

Witnesses to Battle

Transcription of selections from the *Confederate Veteran* article
Inside the Lines at Franklin, written in 1895 by Adelia McEwen German

On an ever memorable day, the 30th of November, we assembled at school as usual. Our teachers' faces looked unusually serious that morning. The Federal couriers were dashing hither and thither. The officers were gathering in squads and the Cavalry, with swords and sabers clanking, were driving their spurs into their horses' flanks and galloping out to first one picket post and then another on the roads leading south and southwest of town. The bell called us in the chapel. We were told to take our books and go home, as there was every indication that we would be in the midst of a battle that day.

At four o'clock that afternoon I stood in our front door and heard musketry in the neighborhood of Col. Carter's on the Columbia pike. To this day I can recall the feeling of sickening dread that came over me. As the evening wore on, the firing became more frequent and nearer and louder; then the cannon began to roar from the fort.

My father [John B. McEwen] realizing that we were in range of the guns from both armies told us to run down into the cellar. We hastily threw a change of clothing into a bundle and obeyed at once. My mother [Cynthia Graham McEwen], who never knew what fear meant in her life, was a little reluctant to go and leave the upper part of the house to the tender mercies of soldiers, but she finally joined us in the basement. A few minutes later there was a crash and down came a deluge of dust and gravel. The usually placid face of our old black mammy, now thoroughly frightened, appeared on the scene. She said a cannon ball had torn a hole in the side of the meat house and broken her wash kettle to pieces. She left the supper on the stove and fled precipitately into the cellar.

After that, the only way we could get anything to eat was by sending a guard, who was in the yard, to the kitchen after it. The patter of bullets on the blinds was anything but soothing.... About four o'clock we heard the tramping of feet and the sounds of voices. Our hearts jumped into our mouths, and what joy when we learned that our own soldiers were in possession of the town!...

In the afternoon, December 1, some of us went to the battlefield to give water and wine to the wounded. All of us carried cups from which to refresh the thirsty. Horrors! What sights that met our girlish eyes! The dead and wounded lined the Columbia Pike for the distance of a mile....

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From this sad scene, we passed on to the locust thicket, and men in every conceivable position could be seen, some with their fingers on the triggers, and death struck them so suddenly they didn't move. Past the thicket we saw trenches dug to receive as many as ten bodies. On the left of the pike, around the old gin house, men and horses were lying so thick that we could not walk. Gen. Adam's horse was lying stark and stiff upon the breastworks. Ambulances were being filled with the wounded as fast as possible, and the whole town was turned into a hospital....

Our house was full as could be; from morning until night we made bandages and scraped linen lint with which to dress the wounds, besides making jellies and soups which would nourish them.



The Battle of Franklin.

Illustration from *A Sketch of the Battle of Franklin, Tenn.; with Reminiscences of Camp Douglas*, by John M. Copely (1893).
 Courtesy of *Documenting the American South*, University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill,
 9 June 2008, <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/copley/ill2.html>>.



Witnesses to Battle Accounts of the Home Front

Read the transcription of the April 1865 letter from Frances "Fannie" Courtney to E. Root, with the U.S. Sanitary Commission in Nashville, to learn about her experiences during the Battle of Franklin and to answer the questions below. The U.S. Sanitary Commission coordinated the war efforts of many women volunteers. Note that Fannie and her mother were Union sympathizers even though her brother chose to fight for the Confederacy.

- 1) Is it surprising to discover that some Tennesseans favored the Union?
- 2) Where did Fannie's family go during the battle?
- 3) List three descriptive words or phrases Fannie used to explain how she and her mother felt during and after the battle:
- 4) What were two of the buildings that were used as hospitals?
- 5) What types of help did Fannie and her mother provide to the wounded soldiers? Where did their supplies come from?
- 6) Did the Federal soldiers receive better care or worse care than the Confederate soldiers directly following the battle? Why do you think this was the case?

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Transcription of a letter from Frances "Fannie" Courtney in April 1865



*Photograph of Frances Courtney.
Courtesy of Rick Warwick.*

Dear Sir:

I hasten to give you an account of the Battle of Franklin, together with a statement of the facts concerning the hospitals and the wounded during the stay of the Rebels, a period of seventeen days, after the Battle....

On the morning of the 30th of November the retreating [Union] army arrived at this place, tired and many almost exhausted. But, notwithstanding this, they commenced immediately throwing up breastworks. You would have been astonished to see how quick the work was completed....

...about half past three o'clock I was sitting at the dinner table, when I heard the roar of artillery. I ran into the yard to listen. There was a yell, the Rebels made a charge along the whole line. The bullets were falling so thick it was unsafe to remain longer.... I hastened to the cellar with the rest of my family and neighbors who sought protection with us. But alas! The charges were fearful, and made with redoubled fury the darker it grew.

About 10 o'clock suddenly the firing ceased for a few minutes. I heard persons in the sitting room above. It proved to be some Federal officers off duty for a time, who stopped to let us know how the Battle was going. All the evening other portions of the house and the entire front yard were filled with soldiers....

At midnight the Federal Army began to retreat, the wagon trains being safe, and gradually the firing ceased. Oh! How grateful to God we felt that it was over, as we thought of the dying and the dead on the battlefield. Then we emerged from our place of refuge. I dragged beds into my mother's room for us to rest there, as we wished to spend the remainder of the night of terror together. I could not sleep, for I longed to go to the battlefield to alleviate suffering, and, at least, do all in my power to make the wounded more comfortable until they could be brought to hospitals....

Early the next morning after the Battle I went to the field. The sight was dreadful. It seemed that I could scarcely move for fear of stepping on men either dead or wounded....

There were forty-four hospitals in total -- three for the Federal wounded and the rest for the Confederates....

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Transcription of a letter from Frances "Fannie" Courtney in April 1865

My Mother and I took charge of a hundred and twenty wounded men, who occupied the Presbyterian Church, it being the largest Federal hospital, and with what we could spare assisted at another which was in a house owned by my mother and near our own home. When we first went to the hospital, the wounded men told us they had nothing to eat for two days. We first furnished them with bread, meat and tea, and coffee, every little luxury we could prepare, for several days. Then they drew scanty rations from the Rebels, flour the color of ashes and a little poor beef not suitable for well men, much less for wounded. All the cooking was done, and in truth, everything eatable furnished, at our house.



Photograph of Presbyterian Church, Franklin, Tennessee. Courtesy of Rick Warwick.

We fed the men twice a day. Sometimes at 10 o'clock at night we would carry them something prepared with our own hands. Many had been robbed not only of their blankets and overcoats but of their coats, and were lying on the floor upon handfuls of straw, with nothing else to protect or cover them. We furnished them all the bedding we could spare, and made cotton pillows for all. There were no bandages to be had, and I made what I could out of my own underclothing. We would get up at daylight and with the help of servants commence cooking their breakfast. We never had time to rest, only as we sat down to eat something hurriedly, for as soon as we had finished feeding our patients in the morning, we had to return home to prepare the next meal....