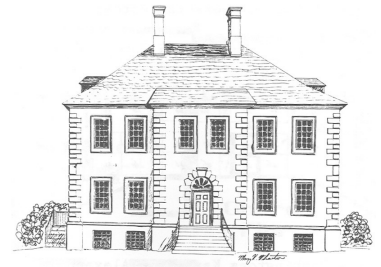


Carlyle Connection

“It’s a fine beginning.”



Nurses, Spies, and Soldiers: The Civil War at Carlyle House

By Sarah Coster

The Mansion House Hospital, which incorporated the 1753 home of John Carlyle and the large building in front of it, was a place of strife and suffering during the Civil War. Alexandria, the longest occupied Confederate city, epitomized what it meant to pit brother against brother. It is a legacy of divisiveness that is still apparent today as we struggle to grapple with what the Civil War meant then and now. Inside the Union-controlled hospital, one found struggles as well. Female nurses were verbally abused and criticized. Soldiers struggled against disease and illness, often serving only to find their pension claims denied. Everyone at the hospital missed home and peacetime.

But Carlyle House and the Mansion House Hospital were also places of hope and triumph. Female nurses here made great strides in earning recognition and respect, paving the way for future female medical practitioners. Soldiers made miraculous recoveries as medicine advanced.

These stories and more have been discovered as staff worked to research the Civil War story of our site.

Throughout 2011 and beyond, to commemorate the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War, exhibits and programs highlighted the fascinating lives of those living here 150 years ago. In 2016, a new exhibit will open, telling these stories in the context of the upcoming PBS series, *Mercy Street*.

James Green and his family lived in Carlyle House when Union troops invaded the city in early 1861. In addition to operating a very successful furniture business, the Greens also ran a large and successful hotel located where the front lawn of Carlyle House is today. It was known as the Mansion House Hotel.

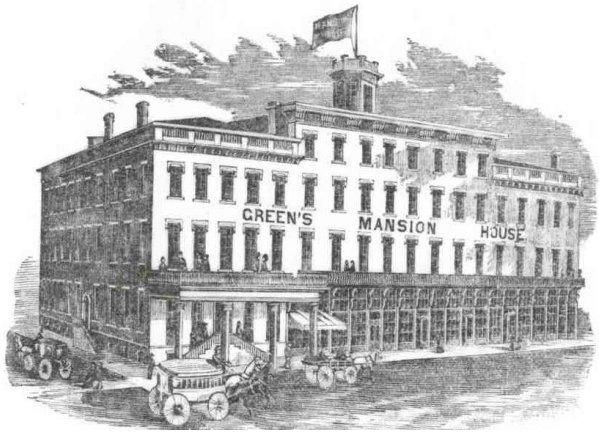


The Mansion House Hospital. This view is of Fairfax Street, facing south toward King Street. Notice the barricades on Cameron Street to protect from Confederate raids.

James Green’s son Stephen purchased a diary in January to record a year that he believed in “all probability will see the end of this Union of States.” On May 24, 1861, Green awoke to guns firing as Union boats landed in Alexandria’s harbor. “The Confederate troops had barely time to leave town,” he noted. They were quickly replaced by Union troops, many of whom boarded at the Mansion House Hotel. “Not much sleep,” Green complained, “with our new boarders overhead dancing...” The dancing stopped a few months later when the building became a hospital.

Shots rang out early in the morning of July 21, 1861, in nearby Manassas, Virginia. By the end of the day, over 2,000 soldiers had been wounded in the first major battle of the war, the First Battle of Bull Run. The Union Army scrambled to find space for the wounded. James Green,

the owner of the Mansion House Hotel, received a letter from the government in early November stating he had three days to vacate the premises. Even with the help of his furniture factory workers, it took over a week to remove everything.



Green's Mansion House Hotel

As the war progressed, Alexandria's hospitals quickly filled to capacity, including the 700-bed Mansion House Hospital. Mary Phinney von Olnhäusen, a nurse, described the over-crowding following the Battle of Fredericksburg in 1862. Fairfax Street, she wrote, "was full of ambulances and the sick lay outside on the sidewalks from nine in the morning till five in the evening . . . and to-night were put back into ambulances and carted off again." Even in a city full of hospitals, these sick and dying soldiers had nowhere to go.

During the four years of war, Union hospitals treated 6,000,000 cases of illness and 400,000 battle wounds and injuries. Two-thirds of Union deaths during the Civil War were a result of disease. Poor sanitation, hygiene and diet caused high amounts of dysentery, typhoid and other illnesses. Infections after surgery were common and often resulted in amputation. Doctors had no knowledge of germ theory or antiseptic practices, and many soldiers lost their lives to infection.

Despite their shortcomings, the doctors and nurses at the Mansion House Hospital made great strides in saving lives. Perhaps some of the greatest strides, however, were those made by the female nurses stationed here. At the time of the Civil War, the idea of a female nurse in a military hospital was a new and unpopular concept, piloted by

Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War in Europe. The female nurses at Mansion House Hospital overcame prejudice and harsh treatment in order to bring comfort and aid to wounded and dying men. One surgeon in Alexandria told Nurse Harriet Dada that "A lady ceases to be a lady when she becomes a nurse." However, through their dedication and hard work, the female nurses won over many the surgeons and doctors and opened the door for future American women to have medical careers.

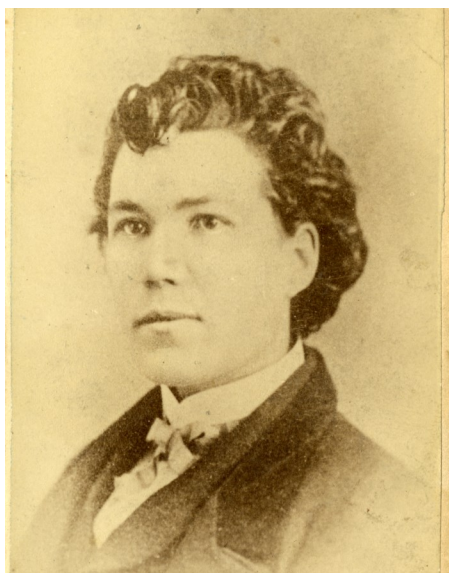


Interior drawing of the United States Hospital at Georgetown. This hospital, like the Mansion House, was a hotel before the war. Image courtesy of the Maine Historical Society.

One female nurse who worked at the Mansion House Hospital defied gender roles in a particularly stunning manner. This soldier was a female disguised as a man. Sarah Emma Edmonds was already passing herself off as a man named Frank Thompson when the war began, working as a door-to-door salesman. When the Civil War called on men to enlist, Edmonds found the opportunity enticing. She joined the Union army, fought at Blackburn's Ford and served as a nurse at the Mansion House Hospital. She also worked as a mail carrier and even, she claimed, spied for the Union.

It is believed some 300-500 women may have served as soldiers during the Civil War, though an exact number may never be known. Most of Edmonds' campmates assumed she was one of the young boys who snuck into the army, except for one. Edmonds' close friend and fellow soldier, Jerome Robbins, was suspicious. He wrote in his journal "a mystery appears to be connected with [Frank] which it is impossible for me to fathom." When Edmonds did reveal her identity to him Robbins kept it a secret, telling only his

diary. It is in this diary, now in the archives of the University of Michigan, that Robbins recorded Sarah Emma Edmonds working as a nurse at the Mansion House Hospital during the winter of 1861-1862. After two months as a nurse, Edmonds moved on to become a mail carrier, which certainly gave her more freedom to come and go, and thus easier to hide her identity. In 1863, Edmonds contracted malaria and deserted, rather than risk discovery. She went on to write her memoirs and was even granted a pension, one of the few women soldiers to receive one.

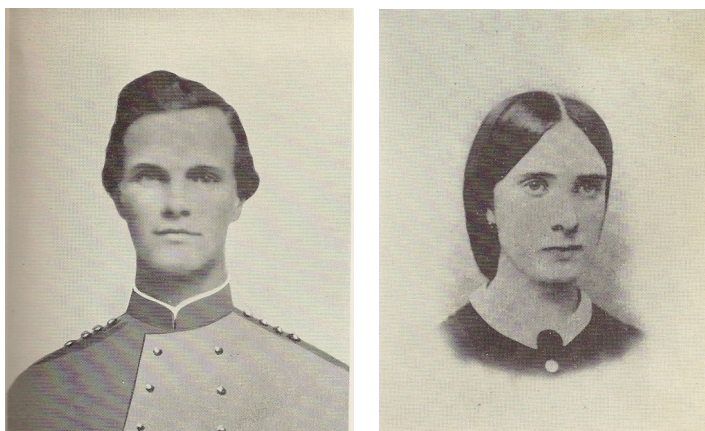


Sarah Emma Edmonds

In Edmonds' memoirs, which she published immediately after the war, she claimed to have been a spy for Allan Pinkerton and the Union Intelligence Service. While little evidence exists to support her claims, it was not uncommon for spies on both sides of the war to use disguise to cross enemy lines. One of these spies was in love with Carlyle House's own Emma Green, the daughter of Mansion House Hotel owner James Green. Known as "Lee's beloved and trusted scout," Benjamin Franklin Stringfellow attended Episcopal High School, near Alexandria. While there, he renewed his friendship with Emma, whose sister had married Frank's brother in 1855. Frank and Emma fell in love, but their courtship was interrupted by the Civil War.

A skinny 21 year-old at the start of the war, Stringfellow used his cunning and bravery to gather intelligence for the

Confederacy. He daringly crossed enemy lines multiple times, sneaking into both Alexandria and Washington. Stringfellow's adventures are the stuff of legends. Once, while spying in DC, he refused to drink to President Lincoln's health, and instead toasted Confederate President Jefferson Davis. He also claimed to have hidden under an Alexandria woman's petticoats to escape Union troops.



Frank Stringfellow and Emma Green

After the war, Stringfellow married Emma, but not before refusing to take the oath of loyalty to the Union and living in Canada. He returned to Alexandria from Canada in 1867, married Emma, entered the Episcopal Seminary, and became an ordained minister in 1876. Frank and Emma are buried side-by-side in the Ivy Hill Cemetery in Alexandria.

On April 9, 1865, General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Confederate Army to General Ulysses S. Grant. He may have signed the terms of his surrender on a desk made at James Green's Alexandria workshop. Carlyle House and the Mansion House Hospital were returned to the Green family and they soon reopened it as a hotel.

The hotel, however, never returned to its former glory. Following the war, much of Alexandria fell into a slow decline and by the 1970s the buildings on Fairfax Street were crumbling into decay. The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority stepped in to save Carlyle House from destruction, opening it as a museum on January 1, 1976.

During the restoration, the former Mansion House Hospital building was torn down, but not before artifacts

from its days as a Civil War Hospital were recovered from underneath the floorboards and behind the walls. These artifacts have formed a centerpiece of our Civil War Sesquicentennial exhibit and will continue to be a physical reminder of the nurses, soldiers and surgeons who used them in our new expanded exhibit, *Who These Wounded Are: The Extraordinary Stories of Mansion House Hospital*, which opens in early 2016.

News from the Educator

It has been a busy fall in the Education department! In September Helen and I offered 4 docent training sessions that were heavily attended by potential volunteers. Since then, 5 volunteers have been welcomed into our docent corps! In October we held our second annual Trick or Treat at Carlyle House which had over 300 children visit the grounds. Once again we have seen an increase in the number of students that participated in school tours this fall. So far 280 students visited Carlyle House up from 254 at the same time last year. I am in the early stages of planning Camp Carlyle 2016 with the dates set for next summer. The dates will be July 11-15, July 25-29, and August 8-12 and the camp will again run Monday- Friday from 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. for rising 3rd-6th graders. I am also planning a half day Mini Camp Carlyle for rising K-2nd graders for the week of July 18-22. Registration will open February 1st.



~Vanessa Herndon

News from the Site Specialist

Carlyle House had two exciting new programs this fall! On a beautiful September weekend, we hosted over 600 visitors for our first ever Scottish Heritage event, "Outlander Style!" On Saturday, September 19th, members of the Appin Regiment, an 18th century Scottish Living History group, modelled Jacobite highlander fashions of the 18th century (a bit to the North of where John Carlyle grew up) and then presented a Living History experience on the grounds of the museum. The Devil's Tailors and Granfling Highland School of Dance performed to rave reviews later in the afternoon, and the entire City of Alexandria Pipe and Drum band gathered crowds as well. The Outlander theme song (real title "The Skye Boat Song") also became the weekend's theme song and was played by bagpipes, fiddles, drums and harps.



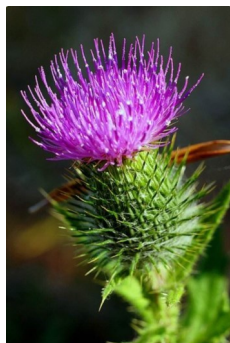
On Sunday, the 20th, we hosted a sold-out tea catered by Calling Card events with delicious baked goods provided by The Dairy Godmother (as well as door prizes), beautiful flower arrangements done by the Virginia Florist, and a donated gift basket from the Scottish Gourmet USA. The Outlandish National Capital Region group also loaned their

cut-out life size version of the character, Jamie, from the television show for photo opportunities. It was a fun-filled weekend!



On Saturday, October 17th, we took a break from the Carlyle Funeral event to create a zombie filled walking tour event. In partnership with Alexandria's Footsteps to the Past, we hosted almost 100 visitors for an evening of tales from the battlefield, the 18th century, and "walkers" in the garden. The television show, "The Walking Dead" has its storyline based in Alexandria, VA as the characters make their way to Washington, DC. It was a popular event and one that we hope to repeat.

~Helen Wirka



Upcoming Events

Soldier's Christmas

Saturday, December 5; 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Come join us at Carlyle House for an annual holiday tradition the first Saturday in December, immediately following the Scottish Walk parade! Step back in time to enjoy colonial life in Alexandria during the holidays at the time of the American Revolution. Take part in festive activities, including live music, demonstrations of military drill, fife and drum, gaming, and cooking. Sample historic beverages and meet the regiment's surgeon as well as men and women of the American Revolution.

Historic Alexandria Candlelight Tours

Saturday, December 12; 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 13; 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Make Historic Alexandria Candlelight Tours part of your 2015 holiday season celebration by bringing some Holiday Cheer to your December! Travel through three centuries of history as you learn more about Alexandria and foodways during the holiday season at Carlyle House, Gadsby's Tavern Museum, and the Lee-Fendall House. Special guest site this year is Lloyd House. Enjoy each site by candlelight, smell seasonal greenery, sip on drinks and taste period-inspired food. Seasonal libations will be available. The tour is self-guided and the sites may be visited in any order. A free shuttle runs in a continuous loop between the sites. Ticket prices are \$25 for adults, \$20 for seniors and active military, and \$5 for children (ages 6-17). For information, tickets, and group sales information, please contact Gadsby's Tavern Museum at 703.746.4242. Tickets for this event can also be purchased online at <http://shop.alexandriava.gov>.

Who These Wounded Are: The Extraordinary Stories of the Mansion House Hospital

Come see our new exhibit, which opens to the public on January 19, 2016.

Please call or check our website for more details on our happenings. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter!

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Carlyle House Historic Park is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.



News from the Site Manager

The upcoming PBS series *Mercy Street* has already taken over Alexandria. The entire City is abuzz about our upcoming time in the national spotlight. With that in mind, we decided to republish Sarah Coster's excellent 2011 article about the Mansion House Hospital so that our Friends can be fully informed as to the true story of this fascinating chapter in

Carlyle House's history. As many of you know, Sarah curated the popular *Nurses, Spies, and Soldiers: The Civil War at Carlyle House* exhibit as part of the Civil War Sesquicentennial, and wrote the accompanying article. Current staff is in the process of updating and expanding Sarah's exhibit based on exciting new findings about the hospital and its occupants. The new exhibit, which will encompass the entire second floor of the museum, is entitled *Who These Wounded Are: The Extraordinary Stories of the Mansion House Hospital*. We hope that you will come see the exhibit after it opens to the public on January 19. Several of us were fortunate to attend the November 5th premiere screening of the first episode of *Mercy Street* and we are happy with the results. Yes, the producers take some artistic license and alter facts a bit, but on the whole the show does an excellent job of portraying life in Alexandria during the Civil War. On the morning of the screening, three cast members, two producers, and a host of press visited Carlyle House. They were delighted to meet some of our Civil War reenactors. Photo from L to R: Zach Whitlow, Teresa Martinez, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Tara Summers, Kyle Dalton, Hannah James, Kathryn Blackwell.



A fun crew at Carlyle House on November 5!

On a more sober note, after many years representing the City of Alexandria on the NOVA Parks Board, David Pritzker has stepped down. He has been a stalwart supporter of Carlyle House and we will miss him greatly. As a small token of our appreciation, David and his wife Charlene, who has also been a wonderful friend and important part of the Carlyle House family, now have a lifetime membership in the Friends of Carlyle House.

Please save the date! The Friends holiday party will be on January 10, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. at Gadsby's Tavern Museum. Invitations will go out shortly.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving. We hope to see you soon.

~Susan Hellman