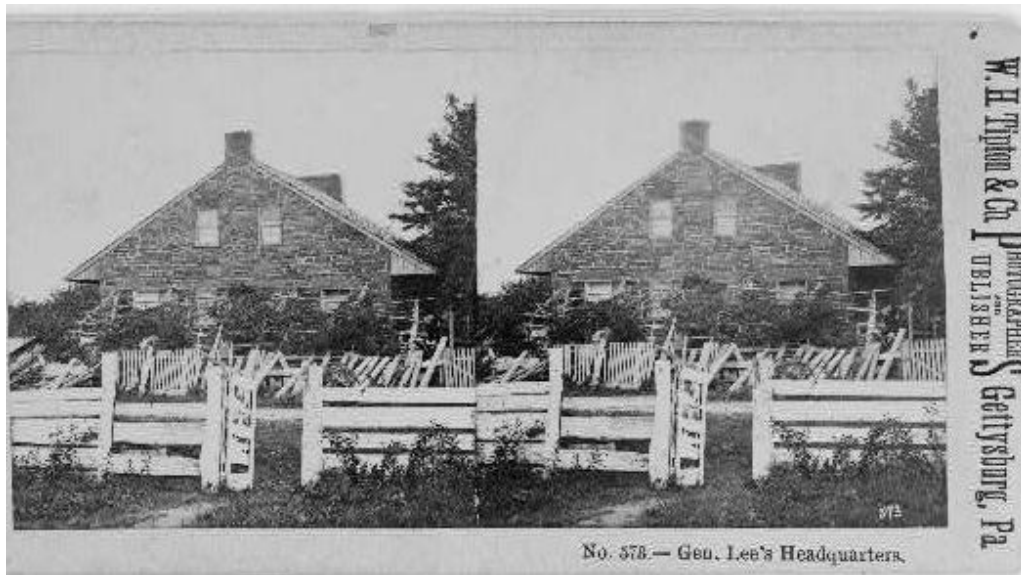


IOWA HISTORY



Courtesy Library of Congress
General Lee's headquarters at Gettysburg, Pa.

Bullets Whistling, She Milked Family Cow

"He thanked me, and, oh, he was a fine gentleman," Mary Wiseman Hindman recalled in 1930 when a Wisconsin newspaper reporter interviewed her.

Mary was talking about Confederate Civil War General Robert E. Lee, who asked for a drink of water. She met the general in June 1863 shortly before the Battle of Gettysburg. At the time Mary was only 17 and lived on the 80-acre Wiseman family farm, located on the southern edge of what became the Gettysburg battlefield in Pennsylvania.

Mary's dad, a "loyal union supporter," had been killed at the Battle of Suffolk, Va., only a couple months earlier. Mary and her mother were left to run the farm with the help of a couple of neighbor boys. By late June, Confederate soldiers had overrun the farm; and it looked as though Union and Confederate armies would soon clash.

Mary had gone into the nearby town to help care for a woman who had become sick at the hotel. This is where she ran into Gen. Lee, who rode up to the hotel in search of water. And Mary learned that she needed to return to the farm as fighting was about to commence.

Mary ran for home. She wanted to get the cow milked before things heated up. But while she milked, bullets "whistled" around her. She continued to milk until an officer urged Mary and her mother to go to the attic of their home. Mary said here they were able to observe the battle from a unique vantage point. But, as the fighting grew more intense, a soldier told them to go to the cellar.

Mary and her mother survived the battle, but Mrs. Wiseman died shortly after from drinking bad water. Mary, an orphan, came to Iowa to live with an aunt. And, it was here that the 83-year-old sat for an interview in Springville in 1930. She said she was the only living person who could claim to have resided on the Gettysburg battlefield during the fighting. Her memories of both Union and Confederate soldiers were positive.

“I can’t remember ever being treated unkindly by the soldiers of either side. They were all anxious to protect us as best they could from the terrible work they had to do,” Mary said.

©www.CherylMullenbachInk.com

Sources

- “Iowa Woman Lived At Gettysburg During Battle,” *Sioux City Journal*, Jan. 30, 1930.
- “Milked Cow During Gettysburg Fight,” *Post-Crescent*, (Baraboo, Wis.) May 31, 1930.
- “Milked Cow Under Fire During the Gettysburg Row.” *Oshkosh (Wis.) Northwestern*, May 30, 1930.