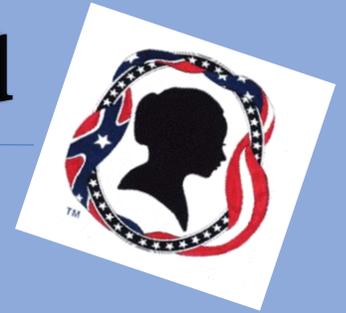


January 2021

# At Home and in the Field

The Quarterly Journal  
of  
The Society for Women and the Civil War



## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the New Year and to our third issue of the new *At Home and in the Field*!

This time, we are pleased to feature an article drawn from the research of member Martha Taylor, who is working on a book about the Confederate raiders who attacked St. Albans, Vermont, on October 19, 1864. She writes for us of the heroism of Ann Eliza Brainerd Smith in response to the raid.

We offer the first article in what will be a continuing series on fine arts in the nineteenth century – a topic which provides significant context for the lives of the women whom we study. Barbara Noes Kennedy, a prominent author on topics related to the material culture of the era, introduces us to viewing the story of the Civil War through art.

We continue our serialized article, “If Heart Speaks Not to Heart”, which addresses wartime personal grief, and condolences expressed in letters from “one sister in sorrow” to another.

With each issue, we are grateful for your appreciative and encouraging responses – but, please remember that we always welcome your submissions of articles, essays, and poetry, for this is your journal, and we know that you have much knowledge to share with the rest of us.

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### Mission Statement:

The Society for Women and the Civil War is 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.

“Talk About ‘War Governors – How About War Governors’ Wives?”<sup>1</sup>

Ann Eliza Brainerd Smith of Vermont

By Martha Taylor

Born October 7, 1819 – St. Albans, Vermont      Died January 6, 1905 – St. Albans, Vermont  
Find-A-Grave Information: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/23122079/ann-eliza-smith>  
Memorial ID: 23122079

Ann Eliza Brainerd Smith, the wife of Civil War-era Vermont governor, J. Gregory Smith, probably had heard the rumors that Confederate refugees living in Canada were contemplating attacks on Northern targets. Did she ever imagine that her own hometown, St. Albans, would fall victim to such an incursion? The same week that her husband presented a report to the Vermont legislature advocating for raising a militia to protect against such attacks, a daring raid by escaped Confederate prisoners of war terrorized St. Albans. Smith was at home that day and had to lead her family’s response to the crisis.<sup>2</sup>

Smith was well prepared to step into this role. Her upbringing, surrounded by prominent, successful men, had given her examples of leadership and broadened her knowledge of the world. Her father, Lawrence Brainerd, represented Vermont in the U.S. Senate, and her step-grandfather, Asa Aldis, was a judge. Smith recalled later that, “Grandfather Aldis was a judge of the [Vermont] Supreme Court and his house was the resort of the most gifted and influential men in the community. I used to sit unobserved in a corner of the room and listen to discourses upon politics, literature, religion, philosophy, current events, and the mysteries of human life. How grand and conclusive were the ideas of these oracles, prophets, magi, as they appeared to my unsophisticated mind! My whole life was influenced by them!” Lawrence Brainerd was active in the Abolitionist movement. It is believed that his home in St. Albans was a stop on the Underground Railroad.<sup>3</sup>

After her husband was elected governor, Smith helped with the war effort by organizing contributions for fairs to support the U.S. Sanitary Commission, but her family of five children and household responsibilities would likely have been her primary concern. As her husband had feared, however, the war would find its way to Vermont. On October 19, 1864 a group of Confederate operatives led by Lieutenant Bennett Young of the Confederate States Army shattered the calm of a rainy Wednesday afternoon in St. Albans. The raiders entered three banks armed with Colt revolvers and demanded that the clerks turn over the money.

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Others secured the nearby streets and stole horses to use for their getaway. Some of the men threw preparations of Greek fire at buildings, trying to set them ablaze. The raid would be the northern-most land action of the Civil War.<sup>4</sup>

Young had recruited his raiding party from CSA soldiers who had escaped to Canada from prisoner of war camps. They intended to gain needed funds for the Confederacy and to burn the town in retaliation for similar actions by Union troops in the South. They also hoped to draw Northern troops away from the front lines. It is possible that Smith had met Young. He had arrived in St. Albans ahead of the raid to do reconnaissance and according to a history of St. Albans published in 1872, he visited the Smith mansion and inspected the horses in the stables.<sup>5</sup>



*The Smith Home – Photo courtesy of  
St. Albans Historical Museum*

Whether Smith remembered that meeting at the time is hard to know; but the news of the raid was alarming. Smith was at home when a neighbor's servant brought news of the attack. Her thoughts immediately went to protecting her house. The Smith home sat only a few blocks away from Main Street, where the banks and primary businesses were located. Known as the Towers, its name perhaps a tribute to the three-story tower that fronted the building, the Smith home occupied the highest point in town. If the raiders wanted to burn a prominent building, the Towers would certainly suffice.<sup>6</sup>

With no men to rely on – her husband was in the state capital and her hired hands had gone off to deliver apples to a cider mill – the defense of the home was in Smith's hands. She sprang into action. While her servants locked up the house, she hunted for weapons. All she could find was an empty pistol. As she wrote to her husband the next morning, “with that in my hand I stood in the door feeling enraged but defiant.” Her brother-in-law, Stewart Stranahan, rode up looking for weapons. She gave him the pistol. He said the raiders had left town, headed north, and that he intended to join the pursuit. Smith would recall in her later years that she felt murderous at that point. She says she told Stranahan, “If you come up with them, kill them! Kill them !!”<sup>7</sup>

After her brother-in-law left, she continued to search for weapons. Locating a rifle and a pistol, she donated these to the men forming posses and patrols. She also allowed men from the town to take horses from her stables to pursue the raiders. Even as she dealt with securing her home and reassuring her family, Smith was concerned that her husband would be distracted by his fears for their safety.

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She wrote him “I worried very much about you, thought you would suffer great anxiety on our account, but my dear, never after this, think that I shall be frightened or that I cannot do all that my best judgement dictates.”<sup>8</sup>

Her husband received news of the raid by telegraph at about four o'clock that afternoon, not long after the legislature adjourned for the day. Governor Smith summoned the legislators back into session to give them the news. Then he began organizing a response. He telegraphed Major William Austine, the acting Assistant Provost Marshal in Brattleboro, Vermont, to request all available troops be sent to St. Albans on a special train. Austine organized a force of convalescent soldiers and Veterans Reserve Corps members, and headed to St. Albans. For the rest of the war, these troops would guard St. Albans. Smith recalled that “there were alarms but no attack. During all that time there was a Henry seventeen shooter on hooks over my bed and a sheathed Bowie knife within reach of my hand. Would I have dared to use them? I don't know, happily there was no occasion. Some of the state officials seemed to think I would have dared, and upon their recommendation, as a pleasant joke, I was given a commission, duly executed, to serve on the Governor's staff with the brevet title of colonel.”<sup>9</sup>



*Ann Eliza Brainerd Smith*

After the war, Smith would continue to be involved in civic life, serving as the state manager for the Vermont women's section at the Centennial Exposition in 1876. She also wrote and published three novels as well as a history of religious ideas. Her husband would enjoy a successful career as a railroad builder, helping to found the Northern Pacific Railway. He named the town of Brainerd, Minnesota, after his wife's family. She lived to see her son Edward follow in his father's footsteps and be elected governor of Vermont. When she was nearly eighty years old, she wrote a memoir of the raid for the Vermont magazine. That publication commented that, “No magazine article for years has attracted so much public attention in Vermont, or been more favorably commented upon by the press of the State, than the history of the “St. Albans Raid,” by Mrs. J. Gregory Smith, published in the January Vermont.”<sup>10</sup>

*Author Note:*

*Martha Taylor lives in Arlington, VA and enjoys all things historical. She is currently working on a novel about the St. Albans Raid.*

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*Editor's Note:*

*Martha Taylor is a participant in SWCW's Author Mentoring Program for first-time authors.*

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Rutland Herald as quoted in February 1899 issue of The Vermonter, p 110.

<sup>2</sup> Lamoille Newsdealer, 19 October 1864, p. 2. New York Times, 1 October 1864, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Dutcher, pp. 322-325. Smith. Personal Reminiscences. p. 7. Miner, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Green Mountain Freeman, 9 February 1864, p.2. Prince, p. 151. Fredriksen, p. 511.

<sup>5</sup> Dutcher, p. 310

<sup>6</sup> Rush and Pewitt, p. 16. Johnson, [unnumbered page]. Dutcher, p. 310. "The Northernmost Land Action of the Civil War," stalbansraid.com.

<sup>7</sup> Smith letter 20 October 1864, Smith, Vermonter, January 1899, p. 103.

<sup>8</sup> Smith letter 20 October 1864.

<sup>9</sup> New York Times 21 October 1864, p. 1. Wilson, p. 38. Lamoille Newsdealer, 26 October 1864, p.2. Smith, Vermonter, January 1899, p. 104.

<sup>10</sup> Vermont Watchman and State Journal. 1 March, 1876, p. 2. Halsted, p. 1. Smith, Vermonter, February 1899, p. 110.

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"The Northernmost Land Action of the Civil War." *St. Albans Raid*, St. Albans Historical Museum, 2020, [www.stalbansraid.com/](http://www.stalbansraid.com/).

## THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ARTS



### Telling the Civil War Through Art

by Barbara Noe Kennedy

Reprinted with permission of the Blue & Gray Education Society

You can learn a lot from paintings depicting events that happened during the Civil War, both on and off the battlefield. Winslow Homer, Frederic Edwin Church, and Eastman Johnson, all famed for their own distinctive styles and motifs, are among the American artists who captured various glimpses into the four-year struggle. Rather than following the European style of glamourizing the hero on the battlefield, they sought to capture the war's transformative impact. Here are some of the most powerful paintings capturing fleeting moments of gravitas.



*Order No. 11, 1865, George Caleb Bingham | Google Cultural Institute*

In protest of Missouri's martial law on the Kansas-Missouri border, George Caleb Bingham, who was a Conservative Unionist, painted this striking work depicting Federal troops brutally looting loyal Missourians. He claimed it was a matter of liberty being threatened by military despotism: Order No. 11 was "an act of imbecility," he said. However, his efforts backfired, with everyone from newspaper editors to ministers lambasting him for showing Union troops in a bad light and sympathizing with the South.

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*Recognition: North and South, Constant Meyer, 1865 | The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston*

As a Union soldier dies on a battlefield, a Confederate soldier holds him close, in grief. The title “Recognition” refers to the fact that the living soldier has just recognized the man he has killed as his younger brother. Constant Meyer captures the sorrow of the Civil War, in which brothers, sons, fathers, and friends fought one another. Behind them, the landscape contrasts life and death: the lush forest behind the living soldier, the stark rocks behind the dying one.

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*"The Girl I Left Behind Me," ca 1872, Eastman Johnson*

Named after an Irish ballad popular of the time, this striking painting depicts a young girl standing on a promontory, seemingly tentative about which direction to go. It's possible she is waiting for a husband who has gone to war. Behind her, a split-rail fence below and swirling fog above bespeak a world filled with division.

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*Our Banner in the Sky," 1881, Frederic Edwin Church*

After Fort Sumter was attacked in 1861, thereby kicking off the Civil War, the fort's tattered American flag was brought to the North, where it starred in a series of patriotic rallies. Church painted this allegorical painting of the flag, with a tree trunk serving as a flagpole, and a vibrant sunset forming the red and white stripes. The stars set against the twilight sky poke through a break in the clouds.

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*“A Visit from the Old Mistress,” Winslow Homer, 1876 | Smithsonian American Art Museum*

This painting, capturing a tense moment after the Civil War in the South, portrays formerly enslaved individuals who no longer are required to greet their mistress with decorum. The mistress is now a guest in their humble home, part of a new reality that was still being defined. Note the one woman who remains seated, something she would not have been allowed to do before the war. Winslow painted the work from different sketches he made in Virginia.

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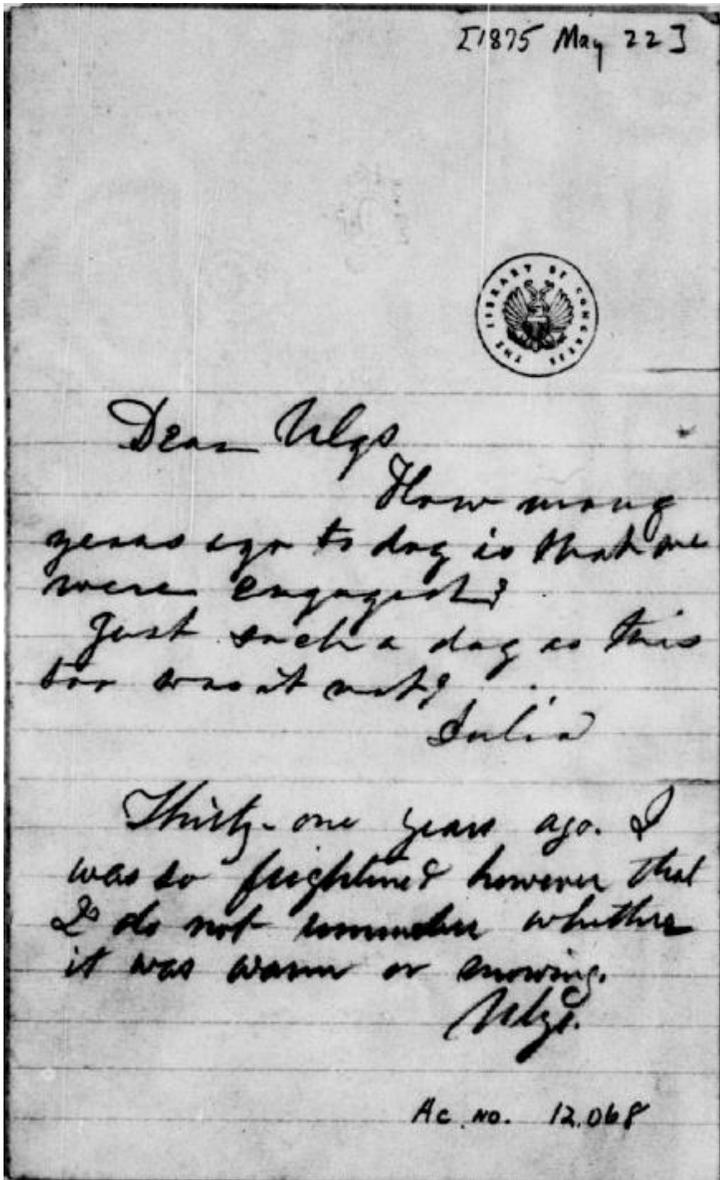


*The Peacemakers, 1868, George Peter Alexander Healy | The White House Historical Association*

Seated in the Union steamer River Queen just before the fall of Petersburg, Virginia, are Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman, Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, President Abraham Lincoln, and Rear Adm. David D. Porter. They are here to discuss the terms of the peace to follow. George Healy was not present for the meeting, but he had already painted individual portraits of each of the men and recomposed the scene that way. The original painting was destroyed in a Chicago fire in 1893; this smaller rendition surfaced 50 years later and was acquired by President Truman for the White House Collection.

## LOVE NOTES

In honor of Valentine's Day, here is a love note from a famous Civil War couple:



Courtesy of The Library of Congress

### Note from Julia Dent Grant to Ulysses S. Grant – May 22, 1875

Dear Ulys:

How many years ago today is that we were engaged?

Just such a day as this too was it not? – Julia

Thirty-one years ago. I was so frightened however that I do not remember whether it was warm or snowing – Ulys



Ulysses & Julia Grant at Mt. McGregor – 1885

Courtesy of U.S. Grant Cottage State Historic Site

## “If Heart Speaks Not to Heart” – Part 2

By Ashley Mays

This article originally appeared in *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, September, 2017. It is reprinted with permission of the University of North Carolina Press.

[Part 2 of a Series \(Part 1 was featured in our October 2020 issue\)](#)

Writing manuals like *Chesterfield's Art of Letter-Writing Simplified* instructed middle-to upper-class writers on the best practices of condolence letter writing. As in contemporary sentimental literature, writers carefully constructed their letters to sound casual and heartfelt.<sup>14</sup> "If heart speaks not to heart, in the simplest, most soothing language of nature, words will, to the sufferer, prove cold and unimpressive—worse than useless," instructed Philip Chesterfield. The manual went on to identify a heavenly reunion as the "one true source of consolation," ultimately hoping that "the anticipated joy blunts the edge of present grief." If the dead reunited in heaven, then death was not really a loss at all; without loss, the reader need not grieve. Following that logic, as a sample letter written to a grieving widow proclaimed, "We *dare* not, then, mourn for *them*."<sup>15</sup>

Wartime condolence letters followed the formulaic and sentimental model of condolence letters that Chesterfield's guidebook modeled, thereby echoing prewar recommendations for how widows should feel about and interpret their losses. This immensely popular style of writing remained prevalent throughout the Civil War, primarily among those remaining at home, often women, and with the education, writing materials, and desire. Condolence letters also typically addressed the loss of men on the battlefield or of subsequent wounds, perhaps because the chaos of hospitals most dramatically necessitated another format for communicating sympathy.<sup>16</sup> Flora Stuart represents the wealthy, socially prominent Confederate widows who typically received condolence letters. Her correspondents, though perhaps more expansive than most, also reflect the wide and distant connections possible for the socially prominent. Since writers dared not admit that a brief relationship or an unhappy marriage might spark something other than heartache, the Stuarts' relationship would not have produced significant variations within the letters. Flora's celebrity as the widow of the famous Confederate general J. E. B. Stuart likely increased the volume of letters that she received, especially from less well-known acquaintances, but the content of those letters mirrored the structure and messages within the smaller stacks of papers that other Confederate widows received.

In 1855, nineteen-year-old Flora Cooke met a young army officer named J. E. B. Stuart while visiting her father, the fort's commanding officer.

[Continued](#)

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The couple married and grew their family and their social status as J.E.B. progressed through the army's ranks. During the Civil War, the Stuarts' social capital continued to rise thanks to the general's exploits in the Confederate cavalry. At the Battle of Yellow Tavern, however, the couple's fortunes changed abruptly. On May 11, 1864, a Union cavalryman shot General Stuart. An ambulance carried the wounded general to his brother-in-law's house where, in the company of a few family members and fellow soldiers, J.E.B. bequeathed his earthly belongings to his loved ones, expressed his resignation to God's will, and passed away. Flora arrived mere hours later. Nevertheless, she learned the details of her husband's death from reliable witnesses who recounted as 'good' of a death as possible in war, and she was able to bury the body a few days later, small comforts denied to many other war widows.<sup>17</sup>



*Daguerreotype of Flora Cooke Stuart. Image courtesy of the Virginia Historical Society.*

In the weeks following the funeral, family and friends wrote Flora numerous condolence letters, which arrived piecemeal over several weeks due to a collapsing mail and transportation system. The messages, however, would last for years to come, shaping Flora's understanding of her family and friends' expectations for her grief; they matched their antebellum predecessors by sympathizing with the bereaved, proving the dead's salvation, and urging an end to grief. Though Ella Ginnan initially delayed for fear of "intruding" upon Flora's grief, she ultimately wrote because "my heart prompts me to sympathise with you, now that your soul is overwhelmed with anguish."<sup>18</sup>

Friends and family began their letters by expressing sympathy for their loved one's loss. The task proved challenging; mere words felt empty and "cold."<sup>19</sup> Kate Dabney lamented that she did "not feel capable of writing to you as I would wish." All, paper and ink could not convey the sound of her voice or the warmth of her arms. Instead, she could only describe her wish to "mingle my tears" with those of her bereaved friend, hoping Flora's imagination would bring those words to life. Even if Kate could have found the right words, she realized that limitations were simply human. Kate admitted, "I wish I could say any thing in this world to comfort you, *but I know your loss & feel that it is beyond the power of any human being to do so. God alone can do that, & I feel that He is with you now.*"<sup>20</sup> Kate might have ended her letter there, but she continued on.

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Words flowed more easily and with more power when friends and family recounted stories of "personal grief," proving that they too had endured tragedy and could legitimately empathize with the afflicted widow.<sup>21</sup> Relatives of the deceased soldier easily proved their camaraderie in the ranks of the bereaved, and even more distant relatives and friends claimed to understand the emotional turmoil of loss.<sup>22</sup> Flora's friend Kate McClellan believed that she could understand a widow's pain because she "had an idolized brother stricken down by the ruthless foe."<sup>23</sup>

Yet fellow widows, both strangers and friends, wrote with particular sincerity, from one "sister in sorrow" to another.<sup>24</sup> When Georgia Smith's husband died earlier in the war, Flora had written a touching condolence letter, which Georgia appreciated while rejoicing that Flora was "still spared" while others had "tasted the one bitter cup." When Flora joined the ever-growing group of Confederate war widows, Georgia wrote immediately. "My dear friend, from my own heart—bowed down with sorrows, I feel for you as only the widow can feel—for what grief is like unto ours? We are set aside, and there is a mark upon us lonely & desolate we must fulfill our pilgrimage—awaiting with patience his time," Georgia lamented.<sup>25</sup> By the last year of the war, more and more women would come to identify with Flora. Another friend, who was still a wife when she wrote a condolence letter to Flora, became a widow shortly after. When Flora reciprocated, her widowed friend replied, "I thought I felt for you but know *now* I didn't. I *do now* more than I can tell you."<sup>26</sup> As these letters show, widowhood, an inherently lonely status, emotionally connected many unwilling friends in war-torn southern communities.<sup>27</sup>

No matter the author, the attempt to establish a sympathetic connection sometimes opened the door to criticism and competition.<sup>28</sup> For instance, fellow widow Georgia Smith let slip her resentment of the "comfort God gives you in *his* children—that is a blessing He has seen fit to deny me."<sup>29</sup> Innocent comments that "a good many of our neighbors have suffered in the same way" might have provided the reader a sense of community or unintentionally cheapened the value of their individual grief.<sup>30</sup> As Betty Warren complained to her brother's widow, "If I do mention my troubles to anyone they'll say 'everyone is losing friends now' and that is the last they think of it; but Oh! 'Tis not the last with you and me. 'Tis very true most persons are losing someone dear to them but that don't help me." Still, later in the letter, Betty was guilty of that very crime. She wrote that Sallie should not grieve because she had a surviving child, whereas other possible victims of war, like Betty, did not.<sup>31</sup>



*The Soldier's Grave* by  
Currier and Ives (1865)  
Courtesy of Library of Congress

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In another letter, she sent a newspaper clipping that recounted a tragic story, claiming, "although your trouble is great enough, this poor woman's is worse."<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps Sallie found Betty's point of view helpful; perhaps she took offense. Either way, Betty's letters demonstrated a central problem that threatened condolence letters' effectiveness in a time of war. To prove they might sympathize with a widow's plight, writers needed to show they had experienced and even overcome loss. War provided an abundance of such proof. Some skilled writers might bond with the bereaved over a sense of shared loss for a shared cause, yet more proof did not necessarily translate into better results, because detailed tales of woe shifted the emphasis of the letter from the reader to the writer. As a result, these condolence letters produced both moments of comradery and moments of competition. This slight shift in tone and emphasis could undermine a letter's ability to convey the sympathy required to persuade a widow to accept the writer's interpretation of loss, thus suggesting the need for a different writing format.

After expressing sympathy, many letters echoed a version of Mary Pickney's question to Leila Habersham, "Are you trusting in God my poor Leila, though He slay you?"<sup>33</sup> Answering yes, according to writers, was the only path to comfort in the face of deep grief.<sup>34</sup> Yet "trusting in God" proved more complicated than simply accepting comfort. Widowhood might produce antagonism toward God, with dire consequences for the soul and for society. According to many letter writers, only those who gave their hearts to God and followed His will would live forever in heaven. This gesture of religious submission, more common among women than men at the time, further proved women's submissive status within the broader gender hierarchy. Though a husband's death might seem an act of vengeance, it was actually a "stroke of God's Providence" reflecting a wisdom that humans could not understand.<sup>35</sup> Turning to the Bible for support, some letter writers even transferred the husband's authority and responsibility directly to God. Georgia Smith referenced Psalm 146:9, where God promised to protect the "widow and the fatherless," while other writers drew from passages like Isaiah 54:4–8 to cast God as a "Husband to the Widow."<sup>36</sup> These verses reminded widows of their continued subordinate roles within the social and religious order.<sup>37</sup>

To be continued . . . .



*Courtesy of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
via North Carolina Digital Heritage Center.*

Continued

## Notes

14. Henkin, *Postal Age*, 97–98, 109–17, 94, 103; Nan Johnson, *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1866–1910* (Carbondale: Southern University Press, 2002), 86. See also Hugh Blair, "Lecture 34: Philosophical Writing, Dialogue, Epistolary Writing, Fictitious History," in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres; Chiefly from the Lectures of Dr. Blair*, ed. Abraham Mills, AM (New York: James Conner, 1832), 273–74.

15. *Chesterfield's Art of Letter-Writing Simplified ... To Which Is Appended the Complete Rules of Etiquette, and The Usages of Society* (1857; repr., New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1867), 49–50.

16. The focus on battlefield casualties likely reflects demographics and circumstances rather than derision of death by disease. Officers in Lee's army were typically older, wealthier, and more likely to be married, so their social circles were more likely to write condolence letters. In addition, officers were one to more than two times as likely to be killed or wounded in battle. See Joseph T. Glatthaar, *General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 188, 198. Battlefield casualties dominated the archival holdings for both condolence and notification letters, perhaps reflecting a bias in the preservation process.

17. Catherine M. Wright, "Flora Cooke Stuart (1836–1923)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, last modified October 27, 2015, [http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Stuart\\_Flora\\_Cooke\\_1836-1923](http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Stuart_Flora_Cooke_1836-1923); Jeffery D. Wert, *Cavalrymen of the Lost Cause: A Biography of J. E. B. Stuart* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 361–63. For more on wartime burial practices, see Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 153–58; Laderman, *Sacred Remains*, especially pt. 2; and Nudelman, *John Brown's Body*, 44–45.

18. Ella M. Ginnan to Flora Stuart, May 24, 1864, Stuart Family Papers, ca. 1846–1925, Virginia Historical Society (hereafter cited as VHS). For fear of intruding, see Sarah P. Jones to Cousin, June 16, [1864], Polk Family Papers #4207, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as SHC); J. J. Govan to Mrs. James L. Autry, January 30, 1863, James L. Autry Papers, 1832–1998, Woodson Research Center Special Collections and Archives, Fondren Library, Rice University, Houston, Texas (hereafter cited as James L. Autry Papers). For assuming pain at the death of a husband, see Georgia Smith to Mrs. Stuart, May 24, 1864, and Nannie O Price to Mrs. Flora Stuart, May 15, [1864], both in Stuart Family Papers; Eliza to Sallie Milner, January 12, 1863, Richard W. Milner Collection, box 40, microfilm drawer 171, box 40, Georgia Department of Archives and History (hereafter cited as GDAH).

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19. Kate M. McClellan to Flora Stuart, June 6, 1864, M. L. Fontaine to Flora Stuart, May 24, 1864, both in Stuart Family Papers; and see also J. J. Govan to Mrs. James L. Autry, January 30, 1863, James L. Autry Papers; Caroline S. Couper to Mrs. Habersham, May 12, 1863, in Habersham, *A Sketch of Frederic*, 194.
20. Kate M. Dabney to Flora Stuart, May 18, 1864, Stuart Family Papers. See also J. J. Govan to Mrs. James L. Autry, January 30, 1863, James L. Autry Papers; Mrs. Gilliam to Leila Habersham, n.d., quoted in Habersham, *Sketch of Frederic*, 201; E. Lewis to J. Stoddard Johnson, April 17, 1862, George M. Johnson Papers, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky (hereafter cited as KHS); Jeb Pugh to Lisa Nicholls, attached to Mattie to Lisa Nicholls, July 28, 1862, Nicholls Family Papers, 1729–1965, Manuscript Collection 639, Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans (hereafter cited as Nicholls Family Papers).
21. Mary M. Fontaine to Flora Stuart, May 15, 1864, Stuart Family Papers.
22. Jeb Pugh to Lisa Nicholls, attached to Mattie to Lisa Nicholls, July 28, 1862, Nicholls Family Papers.
23. Kate McClellan to Flora Stuart, June 6, 1864, Stuart Family Papers. See also Hassie to Cousin Sallie, January 21, 1863, Richard W. Milner Collection, and Shell to My Dear Cousin, November 25, 1864, Lang Family Civil War Letters, box 9, microfilm drawer 252, both in GDAH.
24. Mrs. Sarah Bull to Flora Stuart, May 13, 1864, J. E. B. Stuart Papers 1833–1962, VHS.
25. Georgia Smith to Mrs. Stuart, May 24, 1864, Stuart Family Papers.
26. GMD to Flora Stuart, April 6, [1864 or 1865], Stuart Family Papers.
27. For more on sentimental writings modeling or shaping behavior and feelings for groups of women, see Samuels, *Culture of Sentiment*.
28. *Chesterfield's Art of Letter Writing*, 49.
29. Georgia Smith to Mrs. Stuart, May 24, 1864, Stuart Family Papers.

Continued

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32. Sister B. Warren, October 18, 1862, Spears and Hicks Family Papers.
33. Mary P. to Leila Habersham, May 15, [1863], in Habersham, *Sketch of Frederic*, 186. See also Mary P. Govan to Mrs. Jeanie V. Autry, April 25, 1863, James L. Autry Papers.
34. Kate M. McClellan to Flora Stuart, June 6, 1864, Stuart Family Papers. See also Sister in Law to Mrs. Emma L. Garnett, May 20, 1863, Emma Lavinia Baber Garnett Letters, 1847–1863, #27083, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia; H. M. Bruce to Emily Todd Helm, September 30, 1863, Emilie Todd Helm Papers, KHS; and L.S.D. to Mrs. Johnson, June 18, 1862, George M. Johnson Papers.
35. Kate M. McClellan to Flora Stuart, June 6, 1864, Stuart Family Papers. See also J. J. Govan to Mrs. James L. Autry, January 30, 1863, James L. Autry Papers; Eliza to Sallie Milner, January 12, 1863, Richard W. Milner Collection; Mattie to Sister Lisa Nicholls, July 28, 1862, Nicholls Family Papers. See George C. Rable, *God's Almost Chosen People: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 76.
36. Psalm 146:9, KJV; Georgia Smith to Mrs. Stuart, May 24, 1864, Stuart Family Papers; Isaiah 54:5–8, KJV; Fanny Y. Craft to Mrs. Jeanie V. Autry, [1863], James L. Autry Papers. See also G. W. Dungan to Mrs. Lang, July 26, 1864, Lang Family Civil War Letters; E. Lewis to J. Stoddard Johnson, April 17, 1862, George M. Johnson Papers.
37. Jennifer Gross argues that widows symbolized the failure of the Confederate war effort and the postwar inability of white male survivors to care for the victims of war. These letters suggest that white southern communities took immediate action to keep widows woven into the fabric of society. See Jennifer Lynn Gross, "'Good Angels': Confederate Widowhood in the Reassurance of Patriarchy in the Postbellum South" (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 2001).



## ***THE HEARTH***



### **Okra Gumbo**

The okra plant originated in East Africa and was spread across the continent by tribal migrations. With the spread of Islam, okra was introduced to India, Brazil, the West Indies and China. It reached North America with Africans imported into slavery beginning in the seventeenth century. Okra grew well in temperate climates and was soon adopted by British Americans. They kept the name for *okra* from its use in the Igbo language of southeastern Nigeria. Similarly, the African Bantu Kimbundu language word for okra is *quingombo*, which is also the source of the English word gumbo. Gumbo is a type of soup or stew which not only usually contains okra, tomatoes and onions, but can contain bits of meat and/or seafood along with the vegetables and hot spices, and is served with rice. This recipe is one which does not contain meat or seafood and closely resembles the simplest of historical American gumbos. Now considered integral to Creole cuisine, it represents the earliest of African influences, merged later with Spanish and French influences, upon American cuisine. During cold winter months, this should warm you up - and, if a little fire ash blows into the pot, that just heightens the flavor!

Serves approximately four to five persons as a main course.

#### Special Equipment

Large flat-bottomed cast iron Dutch oven with handles (for hearth cooking on a trivet) and with a bail (for hearth cooking hung from a crane), or large soup pot (for contemporary stove-top cooking).

**Continued**

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Medium-height iron trivet (approximately 4½ inches in height and 8 inches in diameter), or a crane with a set of S-hooks – or a set of chains, with two S-hooks (for hearth cooking). Alternatively, an iron or steel grill of the same height can be used to support the Dutch oven.

### Ingredients

Butter - ¼ cup

Lard - 1 Tbsp. (for contemporary use can substitute light olive oil or vegetable oil)

Onion – 1 small, diced and dusted with flour

Garlic – 1 clove, minced

Flat leaf parsley - 2 Tbsp., finely chopped

Fresh thyme - 1 sprig

Salt - 1 Tsp.

Black pepper - 1/2 Tsp. (or to taste)

Red pepper flakes - 1/2 Tsp. (or to taste)

Vegetable or chicken broth - 4 cups (bouillon and water can also be used)

Water - 3 cups

Fresh tomatoes, peeled or not, and diced, with juice - 3 1/2 cups (1 each 28-ounce can of diced tomatoes with juice can be substituted – fire-roasted would be best)

Fresh young okra cut into coin-shaped slices, or frozen okra pieces - 2 cups

Hot cooked rice - 2 or more cups, to personal preference

### Directions

1. Prepare a hot bed of coals.
2. In a Dutch oven set on a medium-height trivet over coals, or hanging from S-hooks about 6 inches over the fire, heat butter and lard (or oil) until melted. Move coals around as necessary in order to regulate heat.
3. Add the flour-dusted onion and parsley and cook until onion is translucent and soft. Then add the garlic and cook for one more minute.
4. Add the thyme, salt, black pepper, and red pepper flakes, and cook for another minute or so.
5. Add 4 cups of broth, 3 cups of water and the tomatoes. Cook on a medium simmer for 30 minutes.
6. Add 2 cups of okra and cook for another 20-25 minutes, or until okra is tender.
7. Ladle the gumbo over hot cooked rice and place before a table full of appreciative diners.

Continued

Notes:

Easily adapted for contemporary stove-top cooking by using a large soup pot on a burner set to medium heat.

Shredded cooked chicken may be added at the end. If including seafood, one can add firm-textured fish – not tuna – or crab when the okra is added.

Providing diners with file powder and/or a non-vinegary hot sauce as condiments will make them even more appreciative!

As always, please exercise great care when cooking over an open fire or coals.

*Adapted for hearth-cooking by J. White from a contemporary recipe by Tori Avey for the Louisa County (Virginia) Historical Society, which was inspired by Mary Randolph's The Virginia Housewife (1824) and Mrs. B.C. Howard's Fifty Years in A Maryland Kitchen (1881 edition).*



*ARABELLA MARIA: 'Only to think, Julia dear, that our Mothers wore such ridiculous fashions as these!'*

*BOTH: 'Ha! ha! ha! ha!'*

*Harper's Weekly – July 11, 1857*

:

## THE RETICULE

In the nineteenth century, and particularly during the Civil War, poetry offered not only inspiration, but expressions of devotion and consolation. This poem is one which evokes all of these emotions through the voice of a woman.

From *The National Era* <sup>[1]</sup>  
September 22, 1853

### TO BEATRICE, ON RECEIVING A BOUQUET

Thy gift, yet before me, dear sister, hath  
wrought  
A spell, and cast o'er me the shadows of  
thought.  
The violet, lowly in loveliness, seems  
A part, almost holy, of earlier dreams.  
It leadeth me ever with magical power,  
For thought cannot sever dear home and that  
flower.

A frail tie, entwining where  
stronger on cease;  
Thou, too, hast been pining for  
home, Beatrice.

It bloomed, oh, how brightly!  
Where all was my own,  
Where fell the dew lightly on seed  
I had sown.  
There morning beheld me, and all  
was delight  
Till darkness compelled me to murmur  
"good night."  
Those flowers, thus cherished and blooming  
each day,  
She loved, who has perished as calmly as  
they.  
It comes to my bosom an angel of peace,  
Fair childhood's sweet blossom – thy gift,  
Beatrice.



The rose – shall I name thee, thou queen of  
the flowers  
Enough that I claim thee the loved in all  
hours.  
The brow of the sleeper, in visionless rest –  
The joyous – the weeper – thy presence has  
blessed.  
What pure thoughts unspoken thy petals  
impart!

As friendship's sweet token, how  
dear to the heart.  
Though widely we sever, though  
sorrows increase,  
Thy love I hold over with this,  
Beatrice.

Though life's sweetest roses a  
pathway adorn,  
It often discloses the canker and  
thorn.

The spirit concealeth its trials from light;  
Time only revealeth the ravaging blight.  
I ask not of heaven thy future to know.  
To me be it given to share weal and woe.  
Oppressed in thy sadness, till life's ills shall  
cease,  
And blessed in thy gladness, my own  
Beatrice.

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[1] *The National Era* was an abolitionist newspaper published weekly in Washington, D.C., from 1847 to 1860. It featured the works of John Greenleaf Whittier, who served as associate editor, and the first publication, as a serial, of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851).

## After the War

By J. White

Most women and men who serve in combat find that their war-time service defines them for the rest of their lives. This was particularly the case for those who served in the Civil War. Some found that the experience built the character, established the contacts, and provided the inner fortitude to propel them toward great success in building the nation which arose from the war. Some wanted no more than to return to a modest private life as solid citizens, raising their families and contributing to their communities. Still others, who could not shake the trauma which they had experienced, led post-war lives of quiet desperation, sometimes with tragic endings. As our “Mystery Lady” article in the October 2020 edition of *At Home and in the Field* reminded us, the celebrated vivandiere, Marie Brose Tepe, or “French Mary”, decorated with the Kearny Cross for valor, and beloved by Federal soldiers, was one of the unfortunate latter veterans.

Marie Tepe experienced continuous personal and financial hardship following the war, perhaps accompanied by a form of post-traumatic stress disorder. Despite her well-documented service, and support from other veterans, she was denied a veteran’s pension by the US government. She was illiterate and uneducated, thus earning a living was a challenge. At an advanced age, she was impoverished, living with a husband whom she would have liked to divorce, reliant upon friends for shelter in a Pittsburgh tenement, invalided by rheumatism, and in constant pain from the effects of her ankle wound sustained at the battle of Fredericksburg. Just a few months before her sixty-seventh birthday, she drank the rodenticide poison “Paris Green” and, over a day-long period, died an agonizing death.



The trajectory of Marie Tepe’s life can be chronicled in four images, produced at critical junctures in her life. The first, and most well-known, was taken at the studio of the Tyson Brothers, following the battle of Gettysburg. Depicted with an open and earnest expression, and wearing her Kearny Cross, the later colorized version was used for cartes-de-visite which became wildly popular amongst Federal soldiers.

Continued

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The second image, excerpted from a photograph taken by the Philadelphia-based photographer, Frederick Gutekunst, is more melancholy in nature. It shows Marie Tepe standing alone and viewing the site of Federal earthworks which had stood on Gettysburg's East Cemetery Hill.



The third image is a drawing used in her obituary published by the Detroit Free Press on 21 May 1901. It was taken from a photograph of her, made at the reunion of Federal veterans of Fredericksburg, held on December 1, 1893, in Philadelphia.

The final image, un-dated, but known as “The Last Photograph”, is of an elderly and care-worn woman, with lips pursed in endurance of pain, yet still displaying gritty determination.



Sources:

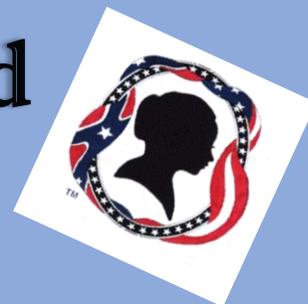
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# At Home and in the Field



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Articles of interest to our membership, including period poetry, stories of women's contributions and period recipes, should be directed to the Editor:

J. White – [swcw1865@gmail.com](mailto:swcw1865@gmail.com)



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