

The Warren Sipe House



Women and the Civil War

For southern women, the War, allowed them to find their strength, bravery, and voices. One way that they contributed to the war effort was through Confederate hospitals. These hospitals, often homes, lacked supplies, medicine, and most importantly, nurses. Women immediately took on the roles of hospital workers and nurses. Here, they met a world they had never seen before, interacted and created friendships with people that they never would have met, and found that they too were strong and capable. In these settings, they rejected popular opinion on gender roles, race and class issues. They overcame their own fears of violence and horrendous living and working conditions. The women in the Warren household faced many of the same issues as other southern women during the War. According to historian Drew Gilpin Faust, “between 1861 and 1865...significant numbers of middle- and upper-class white women left their homes to undertake paid work for the first time.” The income they received varied depending upon the job. In the North wages, were standardized and more stable than in the South. White Union nurses took home “forty cents per day and a ration, or approximately \$12 per month; black nurses received up to \$10.” After September 1862, the Confederate government formalized the hiring of women and established a “pay scale of \$40, \$35, and \$30 per month for chief, assistant, and ward matrons respectively, and \$25 for cooks.” These amounts sound abounding until one remembers that they were paid in Confederate money, and dealt with Confederate inflation limiting purchasing power.

The disorganization of Confederate hospitals also made it hard to document the exact number of women who served. As historian Jane Schultz explains, “Many records were lost when Richmond burned in 1865...Perhaps most important, southern hospitals depended on the labor of slaves and white working-class women.” Other issues also fragmented knowing the number who served, such as objections by their families. These factors created “fragmentary records, the incidence of unofficial service, and the differences in Southern class and racial configurations.” It may never be known exactly how many women went into the war effort as hospital workers and nurses.

The make up of the women who served in the Confederate hospitals was as diverse as the South itself. Schultz explained that, “they were adolescent slaves, Catholic sisters, elite slaveholders, free African Americans, abandoned wives, and farm women. Some were mothers and grandmothers, others childless or unmarried.” Southern women did what they could to survive the instability of war and it was these experiences that influenced their future roles as citizens and participants in the public sphere. These were after all, the mothers of the women who would later fight for the right to vote, their own wages, and the right to an education.



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Women's Reactions to the War

Women had their own feelings about the Civil War and they began to voice their ideas as the war continued. One Southern woman wrote to her husband at the beginning of the War and said, "I study about it sometimes, and get The blues so bad I do not know what to do. God grant That all things may yet be settled without *bloodshed*." Other women were torn between how they felt about their families and how they felt about their country. One woman stated, "I do not approve of this thing. What do I care for patriotism? My husband is my country. What is country to me if he be killed?" Other women were supportive of their sons and husbands going off to fight. One Shenandoah Valley woman wrote to the *Winchester Virginian* about sending her son away saying, "Your country calls...I am ready to offer you up in defense of your country's rights and honor; and I now offer you, a beardless boy of 17 summers, - not with grief, but thanking God that I have a son to offer."



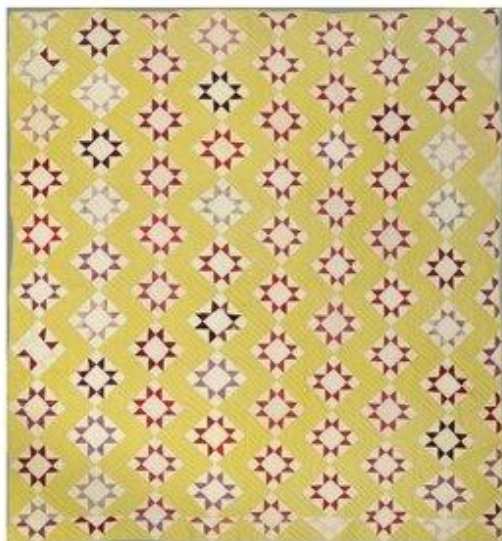
Other southern women found more direct ways to do their part for their homes and families. In Harrisonburg, Annie Samuels and Irene Bell along with 26 other women organized a regiment and in December 1864 wrote to the Confederate Secretary of War, requesting that "the right to bear arms in defense of our home be delegated to certain of the fairer portion of the ill starred Confederacy." Since they had already be subjected to "every conceivable out rage and suffering" because of "incompetency" by the army meant to protect them, they were ready to take matters into their own hands to protect themselves.



National Archives



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Women, Sewing, and Quilts During the Civil War

During the War, women did what they could to help their soldiers and support the cause. One way to show support but also stay within the social structures of society was to sew and donate or make quilts for the war effort. For southern women this could be more difficult than for northern women for several reasons.

First, the South did not have the manufacturing abilities of the North. Second, many elite southern women, were not as accustomed to sewing for themselves. This was often a job relegated to enslaved women. However, they learned and did what they could. Lucy Wood of Charlottesville, wrote that she was almost “broken down” from the amount of sewing she had been doing. She said, “Our needles are now our weapons, and we have a

part to perform...Yes, yes, we women have mighty work to perform.” Once all the pre-war fabric had been used, southern women had trouble getting more because of the lack of manufacturing and the blockading of ports. In some parts of the South, most fabrics were unavailable and Calico, by 1864, was ten times as expensive as before the War. Eventually, southern women turned to making homespun and tore mattresses for the fiber or cut carpets to make blankets for the soldiers. Very few of the quilts made for soldiers on either side remain. There are several reasons for this shortage; first, these quilts got a lot of use during the war. Second, many probably did not see the value in saving them. Third, many of these quilts may have been used in the hospitals for bandages or other needs. Lastly, soldiers were buried in their quilts and therefore, lost to history.

Virginia “Jennie” Warren and the other women in her family most likely experienced many of the same emotions and experiences as the other women mentioned. Virginia Warren’s story is unclear; all her letters, diaries, and memories are gone. Yet, one must ask, how did she feel about losing her husband to the war? How did she feel about having her home turned into a make shift hospital? Did she make a quilt for E.T.H. Warren while he was fighting? Did the War help her to find a new place in society? Did she find her voice and her strength during the War? What about the enslaved women that worked for her? How did they feel about working in a Confederate hospital? Where did they go after the War ended? While many questions remain unanswered, we do know that the War changed women and quilts were part of that change.



Star of Bethlehem

The Warren Sipe House



Other Owners of the House

In 1873, Harriet Warren sold the house to Benjamin E. and Sarah Long. Benjamin served in the Confederate army before owning the house. He was a private in the 7th Regiment, Virginia Cavalry also known as "Ashby's Calvary." This regiment contained 29 companies which were later divided. He then joined the 11th Regiment, Virginia Cavalry. Surviving the War, by 1870 he was a merchant and a farmer. The Longs lived in the home with their two sons Newton and Ashby. Long paid one dollar cash the day he bought it, and was to pay the remainder of his payments for the property in installments. The first payment was due on June 15, 1875, and the second on June 15, 1881. However, Long sold the property on June 7, 1875 without making his payments to Harriet Warren. The new owner, J.S. Harnsberger, agreed to pay the two installments that were owed to her.



John Samuel Harnsberger owned the home from 1875 to 1894. He attended the University of Virginia and served in the Confederate cavalry and reached the rank of Captain during the Civil War. After the War, he became a local lawyer and eventually Mayor of Harrisonburg, a position he won by a fourteen majority vote. He was known as "one of the more popular lawyers at the bar, and a high-toned, honorable gentleman." He only served one term as mayor,

even though he was encouraged to run for reelection. He later ran for Senate on the Democratic ticket but did not win the nomination. In the mid-1880's he decided to become a farmer, leaving his law practice and moved to a farm, renting out the house on South Main Street. He rented it first to a Mrs. Hoxsey and two years later to John G. Yancey. He sold the house to George E. Sipe in 1894.

I devise & bequeath to my beloved & faithful wife Sarah B. Harnsberger all the part of my property real & personal which I own in this city and I appoint her executor of this my last will & testament, & request that she do not require to give account of such execution given under my hand this 20th day of Jan^y 1871. John Samuel Harnsberger
 Harrisonburg, Va.

In the Circuit Court of Rockingham County, in Va., this 20th day of Jan^y 1871.
 A writing purporting to be the last will and testament of John Samuel Harnsberger deceased, was this day presented to the Clerk of the said Court of the Circuit Court of Rockingham County, and there being no subscribing witnesses thereto, Geo. S. Harnsberger A. D. C. of the said County being, severally sworn, and each that they are well acquainted with the said writing of the testator, and verily believe the said writing, and the same contents subscribed to be really written by the testator and have, thereupon said writing he admitted to record in the Clerk's office and testimony of John Samuel Harnsberger deceased, of 2000000.
 A. D. 1871, Geo. S. HARNBERGER, Clerk.



The Warren Sipe House



Marien Sipe, Photo courtesy of Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society, Dayton, Virginia

George E. Sipe

George E. Sipe was a community leader in Harrisonburg and owned the house the longest. He was born October 21, 1850 and attended law school at the University of Virginia and was a member of the Harrisonburg Bar. On July 23, 1881 he married Mary Rebecca Yancey. They had two children before her death in 1886, Louise and Mary. In December of 1891, a 41 year old Sipe married 26 year old Marien Mullikin. Once they married, George bought the house that would to bear his name for \$4,150.00. George and Marien had one daughter, Enid.

Sipe worked with J.S. Harnberger and later started his own law firm. He too had a political career; he was elected as a member of the Virginia House of De-



The Sipe children (left to right) Dot, Enid, and Louise.

legates for 1901 to 1902 and served as the General Receiver of the

Rockingham Circuit Court for 40 years. In addition to his political career, he also held several positions with the First National Bank of Harrisonburg. At different times he served as chairman of the board, president, vice-president, director, and attorney. In 1939, Sipe had two battles with pneumonia which resulted in his passing away in Opelika, Alabama, while visiting his daughter, Enid. He was 89 years old. In his will he left the house to Marien, who lived in the home until her death in 1950.

Sipe made many changes to the home including replacing the low pitched roof with a higher pitched hipped roof, installing the decorative parquet floors and the two intricately carved mahogany mantels on the fireplaces. The Sipes were also known for their extensive flower gardens, which produced award winning flowers and were a staple of the community.

Below is a piece of the original floor and information on the man that built the fireplaces.



The Warren Sipe House



Mrs. G. E. Sipe Dies at Hospital

One of City's Most Prominent Women
Funeral 2:30 Today

Mrs. George E. Sipe, the widow of the late George E. Sipe, died at the Harrisonburg Hospital at 2:30 p.m. today after a brief illness. She was 80 years old.

Mrs. G. E. Sipe

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Ob. and Mrs. Sipe.

Leader in Affairs

In her younger days, Mrs. Sipe was a leader in social, church and school affairs. She was one of the first women in Harrisonburg to be elected president of the Woman's Club. She was also a member of the Woman's Club, the Y. W. C. A., and the Y. W. O. U. She was a member of the board of directors of the Harrisonburg Hospital and the board of directors of the Harrisonburg Public Library. She was also a member of the board of directors of the Harrisonburg Public Library.

Funeral services will be held at 2:30 p.m. today at the Harrisonburg Baptist Church. The Rev. J. L. Wright, pastor, will officiate. Burial will be in the Harrisonburg Cemetery.



When Marien Sipe passed away, the property passed to the two oldest daughters, Louise and Mary. George Sipe had stipulated in his will that his daughters were to hold the property in their own names, "not affected by their husbands," and held the power to handle "said estate in like manner as if each were unmarried."



George E. Sipe will. Courtesy of the Rockingham County Court House

<http://access.newspaperarchive.com/us/virginia/harrisonburg/harrisonburg-daily-news-record/>

The women rented it out to Daisy B. Monger who opened a boarding house in the home. In June 1956, it was sold to the City of Harrisonburg. It sold for \$47,500 and was then dedicated as a Youth Center. However, other agencies occupied the building as well. This included the City Recreation Department, now the City Parks & Recreation Department and the Harrisonburg Golden Age Club. After these groups left, the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society moved in and occupied the house until 1993, when they moved to their current location in Dayton, VA. During 1984-86, the Harrisonburg City Fire Department's Administration Office, Inspection Unit, Rescue Communication Center, and Business Office also shared the house. When the Historical Society moved out in 1993, the city used the home for circuit court while the county court house was under renovation. It was during this time that the jail cell you are standing was built.

In August 1995, the Virginia Quilt Museum moved into the house and continues to call it home. When the museum started, it had 15 quilts but in this building, we have been able to expand that collection to store over 300 quilts while continuing to grow and support our mission to "celebrate and nurture Virginia's quilting heritage."



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The Civil War

In the 1850's Warren helped to organize one of the local volunteer militia companies known as the Valley Guard. Serving as lieutenant, he went to Charles Town in response to the abolitionist John Brown's raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry in October 1859. They served as guards during Brown's trial and execution. In 1861, the Valley Guards became part of Virginia's 10th Regiment Volunteer Infantry Regiment, with Warren serving as lieutenant-colonel in the Confederate Army. As part of the Army of Northern Virginia, the regiment saw action in almost every major engagement in Virginia, Maryland (except Sharpsburg) and Pennsylvania. Warren rose to the rank of Colonel of the 10th Virginia Infantry following the death of Colonel S. B. Gibbons at the Battle of McDowell on May 8, 1862. During his travels, he often wrote to his wife, such as the one on the wall. On May 5, 1864, Warren received a battlefield promotion to the rank of Brigadier-General at the Battle of the Wilderness. During this battle, he was shot seven times and finally died when a bullet ripped through his throat. When the war ended with the surrender of the Confederate Army at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, only about 45 of the original 1,475 men from the Tenth were left. Of those 45, only 11 were still able to carry arms and fulfill their duties.



Flag of the 10th Infantry. <http://www.the10thvirginia.org>

The House as a Hospital

In 1862, Warren deeded his property to his mother Harriet Warren and his Grandmother Milly Rice. In 1863, after the battle at Gettysburg, the house was used as a hospital.

Maj. Joseph Latimer, a young Confederate officer leading an artillery battalion was wounded at Benner's Hill at the Battle of Gettysburg. While he was directing gunfire during retreat, he was hit by fragments from an exploding shell which wounded him and killed his horse which collapsed on top of him. Consequently, his arm was amputated and he was moved to Winchester, Virginia. When Federal troops threatened to capture that city, he was moved to the Warren house. Gangrene soon set in, and he died here on August 1, 1863.