

IMAGES

...THEN AND NOW

From the Indian Hill Historical Society



Buckingham Lodge-1861

Mary Taylor Adams, Civil War Nurse

Mary Taylor Adams was raised in Wilmington, Ohio. Her family traced its roots to Ruben Taylor, who fought in the Revolutionary War at the Battles of Lexington and Bunker Hill under Col. Rufus Putnam. Her father, Justus Taylor, was well educated and held a prominent position in Clinton County. She was the second of nine children, and was known to have a retiring nature. After marrying David L. Adams, she moved to Cincinnati, where their daughter Cora was born. When her husband enlisted in the Union Army she sought to aid the cause.

The Army organized women to serve in hospitals; it chose Dorothea Dix as Superintendent of Army Nurses, as she was famous for her work improving mental hospitals. Mary applied to be a nurse and was accepted. She left her daughter at her father's home in Wilmington while she went to work at Camp Dennison.



The standards for enlisting as an Army nurse were rigorous. Women had to be healthy and “plain almost to repulsion in dress, and devoid of personal attractions”. They were not allowed to wear colored dresses, hoops, curls, jewelry, or have flowers in their bonnets, though they had to be neat in appearance. When on duty, they were not allowed to go to any place of amusement in the evening, and they had to be in their rooms by 9:00 at night. They were not to be accompanied by a patient or officer, except on business. They were required to spend part of their daily pay for the welfare of their patients. The pay was 40 cents a day, plus a meal, which averaged out to \$12 monthly; but with each nurse it varied due to the amount she donated to her patients.

When Mary Adams reported for active duty at Camp Dennison, there were no hospital facilities – only a banked barn which had previously been used to stable animals. She cleared the barn with a spade, and shoveled straw on the ground. She laid blankets on the earth to prepare to receive the first wounded Union soldiers. Those patients had already been to a field hospital near the battleground before being transported back to Ohio. Many arrived with amputated limbs and mutilated bodies. A constant worry was camp infections – diarrhea, dysentery, and other unspecific ailments. Though Mary had no formal nursing training, she was devoted and hard working. Dutifully, she read and wrote letters for her patients. She kept the ward tidy and the soldiers clean. She supplied additional food other than the rations provided. She acted with compassion in her nursing skills.

As the war went on, other relief agencies such as the Western Sanitary Commission provided nurses and other supplies. Catholic nuns helped: the Sisters of Charity aided the patients at Dennison General Hospital. Other relief associations provided supplies – cots, bed ticks, quilts, sheets, clothing, bandages, and towels. Other articles (quilts, blankets, eggs, sauerkraut, cider, chickens, and writing materials) were sent to the troops. Local aid societies were encouraged to send “a box a month” for the soldiers. Mary Adams took the train from Camp Dennison to Wilmington on a regular basis to collect and bring back donated relief supplies. There she visited with her daughter, and she occasionally took Cora to Camp Dennison. Mary's direct involvement in the Union cause helped further the belief that women could effectively function in trying circumstances. In 1892, Mary was granted \$12 per month from the Bureau of Pensions for her wartime contributions.

With skill and benevolence, Mary Taylor Adams served the Grand Army of the Republic. She nourished soldiers, aided the wounded, and labored under difficult conditions. Her noble actions were recognized by the Women's Relief Corps of Wilmington, Ohio, which long ago placed a bronze marker at her grave in Sugar Grove Cemetery.

Mary Taylor Adams' rocking chair can be seen at the Waldschmidt House in Camp Dennison.