of Nellie M. Chase.*

Stevenson, Louise. *The Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture, 1860-1880*.

**To see more titles by SWCW authors, visit our website:**

[Authors List - Society for Women and the Civil War \(swcw.org\)](http://swcw.org)



**Available for pre-order:**

**Noyalas, Jonathan. *Slavery and Freedom in the Shenandoah Valley during the Civil War Era*.**

**Use discount code AU221 to save \$50 off the hardcover price at [University Press of Florida: Slavery and Freedom in the Shenandoah Valley during the Civil War Era \(upf.com\)](http://upf.com)**

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**National Register of Women's Service in the Civil War  
(NRWSCW):**

**Woman of the Month**

**Cathay Williams**

Laundress, US Army, Civil War

Buffalo Soldier

first documented African-American woman to enlist in the US Regular Army



Fictional portrait of Williams



Monument to Cathay Williams



Born September 1844, in Independence, Missouri.

Died ca. 1910, in Pueblo, Colorado.

Cathay Williams was born to an enslaved woman, Martha Williams, and a free man, whose name was not recorded. As a child, Cathay worked as a house slave on a plantation outside Jefferson City, Missouri. Her enslavement ended in 1861, when Federal forces occupied Jefferson City.

During the Civil War, enslaved persons who escaped to Union lines, or who were captured by the Union Army, were officially designated by the US Government as "contraband," and many of these people were employed by, or impressed into service of, the Union Army as laborers, teamsters, cooks, laundresses, and other support roles. At the age of seventeen, Cathay Williams was attached in service to the 8th Indiana Volunteer Infantry Regiment. For most of the rest of the war, she served in the 8th Indiana, presumably filling the role of laundress and cook, and perhaps nurse. With the unit, she saw service in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Georgia. She claimed to have been present at the Battle of Pea Ridge, as well as all the actions of the Red River Campaign. While in Arkansas, it is believed that she first observed the service of African-American US Army soldiers – a sight which may have inspired her own later actions. By the end of the war, Williams had been transferred to work as a cook for the staff of Maj. Gen. Phillip Sheridan. After the war, she made her way back to Missouri.

On November 15, 1866, she disguised herself as a man, and using the alias William Cathay, presented herself at Jefferson Barracks, south of St. Louis, and enlisted for a three-year tour of duty as a private in the US Army. The recruiting officer described the new recruit as 24 years old, 5'9" in height, with black hair, complexion and eyes. He miswrote her alias as "William Cathey." The medical examination was brief and perfunctory, and did not betray her male persona.

Her ability to pass as a man in the ranks was likely assisted by her tall height, an appearance later described as masculine, and her wartime service, wherein she had witnessed the habits of men in military field service. William Cathey was assigned to A Company, 38th United States Infantry Regiment (Colored), which had seen Civil War service as the 38th US Colored Infantry Regiment, and had been reestablished as a Regular Army unit. Two persons in her regiment had knowledge of her previous identity -- her cousin, and a friend.

The 38th, one of the "Buffalo Soldier" units, initially saw service in Kansas, guarding railroad construction from attacks by the Cheyenne. In September 1867, elements of the 38th were marched to New Mexico Territory, with the duty of protecting transcontinental railroad construction. Having contracted small pox and been hospitalized in St. Louis, William Cathey was delayed in joining the unit in New Mexico. According to military records, while still recovering from small pox, she suffered a relapse due to exposure during a military crossing of the Rio Grande River. This eventually resulted in a certain amount of hearing loss. By 1868, likely due to a combination of the effects of smallpox and other diseases, the heat of the Southwest, and the cumulative effects of years of hard military campaigning, she was worn down physically. William Cathey was hospitalized at least five times, with the post surgeon eventually considering the soldier unfit for military duty. It is also possible that the regimental surgeon figured out that William Cathey was a woman. In either event, William Cathey was given a medical disability discharge from the Army at Fort Bayard, New Mexico Territory, on October 14, 1868.

Upon leaving military service, Cathay Williams found employment as a cook for an Army officer at Fort Union, New Mexico. In 1870, she moved to Pueblo, Colorado, where she worked as a laundress, and possibly as a seamstress and cook. She entered into a short-lived marriage with a man who turned out to be a scoundrel. She had him arrested after he stole from her \$100.00, her watch,

and her wagon with a team of horses. She left Pueblo for Las Animas, Colorado, and by 1872, she landed in Trinidad, Colorado, where she first passed as a man named James Cady, and later used the name Kate Williams. She worked in Trinidad as a laundress and possibly as a nurse. According to some sources, she may also have worked as a seamstress and assisted her mother, who owned a boarding house in the town.

While she was living in Trinidad, a reporter for the *St. Louis Daily Times* somehow heard about her life story, and interviewed her for January 2, 1876 article. This newspaper account detailed her life, from enslaved child to Civil War contraband to US Army soldier and beyond.

In late 1889 or early 1890, suffering from diabetes and neuralgia, Cathay Williams was admitted to a hospital in Trinidad, where she remained for more than a year. In June 1891, she applied for a military disability pension based on deafness arising from her smallpox, as well as neuralgia, rheumatism and frost-bitten feet resulting from her military service. She was examined by a physician employed by the US Pension Bureau at a disability hearing on September 9, 1893. Although all of her toes had been amputated, and she could only walk with the aid of a crutch, the physician maintained that she was in generally good health, had some hearing remaining, and did not have neuralgia. The medical examination record shows a "third-grade disability." Additional efforts were made to support her application; however, due to a number of reasons - including poor representation by her attorneys, insufficient supporting documentation, likely bureaucratic indifference, racial bias, and a Pension Bureau overwhelmed by a flood of applications -- her application was ultimately rejected. The Pension Bureau did not dispute that Cathay Williams was the same person as William Cathey; her claim was officially rejected on the grounds that her disabilities were not substantive or service-related.

At some point after her pension application was denied, Cathay Williams moved back to Pueblo, where her mother worked as a matron at an orphanage. She found employment as a seamstress and janitor. Her place and date of death is unknown, but recent research indicates that she may have lived until 1910. No record of the burial site of Cathay Williams has been found to date.

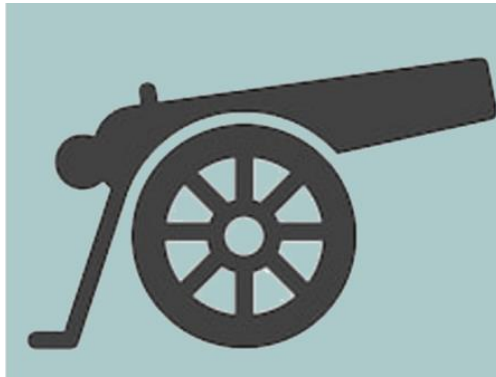
The military service of Cathay Williams was honored in 2016, with the placement of a bronze bust in a memorial rose garden located outside the [Richard Allen Cultural Center](#) in Leavenworth, Kansas. She was also honored by the National Infantry Museum in 2018, with placement of the Pvt. Cathay Williams monument bench on the museum's Walk of Honor.

Cathay Williams' pension application file, which includes her certificate of discharge from the Army, are located in the holdings of the National Archives in Washington, DC, and have been digitized at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/20848612>. Additional sources available upon request.

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## **Partner Organizations Spotlight**

**The Blue & Gray Education Society**



The Blue & Gray Education Society (BGES) was established in 1994, dedicated to public education about the American Civil War and to the active preservation and understanding of its battlefields and historic sites. BGES accomplishes this mission through hands-on field study tours; seminars pertaining to preservation sites and artifacts; interpretative projects; and publication of scholarly research.

BGES is continuing their educational mission during the current pandemic by releasing a series of online lectures by prominent Civil War historians to their membership. They are also actively planning to resume their numerous field study tours once the pandemic is controlled. BGES is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization.

To learn more, visit [Blue and Gray Education Society – America's Premier Civil War Education Organization](#)

**CWRTC NEWSLETTER: *The Light Post***

Readers of *The Calling Card* may also be interested in receiving *The Light Post*. We asked the CWRT Congress to tell us more about it:

***"Since 2015, the CWRT Congress' support of Civil War Round Tables has grown. As the pandemic's restrictions spread deeper into CWRT operations, we began to hear, not only the needs of CWRTs and the larger Civil War community, but the innovative methods some round tables implemented – really remarkable ways that accomplished unity, knowledge sharing, and community involvement. We wanted to be a part of and enhance that. And so, we created *The Light Post* (<http://www.cwrtcongress.org/light-post.html>).***

***The responses have been rewarding. Round tables around the country have shared their unique ways of attracting new members, of cherishing their current members, and giving back to their communities. We are most grateful that *The Light Post* can be a link in the chain of success for others. Our goal is that round tables around the country not only stay afloat but thrive as we await better times.***

***If you would like to receive *The Light Post* (and other CWRT Congress communications) directly, you can subscribe to the mailing list at: <https://www.cwrtcongress.org/> "***

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## Research Requests

### Calling All Writers and Researchers!

The Spring 2021 edition of *At Home and in the Field*, the quarterly e-

journal of the Society, will highlight the efforts of Civil War-era women in industry and the professions. The staff of AHAITF wants to engage SWCW members and supporters, and is seeking contributions of relevant articles for this issue.

Additionally, the Writing Staff is seeking information about the following: women colorists for fashion plates; women factory workers; women apothecaries or pharmacists; and women bakers for the armies. Please contact us if you can share your research into these topics, or to suggest sources related to such research.

Potential articles and research resources and tips will be gratefully accepted at [swcw1865@gmail.com](mailto:swcw1865@gmail.com). Please write AHAITF in the subject field.



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## ***The Calling Card* accepts submissions.**

We are eager to share the achievements of our members, and to advertise the activities of the Civil War and Women's History communities. We also welcome individual research requests, and notifications about educational and archival resources.

Please send your submissions to [swcw1865@gmail.com](mailto:swcw1865@gmail.com), and please write 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.

**To subscribe to *The Calling Card*:  
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