

Carroll History Journal

Historical Society of Carroll County, Maryland

TWO CARROLL WOMEN: EYEWITNESSES TO THE CIVIL WAR

The study of history is dependent on the deep-thinking historian, from Herodotus to Doris Kearns Goodwin. However, scholars cannot claim to have done a complete task of research if they only depend upon official and semi-official records, like Department of Defense documents, Presidential memos, and newspapers of record. Historians, if they wish to tell the full story, must also investigate the accounts of the common folk, ranging from oral narratives that have been transcribed to diaries and letters. These first-person narratives add immeasurably to our understanding of history, providing details which may have been obscured or forgotten but which help fill in the blank spaces around an event. Sometimes these eyewitness accounts offer more vivid details than do dry dispatches and even help to correct or clarify the official record.

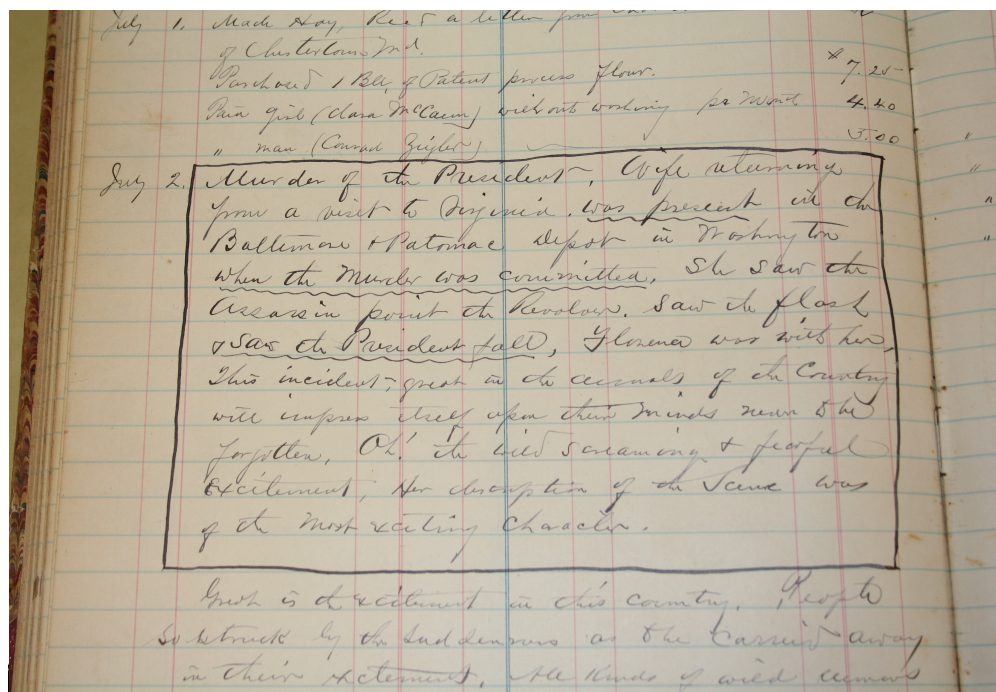
In the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War, Carroll County is fortunate to claim numerous accounts provided by people who were actually part of the fray. What's more, two of them are written by women. One is a 62-year-old Daughter of Charity who saw first-hand the carnage of Harper's Ferry, Antietam, and Gettysburg as she nursed the sick and wounded of both sides. The other is a 16-year-old school girl who presaged the women war correspondents of the

20th century by chronicling the events in a small county town on the days surrounding the Battle of Gettysburg. Her diary is now one of the prized possessions of the Maryland Historical Society. The Historical Society of Carroll County is privileged to bring you these unique accounts of two non-combatants which help give us a better understanding of the impact of that savage war on our region and country 150 years ago.

We are pleased that the authors of our two articles are both HSCC members. Helen Gorman joined the Society in 1981 and is the former chair of the Library Committee and Head Librarian. Sam Piazza is Vice Chair of our Board of Trustees. We thank them for their contribution.

Frank J. Batavick
Publications Committee

Historians never know what a diary will reveal. On July 2, 1881, Dr. Jacob J. Weaver, Jr., of Uniontown, recorded and highlighted his wife's witnessing of the assassination of President Garfield. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.



SISTER MATILDA COSKERY, DAUGHTER OF CHARITY

BY HELEN A. GORMAN

As we commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, it is important to recognize the significant contributions made by Carroll County residents who were non-combatants. One of them was Anastasia Coskery (1799-1870), a Taneytown native who joined the Sisters of Charity religious order in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and worked as a nurse on battlefields and in hospitals throughout most of the war, helping soldiers on both sides of the conflict.

Anastasia was the second of eight children born to Irish-American John Coskery and English-American Jacoba Clementina Bathilda Spalding, daughter of Henry and Anne (Elder) Spalding, formerly of southern Maryland. The Coskerys, Elders and Spaldings were members of a small but vibrant Catholic community in northern Frederick County at the close of the 18th century. John Coskery was a teacher and a hatter. He and Jacoba must have been unusual parents because four of their eight children committed themselves to lives of public service. Son Henry became a priest who rose to be Rector of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore and Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Sons William and Felix graduated from the University of Maryland's medical school and practiced in Baltimore. Anastasia became a nun on August 15, 1829, when nearly thirty years old, and received the name Sister Matilda. Although there are no photographs of her, she was described as "small, slight, rather pale with piercing black eyes, a quick and often abrupt manner of speech [and] whose lips were often moving in prayer."

The mission of the Sisters of Charity was to educate children and provide nursing care and spiritual guidance to the sick, poor, and needy. Their goals were to be accomplished with simplicity, charity, and obedience, and earthly work was always to take precedence over spiritual obligations. Matilda's training included almost five years of nursing instruction, but, because one of her brothers was an invalid, she probably entered the order with some

prior nursing experience. The Sisters practiced what they learned in the Emmitsburg community under local doctors and in the infirmary of Mount St. Mary's College and Seminary.

In 1833, Sister Matilda went to Baltimore on her first mission—service at the Maryland Hospital for the Insane, a public hospital whose staff included lay nurses as well as members of the Sisters of Charity. This was her initial opportunity to work extensively with the mentally ill. Her superiors in the order quickly recognized her administrative skills and, for her second mission, sent her to the hospital associated with Richmond Medical College in Virginia. Her title there was Sister Servant, the Sister who supervised the other nuns, but her duties also included handling the hospital's business affairs and she took her turn at nursing as well.

Back in Baltimore in 1840, she helped found Mount St. Vincent Hospital, an institution run by the Sisters which evolved into Mount Hope Retreat, an asylum for the insane. As her experience in treating mental patients grew, she went on missions to other facilities run by her order in Virginia, New York, Michigan, Delaware, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. Between those missions, she returned to the Central House in Emmitsburg, often to rest after a particularly strenuous assignment, but she continued to teach nursing to the Sisters in training.

Sometime in the 1840s she began writing a nursing textbook based on her experiences and observations called *Advices Concerning the Sick*. Although she never finished the manuscript or published it, her colleagues regarded it highly and consulted it often. By the time she reached her fifties, doctors throughout America recognized her expertise in the care of the mentally ill.

In 1850, her religious order, the Sisters of Charity, merged with the much older Daughters of Charity, an international order founded in France. It became known as the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de



Detail from “Our Women in the War,” an engraving by Winslow Homer that was published in the September 6, 1862, issue of *Harper’s Weekly*.

cannot be attributed to a specific author, but whenever Sister Matilda’s descriptions have been identified, they are vivid and full of emotion.

Harper’s Ferry and Winchester, 1861

On June 7, 1861, a telegram reached the Central House in Emmitsburg requesting Sisters to care for the Confederate wounded at Harper’s Ferry, Portsmouth, and Norfolk, Virginia; a similar request came from the federal government for care of Union soldiers, and soon 100 Sisters were helping soldiers on both sides of the conflict.

Sister Matilda, now 62 years old, and two other Sisters began a journey to Harper’s Ferry by stage on June 9. After several delays, they finally reached the Potomac River, and she noted their crossing:

We were soon over the Potomac bridge, on which kegs of gunpowder were already placed so that the moment of the enemy’s approach, it might be destroyed.

Later she described what they found at the military hospital on Bolivar Heights.

The hospital was filled with sick, and around the town lay about 40 or 50 thousand men just arrived from the most remote southern states, and a cold wet spell having preceded the present heat, they were sick and lay in their tents until there were vacancies or turns for them in the better sheltered houses in the town. One regiment had contracted measles on its march, and this spreading among others in such exposure, thinned their numbers before the balls and swords had begun their quicker work.

Almost immediately, a telegram came from Winchester ordering the whole Confederate army to evacuate the town.

The army moved at once, but they who served the sick, and those that were to collect tents, finally destroy bridges, rail tracks, etc., were still delayed some. . . . Then came new orders to wait awhile; but the poor sick had already been moved to the depot to wait there for the return of the [railroad] cars from Winchester.

Paul. Matilda and the other Sisters adopted the Daughters’ habit—the well-known blue-gray gown and large, white cornette. The Central House in Emmitsburg continued to serve as the headquarters of the order in America.

When the Civil War began, the Sisters had more than 30 years’ experience in health care and had served needy people of all faiths. Their hospitals and educational institutions were operating from New York to New Orleans, and westward to California. During the war, at least 270 Sisters ministered to the physical and spiritual needs of soldiers on both sides at over 60 sites in 15 states. Confederate Lt. Col. Daniel Shipman Troy, who encountered the Daughters of Charity at a hospital in Washington after being captured at Petersburg, Virginia, wrote,

One of the first things that impressed me was that the sisters made no distinction whatever between the most polished gentlemen and the greatest rascalion in the lot. The measure of their attention was solely the human suffering to be relieved.

After the war, Father Francis Burlando, who served as Chaplain and Provincial Director of the Daughters of Charity in Emmitsburg, asked the Sisters who had served on the battlefields and in the hospitals to record their experiences. Many of their narratives, preserved in the order’s archives, are composites and

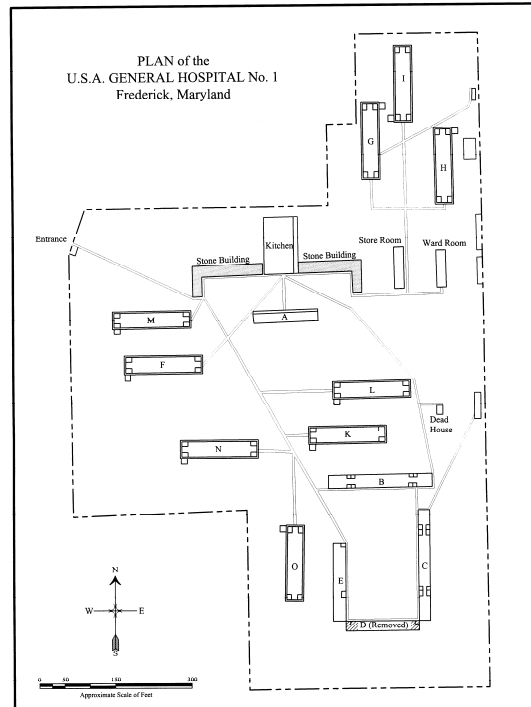
About 11 P.M. the Sisters received notice they would finally leave.

An open farm wagon with two Negro men to drive - our worthy pastor . . . was to be our Blessed Guide and Companion. Our trunks formed seats for us. The heavy spray from both rivers was thick in the air. . . . Our wagon running on a high terrace edge, on the Potomac river, made with the darkness, a gloomy prospect before us. On reaching the depot, an officer met us, and offered to find us a shelter until the car would arrive. He conducted us over two boards raised up, and by his lantern we could see water on one side of us, so that we must watch to pick our steps lest we might get off the boards. At last he opened a little hut, whose door was almost washed by the river. Here we entered, sat down resting our foreheads on our umbrellas, until between 3:00 or 4:00 o'clock [in the morning], when taking the cars, we arrived in Winchester in 5 hours.

Eventually the three Sisters in Winchester were replaced by six others who continued serving until only a few patients remained in the hospital.

General Hospital No. 1, Frederick, 1862-63

In June 1862, Sister Matilda began a year's work at the U.S. General Hospital No. 1 located on the site of the Hessian Barracks in Frederick, Maryland. She and the other Sisters were housed in cramped quarters in the decrepit, century-old stone barracks, while the invalids occupied wooden barracks on the surrounding grounds. At the hospital, the Sisters found the wounded living in deplorable conditions, and they themselves experienced a great deal of prejudice from the Army medical staff as well as the patients. Eventually the situation improved for everyone, and the surgeons acknowledged the superior quality of care given by the Daughters of Charity. On July 4, about 400 soldiers arrived as the



General Hospital No. 1 stood on what are now the grounds of the Maryland School for the Deaf. Drawing from *One Vast Hospital* by Terry Reimer, National Museum of Civil War Medicine; digital reproduction by Barry Warthen.

Union Army began shutting down its hospitals in Winchester, Virginia. Most of the men were suffering from dysentery and typhoid fever, and the hospital was unprepared for such an influx. The sick lay in the hospital yard under the hot sun for a day until beds could be prepared. Sister Matilda did what she could to alleviate their suffering by diluting

wine and distributing it as a refreshing drink. As more sufferers continued to arrive, the worst cases were kept at the hospital and the others were distributed in public buildings. Eight more Sisters were dispatched from Emmitsburg to help the overburdened hospital staff.

No sooner was one crisis resolved, than another arose. Word came on September 5 that the Confederate Army would reach Frederick the next morning. Mobile patients left immediately, but the doctors and Sisters stayed to attend those who couldn't be evacuated. The following day, the hospital surrendered to the Confederates under General Lee, and Southern troops entered the grounds. Sister Matilda described those soldiers.

Oh! it was then we saw a mass of human misery; men, young and old, besides boys that were mere children, emaciated with hunger and covered with a few tattered rags that gave them the appearance more of dead men than living ones! After these skeleton looking beings had domiciled themselves . . . the sick, numbering over four hundred were brought in. . . . The majority were half dead and called for food and drink. They told us that they had been without anything to eat for thirteen days, except some green corn.

After four days, the Confederates marched out of Frederick, and on September 17, the Union and

Confederate armies collided at Antietam—the bloodiest single day of battle in American history.

Antietam Battlefield, September 1862

At twilight on September 18, Daughters of Charity from hospitals in Frederick arrived on the Antietam battlefield and were joined by the pastor of St. Joseph's Church, Emmitsburg, and two nuns bringing supplies for the wounded. Men of both armies lay all over the fields with straw for beds and occasionally a blanket stretched, tent-like, over them as shelter from the sun. Sister Matilda recorded,

Our first work was to finish roofing the six feet of earth they inhabited. We looked for an axe; then some fence rails fixing them as others were, until every sufferer had at least a little shade over him. We distributed our little stores among them, though their wretched condition seemed calculated to destroy all relish for any food or drink. Unable to move or change their position, every filth surrounded them; add to this, vermin, maggots and stench.

Returning to the same field the next day, the Sisters discovered that some of those they had previously helped had been “consigned to the earth,” but others were able to walk to meet them.

Sister Matilda and her party stayed for six days, passing from farm to farm. They were in constant danger from unexploded shells which could detonate at the slightest jar from their carriage wheels.

The farms were laid waste, unthreshed wheat was used for roofing sheds for tents, or beds for the men. . . . Stock, that is cattle of any description, as well as fowl seemed to have disappeared, even dogs were either killed or had fled the appalling scene. . . . Long ridges of earth with stakes here and there told: ‘So many hundred of the Northern Army lies here;’ or, ‘So many of the Southern Army lies here.’

Injured soldiers of both armies were slowly removed from the battlefield. General Hospital No. 1 filled immediately, and the overflow of wounded turned the city of Frederick into an enormous hospital. Between late 1861 and the summer of 1865, General Hospital No. 1 treated more than 30,000 patients and grew to a complex of 38 buildings.

Gettysburg, July 1863

The summer of 1863 saw Sister Matilda back at the Daughters of Charity's Central House. She must have needed a rest after the strenuous work and tremendous responsibilities in Frederick. Late in June, Union troops heading toward Pennsylvania in pursuit of Lee arrived in Emmitsburg and camped on the grounds of the Central House from June 27 through June 30. The Sisters were kept busy supplying as much food as they could gather and cook. By noon on July 1, they began hearing the cannons at Gettysburg, and the roar continued until late in the afternoon of July 3.

On July 5, Father Burlando and the Sister Superior decided that a group of the Sisters must go to Gettysburg. An omnibus with fourteen Sisters, baskets of provisions, bandages, medicines, and other supplies set out; Father Burlando and two more Sisters traveled separately in a carriage. When they reached the edge of the battlefield, a horrific spectacle met their eyes. Sister Matilda offered this vivid picture.

But on reaching the Battle grounds, awful! to see the men lying on the road some by the side of their horses. - O, it was beyond description - hundreds of both armies lying dead almost on the track [so] that the driver had to be careful not to pass over the bodies - O! this picture of human beings slaughtered down by their fellow men in a cruel civil war was perfectly awful. . . . on both sides were men digging pits and putting the bodies down by the dozens. One newly made grave contained fifty bodies of Confederates. . . . in this frightful condition we found the Battlegrounds of that fearful Battle of Gettysburg.

Houses, churches, public buildings, and the Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg were filled with the wounded, and still there were many thousands on the battlefield. Sister Matilda related what she saw at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in the center of town. The sanctuary was crowded with the most serious cases those “of [the] very worst amputated limbs.” Men lay on the pews, under them, and in the aisles. There was hardly room to move among them. Dirt and horrific odor added to the patients' miseries, but Sister Matilda remembered, “Now was the moment to go to work, and the Sisters did truly work in

bandaging the poor wounded, some.” The soldiers were given nourishing drinks made from “jellies” dissolved in water, and the Sisters applied whiskey and vinegar to the wounds, although no one yet understood how or why they acted as disinfectants.

Tents and farmhouses were converted into hospitals for three miles around the town. The Sisters traveled by ambulances to distribute clothing and other items to hundreds of wounded who lay on the ground on their blankets. Sister Matilda described one incident. *“We noticed as we were going through the woods a red flag out with a board marked ‘1700 wounded down this way.’”* Following the sign, they discovered a huge number of men lying *“in a heart-rending state.”* The Sisters quickly began tending to their needs. Combs were among the useful articles they distributed. Those were needed in *“the worst way”* to help remove lice. No one was immune to the *“troublesome animals.”* Sister Matilda noted, *“The Sisters too brought plenty of the vermin along on their clothes! - I shudder on thinking of this part of the Sisters sufferings.”*

There were 113 hospitals of various sizes and types set up to treat the wounded after the three days of slaughter. One group of Sisters remained on duty in the Gettysburg area until August 1865, more than two years after the battle was over.

Sister Matilda was almost 66 when the Civil War finally ended in April 1865. She spent the remaining years of her life at the Central House instructing the newest Sisters in spiritual matters and practical topics as well as nursing the poor of Emmitsburg. When she died in June 1870, she had spent over forty years as a member of her order and made outstanding contributions in caring for the poor, sick, insane, and wounded. One admirer said, *“She was an eye to the blind, a staff to the lame, a precious balm to the wounded heart. She wept with those who wept and rejoiced with those who rejoiced.”* She was laid to rest beside other Sisters in a cemetery on the grounds of the Central House.

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Detail of the window at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Gettysburg depicting the Daughters of Charity ministering to the wounded after the battle. The window was installed in 1963.

Photograph by Cathy Baty.

About the Author: Helen A. Gorman spent 35 years with the Carroll County Public Schools, retiring as a Media Specialist. A native of Taneytown with strong interest in the area's history, she has written several historical sketches and a walking tour of the town, as well as a history of St. Joseph's Church. Helen continues to work in HSCC's library where she has volunteered for many years. Helen is also a distant relative of Sister Matilda.

MAGGIE MEHRING: A CARROLL COUNTY TEENAGER'S FIRST-HAND ACCOUNT OF THE CIVIL WAR

BY SAMUEL P. PIAZZA

Maggie Mehring experienced the most destructive war that was ever fought on American soil. At the age of 16, she chronicled her thoughts, fears, political positions, and accounts of the Civil War in a diary she wrote in 1863 while attending Kleefisch's School for Girls in New Windsor, Maryland. Many of her entries drew on personal knowledge, while others were provided by her teachers, siblings, cousins, and newspaper accounts.

Maggie Mehring was born into a middle-class family in Taneytown, Maryland, in 1847, the youngest of nine children of George and Elizabeth (Marshall) Mehring. George Mehring was a third-generation farmer who held leadership positions with Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Taneytown. Little is known about his wife Elizabeth, other than that she was born in Pennsylvania and committed suicide by hanging in 1853 at the age of 49, less than a year after two of her daughters had died within a month of each other. About two years later George moved what remained of his family about five miles southwest to Bruceville in Carroll County, where he bought a grist mill and transferred the family's church membership to the Woodsboro Evangelical Lutheran Church in neighboring Frederick County. George died in 1860 of unknown causes at age 57.

After their father died, his three sons' paths diverged. Frederick took over the mill. William continued farming, but soon married and started a family elsewhere. Luther eventually graduated from college and moved on, but Frederick continued to live on the family farm with his sisters Joann and Maggie. None of them ever married. Fred became a successful businessman after the Civil War, opening a large fertilizer plant, the Frederick Mehring Fertilizer Company, which remained in his name long after his death in 1923.



The Mehring home, "Myrtle Hill," in Bruceville. The house was built by Normand Bruce, the founder of Bruceville, in the late 18th century. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.

The family's economic status made it possible for Maggie to attend Kleefisch's School for Girls in New Windsor in 1863. This boarding school offered courses in music, religion, physiology, reading, composition, arithmetic and philosophy to name a few. For two and a half months in the summer of 1863, Maggie wrote a diary that revealed, in addition to first-hand accounts of the Civil War, the everyday thoughts, feelings, and activities of a teenage girl.

Maggie Mehring and the Civil War

In June 1863, when Maggie began writing in her diary, her life was centered on western Carroll County—in Bruceville, where she lived with her brothers and sister, in New Windsor, where she attended school, and in Taneytown, where she retained ancestral roots. What she could not have known was that western Carroll County would soon become the staging area for the pivotal Battle of Gettysburg, about to take place less than 20 miles away.

Maggie made it clear through her writing that she favored the Union in the war, but she lived in a divided county within a divided state. In the midst of this political landscape, Maggie began to chronicle her life. Although her diary probably was a school assignment, she recorded not only names and events but also her own thoughts and fears. Her first entry coincided with the incursion of the first advanced guards of the Confederate army into Maryland. On June 15, Maggie noted with some trepidation a rumor that the Confederates were near Frederick, where she had recently been visiting:

If it is so, I hope that they [her family] will send for me, for I do not want to be away from home when the rebells are in Maryland.

On June 19, Maggie doubted the soldiers were so near, saying the report “*is not given much credit here as those reports usually come from Rebel sources.*” Yet three days later, she heard “*on very good authority that the Rebels are in Frederick... [and] have not molested any one as yet except to steal their horses,*” an example of their “*Souther Chivelry.*” The next day, Maggie defiantly stated:

It is rumored here that the Rebels have left Frederick and that there is a force of fifty thousand at Gettysburg[;] if it is true I hope they will meet a warm reception from Pensylvania in the shape of balls for taking the trouble and liberty of calling on them without our invitation.

On June 26, Maggie wrote, as if the circus were coming to town, that she had wanted to rise early that

day because the day before she had heard *too thousand Rebels were in Taneytown and would be in New Windsor before the following morning. I retired early expectin to see any quantity of Rebels the next morning . . . but was very agreeably disappointed to a wake and find all quiet and no Rebs about.*

Nevertheless, her nervous excitement was still evident when, on July 1, she recounted another rumor of invading forces:

We were a little alarmed yesterday evening by a man riding into town an saying that a Rebel brigade would be here in a few moments but we soon ascertained it to be a story, probably set afloat by some Rebel sympathizer.

By the next day Maggie had grown inured to such rumors:

It has been reported so frequently that the rebels are coming for the last few days that it has most ceaseded to cause an extr pulsation of the heart.

Maggie would see her share of combatants on both sides of the conflict. On June 30, 1863, she witnessed Brigadier General David McMurtrie Gregg’s Union cavalymen on the move through New Windsor:

Cousin Annie came back and said that there was a squad of cavilry crossing the creek and would be in town in a few moments. They proved to be General Gregs Union escort and consisted of a bout sixty men. They were only the advance guard [;] a little while after dark five-thousand four hundred passed thurgh. They were dressed very nicely and rode handsome



The building on High Street that once housed the Kleefisch School for Girls as it appeared in 1915. Courtesy of the New Windsor Heritage Committee.



Union Brig. Gen. David Gregg, Second Division, Cavalry Corps, Army of the Potomac. National Archives.

horses. It was a beautiful sight, for the moon shone so brilliantly that one could almost imagine it was day and the horseman riding six and eight abreast with their swords clattering while cheer after cheer rent the air.

Mr. Mire, General Gregg's clerk, told Maggie and her school friends:

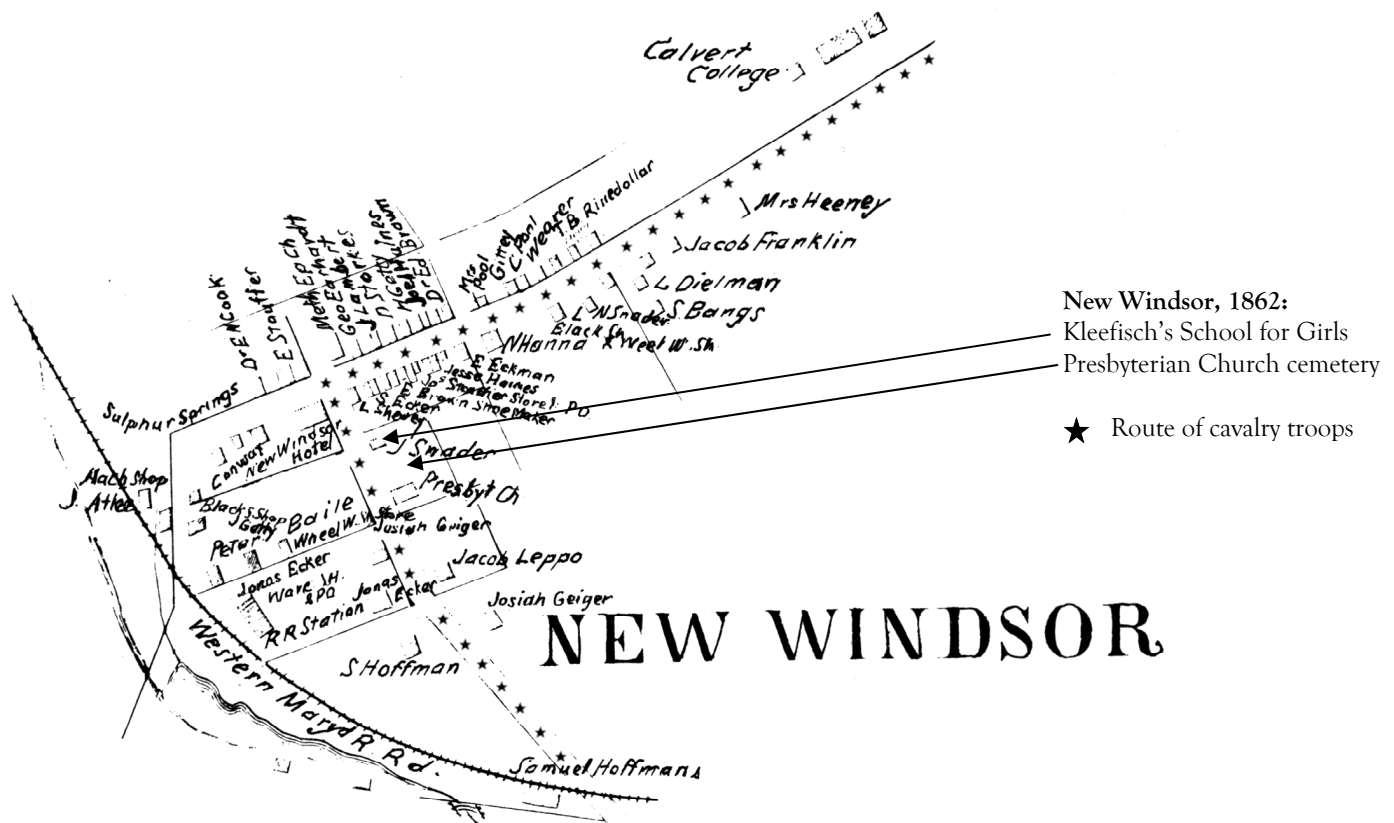
They had left a bout twenty-five thousand infantry a few miles back and he thought they would come through a bout four o'clock this morning and as we girls were afraid we would oversleep ourselves we determined taking it turn about watching. Lizzie, Clay, and Mollie, comprised the first watch, Isibell and I the second[.] Ther was not any of us that slept very much. Isibella and I had a very pleasant time for the pickets came off duty that were on in the first part of the night and as they stopped at the hotel [later known as the Dielman Inn], we could see them feeding their horses and hear them chatting, they appeared as merry as crickets because they had been relieved as we thought, there was 14 light field pieces with the cavilry. We were very much disappointed this morning as the infantry went another road and we did not get to see them.

Maggie spoke to a few of Gregg's men:

They all said that they nevere felt happier than when they set foot on Maryland soil. They have been in Verginia and enduring all the hardships of patriots. They said they never saw ladies in Verginia scarcely unless they were treated with scorn and derision by them, and it made them feel like they were at home to be greeted by smiling faces.

On July 1, Maggie described some Confederate soldiers:

The Union scouts brought in three captured Rebs - too of them held their heads down and looked very sad but the third one was lively. They were



mounted on farmers horses which they had stolen between here and Westminster. Our cavalry captured them and took their horses from them. They then marched them out to the infantry camp.

Maggie also documented battles, skirmishes, and deaths. Under the command of Major Napoleon Bonaparte Knight, 95 men from the 1st Delaware Calvary were tasked with guarding Westminster, an important supply depot for the Union forces. Captain Charles Corbit commanded Company C, while Lieutenant Caleb Churchman led Company D. On June 29, 1863, their small band encountered the advance guard of General J. E. B. Stuart's Confederate cavalry, on lower Main Street. The badly outnumbered Union cavalry charged the invaders but were routed, and Stuart's cavalry temporarily occupied the town. Three days later Maggie wrote:

Monday night our troops had a slight brush with the Rebels at Westminster our troops entering the town as the Rebels were skedaddling. Two of our soldiers an two of the rebels that were killed on Monday in Westminster were buried there yesterday.

Maggie's acquaintance Ikie Atlee told her that four Union soldiers had ridden through New Windsor on July 1, one of whom

had something that looked like a ball in the side of his face. Mr. Weaver asked him why he did not have it taken out [and] he replied that he had not time to stop. Ikie is certain that it was a ball for the blood was running down his face in a stream. He must have been wounded by a Rebel. We heard the cannon booming very distinctly last night and it is supposed that there is a battle going on between Littlestown an Gettysburg. The sun is shining so brightly an the air is so close that the poor soldier will suffer terribly for water.

In that same July 1 entry, she wrote about a burial in New Windsor's Presbyterian graveyard next to her school. The soldier

died from exhaustion. His cousin staid with him and saw him decently buried before he left[;] he expects to come up to the rear of our army to morrow morning. The soldiers name that died was Irvin, he was a native of Pensylvania.

Her emotional investment in the war was evident by the sadness she expressed about the second

burial five days later:

There was another Soldier buried in the Presbyterian graveyard beside of the first one. His name was Thomas Thorn. He was a native of New York. It seemed hard to see him buried among strangers an by strange hands no friend to follow him to the grave or weep over his untimely end, denyed the comforts of home, with no loving mother or Sister to minister to his wants or close his eyes in death. Such is the soldier's lot. This is but a bright picture compared to those who are shot on the battle field. Oh when will this cruel war be over.

Maggie's last line echoed the lyrics from a song popular at the time, "Weeping Sad and Lonely, or, When This Cruel War Is Over," by Charles Carroll Sawyer." Thomas R. Thorn was a private in Company F of the 44th Regiment, New York Infantry, which fought in a number of the most decisive battles of the Civil War, including Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Petersburg. The Regiment lost more than three hundred men during the course of the war.

Maggie, dependent on information gathered from others and incomplete newspaper accounts, lamented in the same diary entry, "*we had many of our brave officers killed an wounded on Friday an Saturday. General Segwick and General Sickles were both killed. General Greg wounded.*" She was wrong about the three generals. John Sedgwick did not die until May 9, 1864, at the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House in Virginia. Daniel Edgar Sickles lost his right leg at the Battle of Gettysburg but survived his wound and lived into his 90s. Further, there is no record of General Gregg's having been wounded at Gettysburg.

Maggie also recounted information about troop and supply train movements. On July 5, she spoke to her cousin John, who told her "that any quantity of soldier almost passed through Bruceville." She added:

This morning as I was making up my bed I heard a rumbling noise an going to the window to learn the cause I saw that they were commisary baggage and ammunition waggons. Most of them were from

This image of Maggie Mehring with an unidentified companion appeared in her book, *Seventy-Days Abroad* in 1910. Which woman is Maggie remains unknown.

Maine New York Massachusetts an Vermont. I have no idea as to how many wagons passed as they were passing from after seven o'clock until twelve. They were going on to Frederick to take supplies to the troops lying there.

In the aftermath of Gettysburg, she had heard “various reports”:

General Lee is retreating towards Virginia an our men following him an have not come in close enough contact to be fighting as yet. Another is that the Rebels are still at Gettysburg an sent a flag of truce in forr permission to bury their dead. It is said that Steward [Confederate Gen. J. E. B. Stuart] is trying to cross the river an five thousand Union troops left Union town Saturday evening to tear down the bridges along the Potomac, and guard the fords.

On the same date, Maggie relayed war information involving her baptismal church in Taneytown:

The Signal corps have possession of the [Trinity] Lutheran church an use the cupola for a signal station.”

On July 15, Maggie wrote that the Confederate Army had “crossed the river into Virginia. Our troops captured two thousand of them in crossing.” Yet six days later she chided the Union leadership for not aggressively pursuing the Confederates after the battle:

One day too late and another golden opportunity of capturing a greater part of the Rebel army is lost. . . . The time that the Rebels were here last Summer [for the Battle of Antietam] our troops were 9 hours too late and this time one day. It shows the importance of time.

The Battle of Gettysburg raged for the first three days of July, but the misery of the wounded and war-weary soldiers lingered on. Maggie’s sister wrote on July 7 that the Union had “taken the churches in Middleburg an Taneytow[n] for Hospitals” for the wounded. On July 22, Maggie herself noted that Mrs. Kleefisch and Mrs. Maggie Ecker “were out today to collect food and cloathing for the wounded soldiers



at Gettysburg.” In her July 21 entry, Maggie commented on the thousands of Union and Confederate soldiers who had been killed, wounded, or had deserted:

The estimates that have been made by competent officers of Lees losses since crossing the Potomac are 5000 killed, 9,909 wounded prisoners, and 9,500 uninjured prisoners. It was known that 6,000 wounded Rebels passed through Winchester three days before and 300 wagons full of wounded have since been carried over the river. Desertions will probably reach 3,000 making a total loss since they crossed the river of not less than 33,009.

Maggie Mehring after the War

In 1886, Maggie became a member of Mt. Zion Evangelical Lutheran (Haugh’s) Church, Ladiesburg, Frederick County. She generously supported the church until her death in 1923 and is buried in the church cemetery. She was not only a local leader of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, the largest women’s temperance and suffrage group of its time, but also a state and nation-wide leader, attending a number of national and international WCTU conventions as a delegate in the first quarter of the 1900s. She strongly

believed that prohibition would be achieved when women finally gained their right to vote, writing in her book, *Seventy-Seven Days Abroad in 1910*, "The liquor men know that the death knell will be sounded when women have justice done them and they are allowed to vote."

For a few weeks in June and July 1863, Maggie Mehring provided the perspective of a 16-year-old school girl on the most pivotal battle of the Civil War. Maggie, like many of the girls who experienced both the shooting war and its disruption of the home front, waged her own war as an adult against intemperance and women's inequality.

Sources:

Mehring, Margaret. Diary. 15 June 1863 to 4 September 1863. Maryland Historical Society's Special Collections Reading Room. Baltimore, Maryland.
Mehring, Maggie. *Seventy-Seven Days Abroad in 1910*. (printed by author, date unknown). Maryland Historical Society's Main Reading Room, Baltimore, Maryland.

About the author: Samuel P. Piazza is the Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees at the Historical Society of Carroll County. A lawyer for over 25 years, Sam moved to Carroll County in 1994 and soon became fascinated by the role the county played in the Civil War. He chose Maggie Mehring as the subject of the thesis for which he was awarded his Master's Degree in Historical Studies from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County in 2008.

Maggie's obituary appeared in Union Bridge's newspaper, *The Pilot*, on October 26, 1923.

The Late Miss Margaret Mehring

Miss Margaret Mehring, of Bruceville, departed this life Wednesday morning, October 17, 1923.

By the death of Miss Margaret Mehring, a loving circle, a large number of attached friends and the entire community, of which she was a useful and most respected member, have sustained a great loss. It would be unjust to her many domestic virtues and sterling social qualities to allow her to pass away without some tribute of memory. She was a member of the Lutheran church at Mt. Zion—a true, genuine and sincere christian lady, and of that active benevolence which prompted her to relieve want and suffering whenever in her power to do so. She possessed great energy of character and mental vigor combined with womanly traits. Firmness, cheerfulness and soundness of judgment were strong elements in her character, while the vivacity of her manners and fine conversational powers made her a charming companion. She was one of the noblest women and the embodiment of a genial, sincere, accomplished, frank and generous Maryland lady.

Time, when it robbed her cheek of its bloom and her step of its lightness, had no power to chill the warmth of her heart, or dull the brightness of her intellect. Genial hospitality and many amicable qualities endeared her to a large circle of friends, and her faithful and affectionate discharge of every duty to her brother who passed away nine months ago, rendered her more than loved by her friends.

Life's Christian service ended here, she wears the crown immortal, and the memory of her worth remains a blessed legacy to her mourning kindred and friends, and her name will long be cherished by all who knew and loved her.

She is survived by one brother, Luther Mehring, of Indianapolis, Ind., by two nieces, four nephews and seven great-nephews and nieces. Funeral services were held at her home, Myrtle Hill, Friday afternoon, at 1:30, followed by interment at Mt. Zion Church, services being in charge of her pastor, Rev. R. S. Patterson, assisted by Rev. L. B. Hafer, of Chambersburg, Pa., Rev. Wilbur Shipley, of Taneytown, and Rev. Ainesbrook, of Baltimore. The pallbearers were Messrs. Edward Sharetts, Luther Sharetts, Denton Gehr, Oliver Cash, Frank Harbaugh and John Airing.

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