

Carroll Yesteryears
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The Civil War through the Eyes of 3 New Windsor Teens
By Frank J. Batavick

It is a quirk of history that three primary source documents about New Windsor in the Civil War come from teenagers. The first is from Maggie Mehring, a thirteen-year-old from Bruceville who was boarding at Mrs. Joanna Kleefisch's Academy in the old Presbyterian manse on High Street. Maggie left us a journal that describes Union cavalry passing through town on its way to Gettysburg on June 30, 1863.

Early one evening, Maggie watched out a window as General David McMurtrie Gregg's advance guard of about 60 men passed by. That night, 5,400 troops followed in their wake. Her diary reports that they "dressed very nicely and rode handsome horses. It was a beautiful sight." Two members of the advance guard "slept in the churchyard. There was not any of us that slept very much last night."

On July 1, Maggie continued: "The Union scouts brought in three captured Rebs—two of them held their heads down and looked very sad but the third one was quite lively. They were mounted on farmers horses which they had stolen between here and Westminster.... There was a soldier buried in the Presbyterian grave-yard this morning. He died from exhaustion.... The infantry brigade was so long that when their advance guard entered Westminster their rear was just leaving Jewsburg (Marston)."

July 2: "There were a hundred and fifty government wagons passed through the upper part of town this morning.... We heard the cannon booming very distinctly last night and it is supposed that there is a battle going on between Littlestown and Gettysburg."

What young Maggie heard was the pivotal battle of Gettysburg being fought at fever pitch, just 23 or so miles away. As the Union army dispersed after its hard-fought victory, some troops returned through town. According to Maggie, one soldier, Thomas Horn of New York, was wounded and succumbed, adding another grave to the Presbyterian cemetery.

She became a local leader of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and attended national and international WCTU conventions in the early 1900s. She was also a suffragist and thought that prohibition would only become the law of the land if women were granted the right to vote. Maggie authored *Seventy-Seven Days Abroad* in 1910, which advocated for women's suffrage and catalogued the abuses of alcohol in society. Today, her teenage diary is in the archives of the Maryland Center for History and Culture.

The second New Windsor teen is 18-year-old Kate Woods, daughter of a coach maker on lower Church Street. She began writing love letters to Jesse H. Barnes, a 20-something would-be beau in 1862. He lived about two miles southeast of town, and the two may have met at the nearby "Brick" church mentioned several times in her letters. Jesse apparently initiated the correspondence, though none of his letters survives.

In 1999, workers discovered a bundle of Kate's missives hidden under the attic floorboards of the historic Robert Strawbridge house at the Strawbridge Shrine 1½ miles southeast of town. Jesse's family once lived there, farming the surrounding land. He most probably concealed the letters while on leave from Company F, Seventh Maryland Infantry Regiment, of the Union Army in April 1864.

As might be expected, the contents of the letters are rather trivial. One reads: "Dear Friend, I had almost gave up that hope of ever hearing from you. I thought you had forgotten me, being so far away, you say, with no kind friends to pity you. [You] may not have many there but you have many here. Many that long to see you, and if it were in there power would have you here, in your once happy home, which would be a consolation to you and the friend you have left behind." Though stilted by today's standards, these notes do give us an appreciation for the eternal, never changing angst of teenage love.

Jesse was captured on the first day of the Battle of the Wilderness on May 5 when the forces of General Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee first collided. The Confederates took Jesse to the notorious Andersonville, GA, prisoner of war camp. He was then transported to another camp at Florence, SC, but lasted only a month because of the horrific conditions there. He died on October 8 at age 22 or 23, and was buried in an unmarked grave, leaving Kate's teenage love unrequited.

Ironically, Kate married the Virginian Lewis Thomas Veitch, a deserter from the Confederate forces, in 1865. He somehow had made his way to New Windsor. She is buried with him in the Presbyterian Church Cemetery with one of their young daughters.

No cameras were available to capture the events of the Rebel raid on New Windsor on July 9, 1864, but a 16-year-old, Frederick Dielman, had his sketchpad handy. With a chorus of rebel yells and the firing of pistols in the air, 600-800 Confederate cavalry came swooping into town. The troop included 135 men from the 1st and 2nd Maryland Cavalry, and their immediate goal was to loot the town's stores—stealing chickens, boots, hats, shoes, tobacco, biscuits, and whatever else they could muster to provision their ranks. They also took any worthy horses, saddles, and bridles. Their long-range goal was to execute a daring mission to capture Washington, DC, as strategized by General Robert E. Lee himself. The dashing Major Harry W. Gilmor, who hailed from Baltimore County, led the raiders. They were part of a larger force commanded by General Bradley T. Johnson of Frederick. If successful, the bold invasion might have changed the course of the war.

Young Frederick captured the height of the rebel looting while it played out right across the street from his house. Somehow, he was able to submit a detailed sketch to *Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, the *Time* magazine of its day, and it was published in the September 3, 1864, edition. One hundred years later, the Carroll County Civil War Centennial Commission chose to make the drawing the center focus of a commemorative plate.

However, there were immediate repercussions for young Frederick, as reported by the September 17 issue of Baltimore's *The Sun*. General Henry H. Lockwood, commander of the Middle (States) Department in Baltimore, ordered his arrest and charged him with "giving aid and

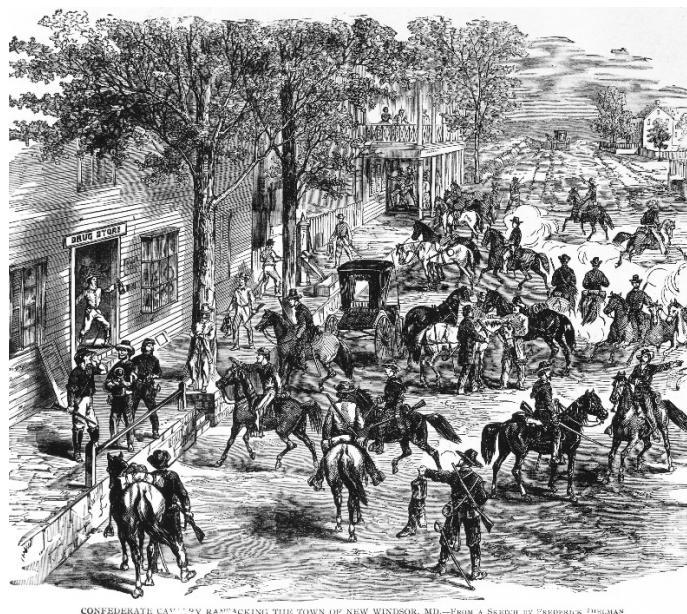
comfort to the enemy...during their late raid into Maryland.” It is not clear if Dielman gave any actual aid to the rebels, or if his drawing was considered enemy propaganda. Regardless, the teenager was taken to Baltimore and locked up in a military prison. He was later found innocent of all charges by a military commission and released. A follow-up item in *The Sun* noted, “This youth has amused himself whilst in prison by making various very unique drawings. He has a wonderful talent in that line for one of his age.”

Frederick received a Master of Arts from the town’s Calvert College in 1865, and then set off for Richmond, VA, to practice his reportorial skills. There he produced sketches of the city’s post-war devastation for national publication. He then traveled abroad to study at the Royal Polytechnic Institute in Munich. Upon his return, Frederick took up residence in New York City where he produced illustrations for books, including the poetry of Longfellow and an 1893 novel by George Eliot. He also did illustrations for *Century* and *Scribner’s* magazines, created designs for two mosaic panels for the reading room of the Library of Congress, and painted murals for the lobby of the Washington Star newspaper in Washington, D.C.

Dielman became president of the National Academy of Design and a professor of drawing at three New York art schools and was a founder of the Society of American Artists. His work still sells at auction today, and is avidly collected.

Three teens, three careers, and three ways to witness the Civil War through their eyes—that’s an exciting way to touch our common history.

Frank J. Batavick serves on the board of trustees of the Historical Society of Carroll County and was a co-founder of New Windsor Heritage.



CONFEDERATE CAVALRY RAIDING THE TOWN OF NEW WINDSOR, MD.—FROM A SKETCH BY FREDERICK DIELMAN

Frederick Dielman’s 1864 sketch of Confederate raid on New Windsor. (New Windsor Heritage)



Site of Mrs. Kleefisch's Academy for Girls where Maggie Mehring was enrolled. (New Windsor Heritage)



Frederick Dielman, c.1875 (New Windsor Heritage)