

Theresa and Edward  
O'Brien, photo of an oil  
painting, date unknown,  
superimposed on her diary.  
HHC L&A, O'Brien Family Collection,  
MSP 390, Box 1, Folder 5.





# Theresa O'Brien's Diary

## Love and Devotion Behind the Line

By Miriah O'Connor

"Oh! the cruel sufferings Brought by this unnatural war,  
once a happy Prosperous Country; now? Polotitians [sic] to what a  
state, have you Reduced your beautiful Country?"

**T**heresa O'Brien, an army officer's wife from New Castle, Pennsylvania, recorded those sentiments in her diary on September 25, 1862, just one week after witnessing the horrors of the battle of Antietam.

Theresa O'Brien accompanied her husband Edward to battle during a nine-month enlistment. Her diary—in the O'Brien Family Collection at the Heinz History Center Archives—recalls her daily activities and observations of military life and reveals her insights into the war, helping to explain what

motivated some women to accompany men to the battle lines. It also provides her perspective on the battle of Antietam, in which Edward took part. Her brother and brother-in-law also fought and died in the war.

Women have played an irreplaceable role in battles since feudal armies waged war across Europe. Even before modern-day warfare blurred the lines between the sexes on the battlefield, women at military camps and outposts demonstrated a range of skill sets and occupations. Most performed domestic tasks,

though some certainly presented themselves for less virtuous reasons, comforting lonely soldiers for a price. Although it might be easy to assume that a woman traveling with a group of men was a prostitute, most were nurses, soldiers' daughters, or wives—like Theresa O'Brien.<sup>1</sup> After the Civil War, women were still "followers" in some conflicts, including the Indian wars in the West, but by the 20th century, women were disappearing from army camps. Starting with World War I, they had more recognized, official roles in the military and auxiliaries.



Born in New Castle, Pennsylvania, around 1838, Theresa O'Donnell married Edward O'Brien on April 20, 1861. Edward was influential in the early militia of Lawrence County. A metallurgist, he worked in a foundry making metal moulds. He served in the Mexican War and was commissioned a second captain. When Edward enlisted in Company F of the 12th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry on April 21, 1862, only a day after their wedding, 23-year-old Theresa became a military wife and decided to accompany her husband to war. There is no mention in her diary of performing tasks such as cooking for troops or nursing; instead she acts as Edward's companion and a "surrogate mother" to soldiers who needed a sympathetic

ear. When Company F was mustered out of service from Baltimore, Maryland, Edward re-enlisted and in July 1862 responded to a call for troops from Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin, helping to recruit Company D of the 134th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry.<sup>2</sup>

A military camp is not a luxurious or safe environment, so the modern observer might question why women left home to accompany their men to war. One woman who followed her husband west to fight American Indians explained simply, "I had cast my lot with a soldier ... and where he was, was home to me."<sup>3</sup> Theresa O'Brien begins her diary with an exclamation to the "dear reader," assuredly hoping

that her words would be shared with those at home to help them understand the war and why she and other women would put themselves in harm's way: "I shut my eyes & pray god will give me [strength] to do violence to my own feelings for the sake of Him who is my all."<sup>4</sup> Theresa is fearful, but her words express her determination to support her husband throughout the war. She prayed that she could be strong for him, and just as the soldier's wife who wrote that where her husband was at was "home to me," Theresa's feelings for Edward motivated her decisions.

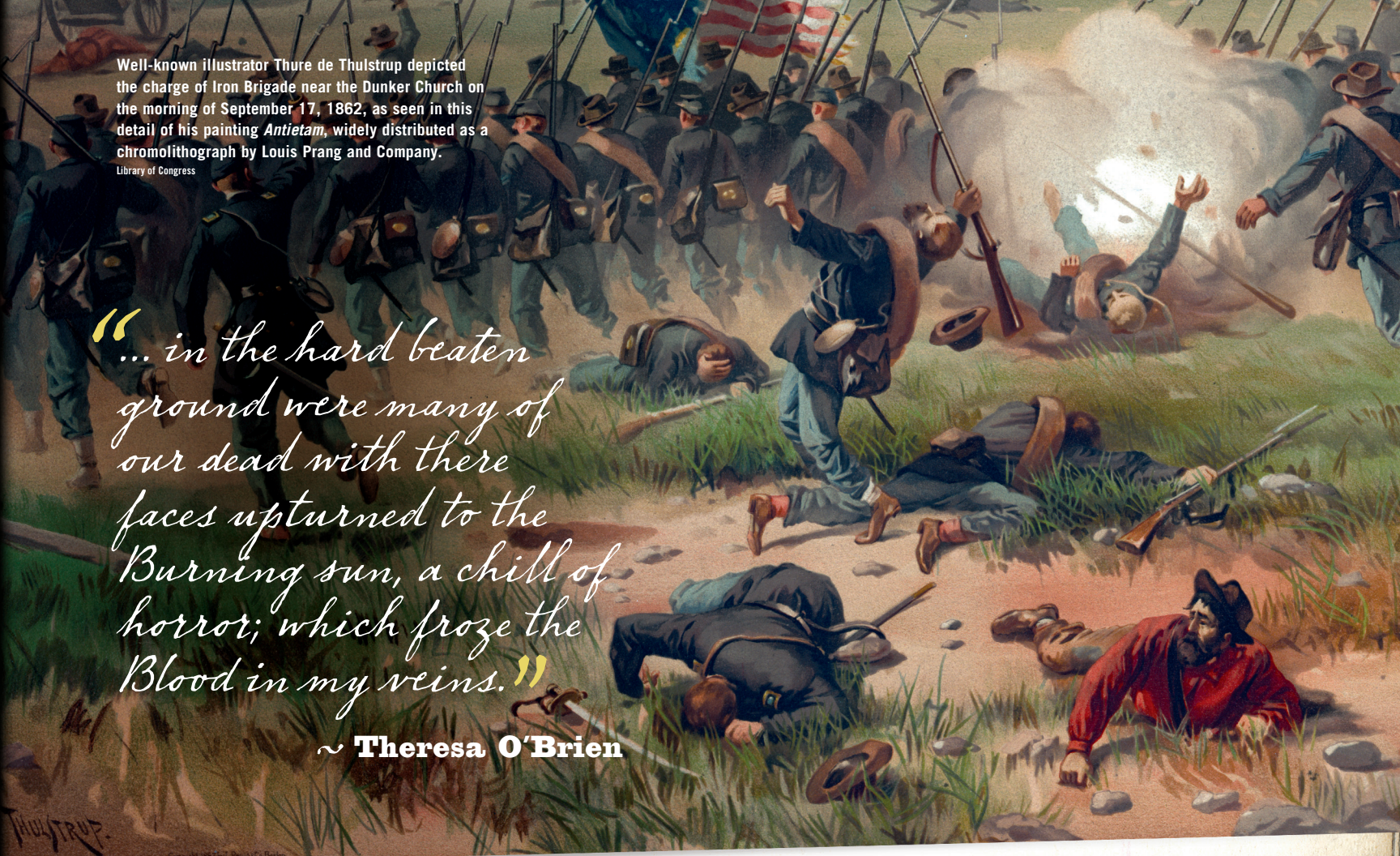
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Colonel Edward O'Brien. This carte-de-visite, from the upcoming book *The Civil War in Pennsylvania: A Photographic History*, was in an album of the 134th Pennsylvania belonging to Captain J. Adams Vera, Beaver County.

Courtesy Ken Turner.







Well-known illustrator Thure de Thulstrup depicted the charge of Iron Brigade near the Dunker Church on the morning of September 17, 1862, as seen in this detail of his painting *Antietam*, widely distributed as a chromolithograph by Louis Prang and Company.

Library of Congress

*"... in the hard beaten ground were many of our dead with there faces upturned to the Burning sun, a chill of horror; which froze the Blood in my veins."*

~ Theresa O'Brien

## The Battle of Antietam

Theresa acted as companion to Edward and observer, often referencing a compelling curiosity and fascination about her surroundings and the soldiers' lives.

Remarking on the casualties at Antietam, she

could see many poor fellow stretched where they lay. in looking Ardently to the left there just beside me in a corn-field and amid the corn, on the hard beaten ground were many of our dead with there faces upturned to the Burning sun, a chill of horror; which froze the Blood in my veins. for an instant as I looked and yet I looked again, and again, as if impelled By a sort of fassionation.<sup>5</sup>

Theresa had written her first diary entry less than two weeks before that terrible battle of September 17, 1862. (It is known as the battle of Antietam or Sharpsburg, having been

fought near Antietam Creek in Sharpsburg, Maryland.) The two armies suffered approximately 23,000 casualties,<sup>6</sup> leaving the fields drenched in blood and the small town of Sharpsburg to cope with multitudes of dead and horribly wounded. On September 19, 1862, Theresa writes, "All the way From Frederick, to Sharpsburgh is one hospital. houses all along the road are fill'd with terrible cases of suffering, and sharpsburgh itself has been made desolate."<sup>7</sup>

For days after the battle, her diary is filled with tragic, overwhelming visuals. The incredible loss of life at Antietam was so that "one of the Boys went out to get a handful of straw and in taking up an armful Picked up a dead Rebel. They say there is a great many lying around dead, lying on top of ground far from all who love them."<sup>8</sup>

Not only did the Army of the Potomac suffer a great number of casualties, but many

men were taken prisoner. When prisoners were paroled by the enemy, they swore an oath to not continue fighting until formally exchanged. Theresa witnessed such an event when Edward called her to follow him to the lines:

just now E. came in to ask me to walk out a little ways to see 12,000 Paroled Prisoners. yes just think of to see 12,000 of our own troops marching Back without arms. Too bad, too Bad Indeed, I felt twas no use in our going any further when double our number is marching along quietly without arms. and they look better than our soldiers. There new uniform has never been sullied; Tis enough carnage of our poor fellows.<sup>9</sup>

The slaughter at Antietam was so overwhelming that it is easy to forget the impact on civilians:

a short distance from where we were [at camp] was a nice looking farmhouse. E and I walked down and found only an old gentleman the other members of





*"... to be sick in such a place far from all who love him and no loving hand to wipe the gathering dew from his brow."*

~ **Theresa O'Brien**

Women in camp helped soldiers write letters home.

HHC L&A, Harper's Weekly: A Journal of Civilization, Vol. 8.

the household having fled during the Battle, he says, my wife is sick a way from home. She cant come home and I too am sick and cannot go to her, Poor old man he never expected to see such a Battle, in his old age on his farm. Where he had spent so many peaceful years. What a beautiful place it had been, But the labour of years Oy! a lifetime were destroid in a very few hours... all suffered alike.

Theresa and Edward left the man's house "feeling simpathy too deep for words for any attempt to express what we felt for the lonely old man would of been mocking."<sup>10</sup>

## A Woman's Comfort

A woman in camp could be a great comfort to the men, who sometimes showed their appreciation with acts of tenderness. A Maine recruit during the Civil War wrote in a letter home that Annie Etheredge (a vivandiere, an enlisted rank for females who assisted the regiment with various activities), was a "heroine of the War...a braver soul cannot be found" because of her actions on the battlefield binding the men's wounds. She was so loved by the men in her regiment that "there isn't a man at any of the headquarters who wouldn't gladly surrender his bed and tent to her."<sup>11</sup>

The men in Edward's regiment often showed respect and care for the O'Briens. Theresa occasionally mentions sharing meals with the troops and remarks that "some of the Boys kindly shared there coffee with us" after she and Edward returned from meeting the elderly man in Sharpsburg. After this respite and their tent was pitched, Theresa and her husband "felt at home once more."<sup>12</sup> The next night, a lack of supply wagons left them with no place to sleep. Theresa and Edward were about to rest in the Ambulances when

one of the Boys of Camp came with his shelter tent, and fixed us up a nice little house. Then some of the Boys took there Blankets and made us a nice little Bed,



when everything was ready, E. helped me down, and Oh! dear But, I had to laugh, we had to stoop down on our hands and knees to get in our Bedroom.<sup>13</sup>

Theresa was frequently concerned for the soldiers' well-being, worrying in a maternal fashion, interceding where she could to help.

A young Boy by the name of Mayberry came in he was crying; he had news, his Brother was wounded in Wensdays fight; and wanted a Pass to visit him, But his Capt. he said was so cross. he didnt like to mention the matter to him; I saw the adgt Passing and asked him to see the Boys Capt. and do all he could to get him a pass. I was pleased however to see the Boy coming in smiling while tears were still glistening on his cheeks to thank me. Poor Boy when I had done nothing.<sup>14</sup>

The benefits of having women in camp were two-fold: they not only freed up some men to concentrate on military duties by performing tasks like cooking and laundry, but also

provided emotional support for the men. A woman's presence could remind a man of his mother, sister, or sweetheart back home.

Because some women went to camp motivated out of love and devotion to their male family member, often "teams of soldier-husband and nurse-wife" served in the field.<sup>15</sup>

Enlisted men's wives, when allowed in camp, often cooked, did laundry, and performed other domestic duties, living on the regiment's supplies and rations. However, most officers' wives received financial support from their husbands or families. Edward apparently supported Theresa financially because according to her diary she did not perform paid domestic duties in camp. The daily lives of the wives of officers and enlisted men were almost as different as those of their husbands'. Rarely was an officer's wife expected to be more than a companion or "sometimes nurse." Theresa and Edward O'Brien fell into the officer class because of Edward's previous military experience, but after the war he worked at R.W. Cunningham's foundry in

New Castle, which suggests the O'Briens were working class.<sup>16</sup>

Nineteenth-century military hierarchy dictated that enlisted men and the officers stay in separate areas. The enlisted men marched long days and were often [stretched] "on the hard beaten ground ...with only there Gray sacks for a Pillow."<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, officers often lived in such conditions as Agnes Salm-Salm described in her memoirs. In *Ten Years of My Life* she describes the "large carpeted hospital tent" in which she and her husband, a royal Prussian officer serving as a Union colonel, lived during winter camp. Their tent was furnished with a sofa and a "large bedstead with a red and white silk canopy." The Salm-Salms had another tent for their kitchen and their maid.<sup>18</sup>

Whether Theresa O'Brien lived such a lavish life at camp is unknown, as she makes no such allusions her diary. Most often she slept with Edward in a tent, referring to it as their "home."

# Telegram from Edward to Theresa.

HHC L&A, O'Brien Family Collection, MSS 390, Box 1, Folder 7.

**WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY.**

NO. 1.] **TERMS AND CONDITIONS ON WHICH MESSAGES ARE RECEIVED BY THIS COMPANY FOR TRANSMISSION.**

The public are notified that, in order to guard against mistakes in the transmission of messages, every message of importance ought to be repeated, by being sent back from the station at which it is to be received, to the station from which it is originally sent. Half the usual price for transmission will be charged for repeating the message; and while this Company will, as heretofore, use every precaution to ensure correctness, it will not be responsible for mistakes or delays in the transmission or delivery of repeated messages, beyond an amount exceeding five hundred times the amount paid for sending the message; nor will it be responsible for mistakes or delays in the transmission of unreported messages from whatever cause they may arise, nor for delays arising from interruptions in the working of its Telegraphs, nor for any mistake or omission of any other Company, over whose lines a message is to be sent to reach the place of destination. All messages will hereafter be received by this Company for transmission, subject to the above conditions.

**A. STAGER, Gen. Supt., Cleveland, Ohio.** **L. R. ELWOOD, Secy., Rochester, N. Y.**

*Ms O'Brien*  
*New Castle* By Telegraph from *Pittsburg*

*June 20 1863*

*The regiment will be kept here for two (2) or three (3) days I think I am three miles from the City*

*Ed O'Brien Col.*

*pd*



## Drawbacks of Women in Camp

Although the benefits of having women in camp seem obvious and practical, the disadvantages are also evident. A woman would have been outnumbered by thousands of men and likely would have been conscious of her personal safety. Theresa makes no reference to witnessing violence against women in camp, but it did sometimes occur, particularly against black women. In her work on female relief workers in Civil War hospitals, Jane Schultz noted, "The extent to which [black] women were arbitrarily stereotyped can be seen in white officers' characterization

of them as prostitutes, despite the protests of their soldier husbands." Esther Hill Hawks, a doctor at Sea Islands, testified that "No colored woman or girl was safe from the brutal lusts of officers and men....There are several women in our little hospital who have been shot by soldiers for resisting their vile demands."<sup>19</sup>

Although attacks on white women were relatively rare, it is possible that officers in Edward's regiment were concerned about Theresa's safety during the march to Georgetown, September 12, 1862:

Poor fellows. it was a long march through the rain, without supper, by the time we Passed Back through Georgetown... I was so alarmed about my husband he being ill for Several days, and

now out in the rain. I staped out of the Ambulance, and was looking round for him when Capt. Legan, came up to me and advised me to go to a hotel. As twould be impossible to find anyone in the darkness.

Capt. Legan then escorted Theresa to the Willards Hotel in Washington. Understanding that it would have been dangerous and improper to remain in camp without Edward (in addition to the logistical problem of having no place to house her), Theresa appreciated the captain's offer: "no one can have any Idea of my feeling at that time. Alone in the darkness, and deprived of my husbands Protection; and thrown on the sympathy of an entire stranger." Theresa waited for two days at the hotel for Edward to retrieve her. "Oh! Why dont he come send me a line. to say where they are or what they are doing, I have lived one long year in one single day... Oh! But I tired of this Prison, I will never leave them again no not for one single day."<sup>20</sup>

When Edward retrieved Theresa, he tried to convince her that she did not need to join the men in Maryland and to stay in Washington alone; it is not clear whether he feared for her safety, or her presence was unwanted—a

A woman would have been outnumbered by thousands of men and likely would have been conscious of her personal safety.

Officers, especially, had the privilege of family visits or extended stays.

HHHC L&A, *The Photographic History of the Civil War*, Vol. 8.

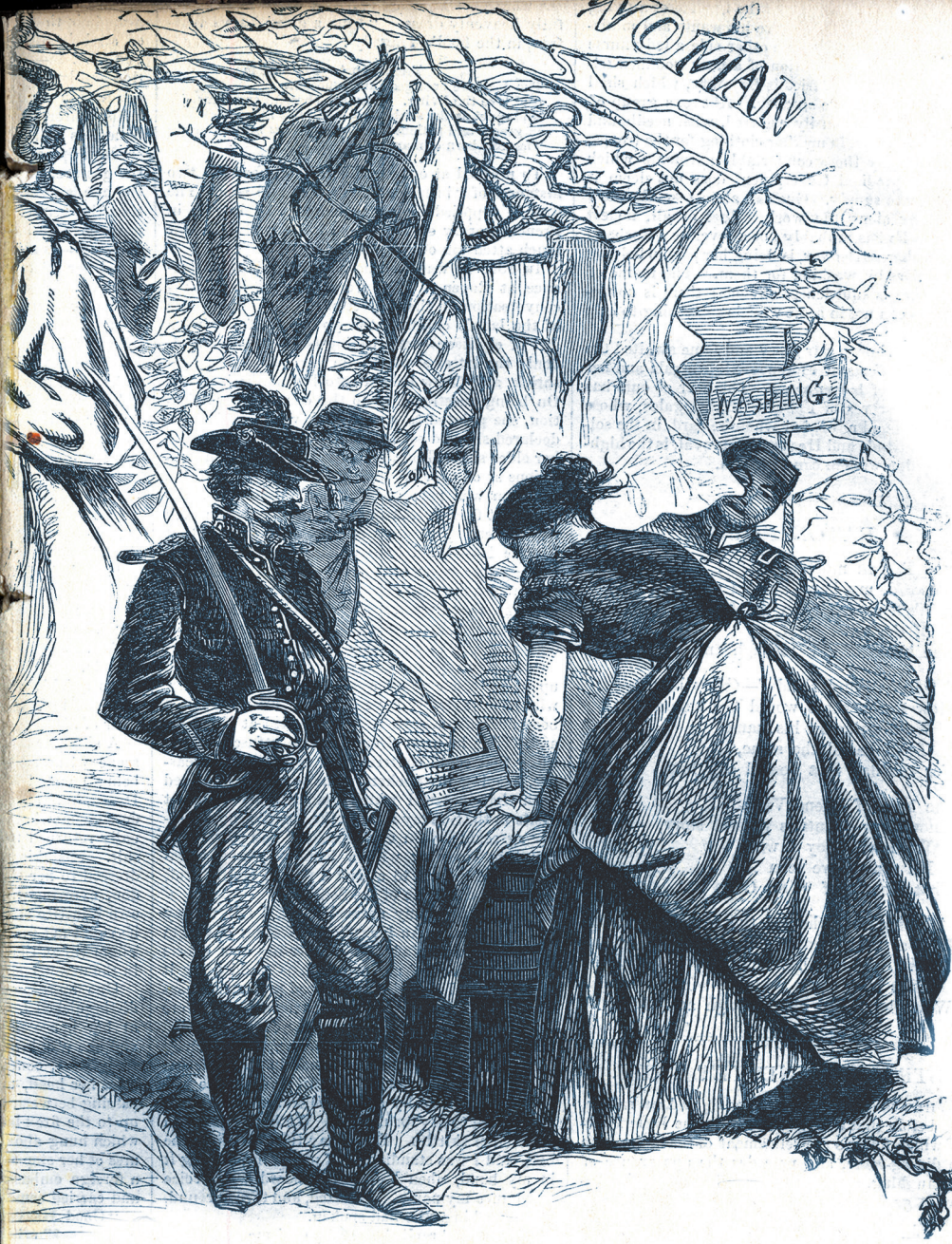




WOMAN

Women in camp often earned their keep by cooking or doing laundry.

HHC L&A, *Harper's Weekly: A Journal of Civilization*, Vol. 8.



The benefits of having women in camp were two-fold: they not only freed up some men to concentrate on military duties by performing tasks like cooking and laundry, but also provided emotional support for the men.

possibility that should not be discounted. Nonetheless, in her diary she scoffs at his attempts to keep her in Washington: "they must think I am very stupid, why what would take them in to Maryland ... if they were not needed." Her reason for accompanying the troops was that "I will Be near E always."<sup>21</sup>

In addition to concerns about personal safety, women imposed a physical burden on a camp. They required escort by the troops and could be in the way during long marches. Although some women might have rode horses, or walked, most (particularly officers' wives) rode in ambulances. Under battle conditions, women had to expect

"to be inconvenienced and endangered... as personnel could not be spared for their evacuation;"<sup>22</sup> in an emergency, all ambulances and wagons were needed to transport men and supplies. These non-combatants also burdened the limited supplies, including food rations. During a ride behind the lines at Antietam, Theresa witnessed "heavy rapid firing" and as they followed the lines "met some of the old troops coming Back [away from the front lines], they asked one of our Boys for ammunition, and looking at me one of them said you surely will not go much further."<sup>23</sup> Theresa fell back to the woods and watched the regiment move off to fight. Her behavior

is moderately unusual. A woman would not normally be so close to the action. She would stay at the camp while the men marched to the front. This is just another example of the special circumstances that Edward made for Theresa, ensuring she could stay with him.

**"Him who is my all...  
Dear Ed"**

Theresa seems terrified that Edward would be hurt and she would not know the circumstances. When addressing death in her diary, she records how sad it was "to be



sick in such a place far from all who love him and no loving hand to wipe the gathering dew from his [wounded soldier] brow."<sup>24</sup> Before Antietam she writes that it was unfortunate that families would not know where their loved ones were buried, but after the battle, expresses something akin to envy for women who had not witnessed the horrors of war.

While walking through a cornfield, I almost stumbled on some graves...here thy Bodies lay buried in this open field, tis well that loved ones at Home, know not thy burial place. a soldiers grave should be a sacred spot. and those at Home while reading of the Brave Soldier, who fought and died while so gloriously defending his Country's cause. are oft to be carried away by enthusiasm and Picture to themselves, the Brave, Soldiers grave. in some Quiet nook... not in an open field, with Beasts of prey trampling over, Remains of loved ones.

Her words evoke sadness and disgust, but in the same entry she laments that "I have

seen horrid sights sometimes I feel faint & sick then I shut my eyes & pray god will give me strength to do violence to my own feeling for the sake of Him who is my All... dear Ed." Theresa's diary entries, being her own thoughts and not Edward's, cannot tell us for sure whether Edward desired her presence in camp; however, Theresa's words indicate that because she loved Edward so much, she put the burden upon herself to stay.<sup>25</sup>

Political matters (not just death) also interested Theresa. She felt the war was one between politicians, whose responsibility it was to end it. There is no record of her thoughts on the war's latter days, after experience could have altered her perceptions. President Lincoln and General McClellan visited the Army of the Potomac and on the morning of Friday, October 3, 1862, Theresa writes that she saw "what is styled one of the grandest Military review of our day; they fired a salute of thirty-three guns." Her opinion of the president was

of nothing special, "rather a plain looking individual, there is nothing Prepossessing in his appearance." General McClellan, considerably one of the most controversial political figures of the war because of his act of disloyalty by running as the Democratic presidential nominee in 1864, was the more interesting figure in Mrs. O'Brien's eyes. "It was our little Mac that I was most interested in, with His finely shaped Classical Head, and dark hair... How young looking he is to know so much to think of and so many thousand men looking up to him to lead them on to victory or death."<sup>26</sup>

The Civil War, the "War between the States," divided the nation and many homes within it. While speaking to some wounded rebel prisoners, Theresa discovered that one man from Louisiana had fought against his brother, who lived with their mother in Philadelphia. "O he says so unnatural a war Brother against Brother if twas some foreign nation then we could fight with greater zest."<sup>27</sup> The Confederates were already so dependent on a conscription army that as early as 1862 a wounded rebel told Theresa that he was forced into the service, with "two of his Brothers being shot dead for Resisting the draft."<sup>28</sup>

Documents from Edward are also stored in the O'Brien collection, providing another perspective on the couple's wartime relationship. Edward and Theresa became ill with the fever that passed through camp in fall 1862. Theresa became so ill that she was left behind when the troops returned to Fredericksburg from Sharpsburg during the third week of October. Theresa indicates in her diary that she was not left alone, although she doesn't say who stayed with her. When her fever broke she exclaims in her diary that she had been ill for weeks; she "was not able to meet Ed when He came to say goodby I was sitting propped up on Pillows it was a sorry parting." She is thankful to have survived the sickness that killed many men but lamented:

I am all alone now amid confusion of every kind god will watch over you my loved one and spare you to me else why

Rarely was an officer's wife expected to be more than a companion or "sometimes nurse."

Sketch of an officer and a woman sitting in a tent by Alfred Waud, 1860s.

Library of Congress



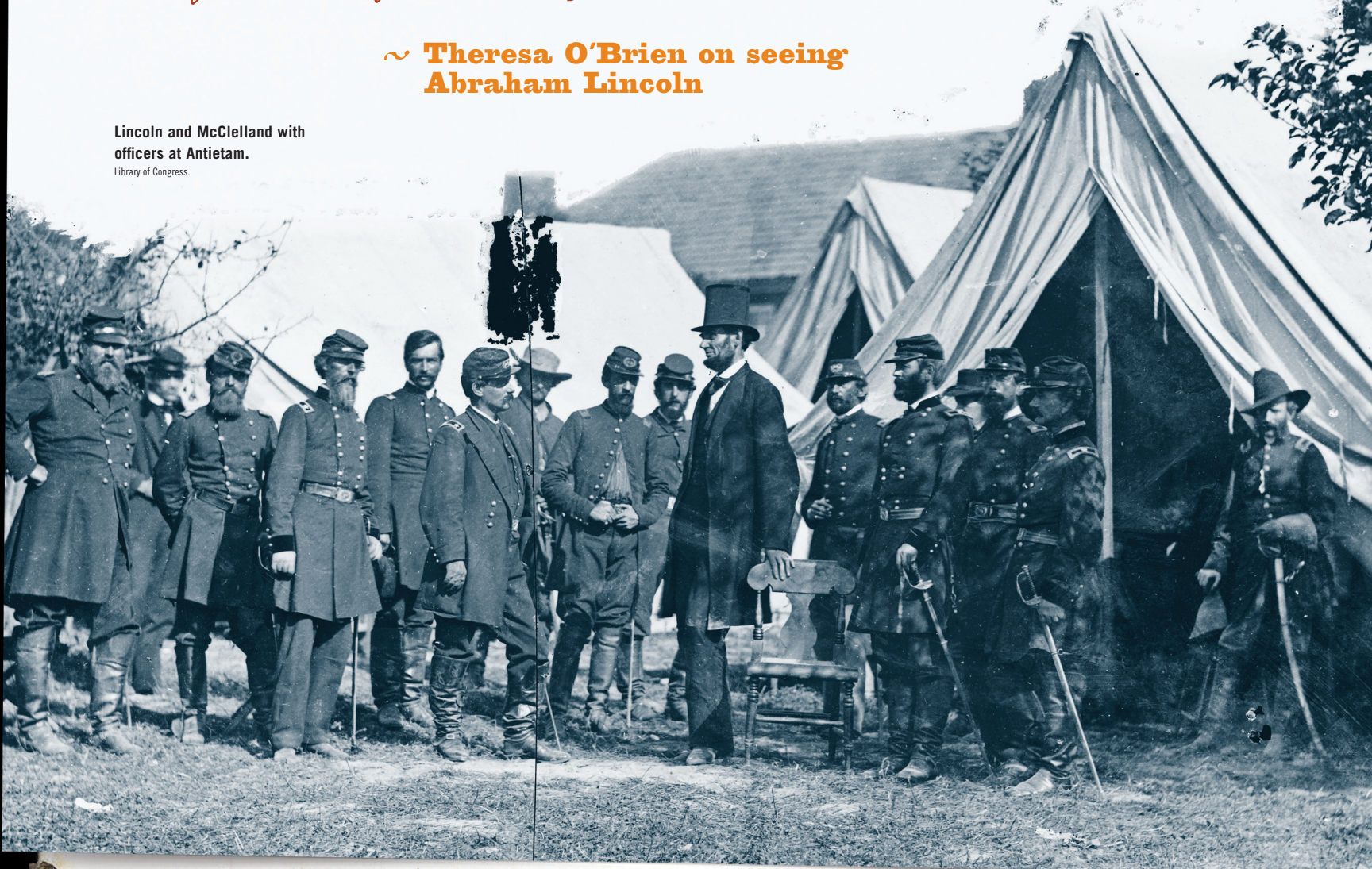


*"... rather a plain looking individual, there is nothing Prepossessing in his appearance."*

~ **Theresa O'Brien on seeing Abraham Lincoln**

Lincoln and McClelland with officers at Antietam.

Library of Congress.



was I spared through that dreadful fever while big strong men died in a day... but I will bear everything if my loved one is spared to me.<sup>29</sup>

Fearing for his wife's safety and future health, Edward wrote to his sister Lizzie, pleading with her to convince Theresa that "it would be much Better for her to go home as Soon as She is well for it is a hard Place for a Woman to be Sick in Camp." He laments the futility of Lizzie's actions, saying he "does not expect she [Theresa] will go," yet his intent is obvious.

It is not known why Edward was so tolerant of Theresa's wishes to join him or have her remain in camp—even though "She Should have known Better before Starting out." He might have wanted her there, or he might have been hoping to avoid marital discord. Indeed, following his pleas to his sister, Edward asked that when writing to Theresa she "need make no allusion to this [his] letter."<sup>30</sup>

The 134th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment returned to Pittsburgh May

26, 1863. Colonel Edward O'Brien arrived presumably unharmed. In speaking to the crowd he praised his troops and criticized the Copperheads, a Democratic faction who wished to quickly end the war, for doing more damage to the men at the front line than the Rebel troops.<sup>31</sup> His regiment returned to the city May 26, but Edward sent Theresa a telegraph from Pittsburgh to New Castle June 20, 1863, informing her that "the regiment will be kept here for two (2) or three (3) days I think I am three miles





## WOMEN IN CIVIL WAR CAMPS

By Miriah O'Connor

A soldier's wife during the Civil War did more than keep the home fires burning. Women in the 1860s were expected to volunteer to help the troops and support the national cause—all at their own expense. During their precious little free time, countless women volunteered in hospitals or made supplies and clothing for the troops.

A number of women even accompanied their men to war. Some attempted to “prove their mettle,” and some followed their husbands, fathers, or brothers to assist with domestic duties or because they were unable to support themselves at home. Other women followed the troops to provide sexual services for money. This is the most common meaning of “camp followers,” a derogatory term because “at a time when female virtue was defined as chastity and public virtue as self sacrifice, these women [who went to camp] were perceived as being deficient in both.”<sup>1</sup> Civil War officers fought a constant battle with prostitutes, who were repeatedly forced away but always made their way back.

Though overshadowed by the scandalous camp followers, much more common were the sisters, daughters, and wives willing to suffer the trials of war camp life. They provided the troops with much-needed domestic help, nursing skills, and companionship.

<sup>1</sup> William Sylvis in Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 48, as referenced in Patricia L. Richard, *Busy Hands: Images of the Family in the Northern Civil War Effort* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003).

from the city.”<sup>32</sup> This telegraph indicates that the couple was separated and that, at least temporarily, Theresa had returned home to New Castle. Edward and Theresa’s movements and location for the war’s remainder are not documented.

After the war Edward worked in the R.W. Cunningham foundry in New Castle where, on February 2, 1866, he lost his left eye in an explosion. He fell into a darkened emotional state and spent the last months of his life in Dixmont Hospital near Pittsburgh, where he received treatment for “brain sickness,” melancholy attributed to his inability to provide for his family, which had grown after the war to seven children. He died July 10, 1877. The final entry in Theresa’s diary, January 13, 1878, is startling in its mournfulness and depression:

A wet dreary day all alone with little  
Eddie & Lizzie [their children] may god  
wach over my little ones I have a dull  
aching Pain in my left side perhaps tis  
the seed of my death only for the little  
ones god had given me to render on  
account of I would be glad to fold my  
hands in peace & join you O my Beloved  
Dear Dear Ed what a dark dreary world  
this is without you

There is such a feeling of sadness &  
desolation comes over me at times that  
I think I will surely die strange yes tis  
strange How the Heart can suffer and  
live. but I am more dead than alive dear  
Ed thinking or speaking of you is all  
that interests me, now How many time  
I have said to you, if anything would  
Happen to you; it would kill me yet  
Here I am a thing with-out life or light.  
yes my light Has gone out, my Heart  
& Home is all dark and there is such a  
feeling of desolation comes over me and  
it never leaves me yes truly a dark cloud  
was settled on my Heart & Home... if I  
could see you just once more. ... Oh! if  
you could only come to me.<sup>33</sup>

Theresa lived six more years after making that entry, passing in 1883. Edward and Theresa are buried in St. Mary’s Cemetery in New Castle.



Their seven orphaned children were taken in by relatives, the Flynn family, except the youngest, Elizabeth, who was placed in Villa Marie Convent in Lawrence County.<sup>34</sup>

Miriam O'Connor has a B.A. in History from the Honors College of the California University of Pennsylvania. During an internship with the Heinz History Center she transcribed Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>1</sup> David S. Heidler and Jeanne T. Heidler, ed. *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000) s.v. "Women. Approximately 20,000 women served as nurses in the Union army, even more women than this contributed indirectly to the cause. Within two weeks of the start of the war, women had formed almost 20,000 aid societies.

<sup>2</sup> Biographical sketch. HHC L&A, O'Brien Family Collection, MSS #390, Box 1. Folder 16.

<sup>3</sup> Unknown source found in John R. Sibbald, "Camp Followers All: Army Women of the West," *The American West* 3, no. 2 (March 1966): 56.

<sup>4</sup> Nov. 30. Theresa O'Brien's diary. HHC L&A, O'Brien Family Collection, Box 1, Folder 16.

<sup>5</sup> Sharpsburg, Sept. 19, Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>6</sup> "The Battle of Antietam," Civil War Trust, <http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/antietam.html> (accessed October 27, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Sharpsburg, Sept. 19, Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>8</sup> Wednesday morning, Sept. 17, near Frederick City. Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>9</sup> Wednesday morning, Sept. 17, near Frederick City. Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>10</sup> Thursday morning, Sept. 18, Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>11</sup> Ruth L. Silliker, ed., *Rebel Yell & the Yankee Hurrah: The Civil War Journal of a Maine Volunteer: Private John W. Haley, 17th Maine Regiment* (Camden,

Maine: Down East Books, 1985), in Elizabeth D. Leonard, *All the Daring of a Soldier* (Westminster, England: Penguin Group, 2001), 106-8.

<sup>12</sup> Thursday morning, Sept. 18, Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>13</sup> Sharpsburg, Sept. 19, Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>14</sup> Monday morning, Sept. 22, Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>15</sup> Richard H. Hall, *Women On the Civil War Battlefront* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 35-36

<sup>16</sup> Biographical sketch, O'Brien Family Collection.

<sup>17</sup> Sept. 13, Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>18</sup> Agnes Elisabeth-Winona Leclercq, *Ten Years of My Life* (Volume 1) (London: Thomson Gale, 1876), 36-40. Found in *Women in the Civil War*, 71.

<sup>19</sup> Jane E. Schultz, *Women at the Front: Hospital Workers in Civil War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 93. Esther Hill Hawks, *A Woman Doctor's Civil War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 34.

<sup>20</sup> Sept. 13, Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>21</sup> Sept. 11, Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>22</sup> Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Women in the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 65.

<sup>23</sup> Sharpsburg, Sept 19, Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>24</sup> Sept. 5, Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>25</sup> Antietam, Nov. 30, Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>26</sup> Friday morning, Oct. 3, Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>27</sup> Monday, Sept. 29, Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. Theresa's observations on these stories are the some of the most dispassionate found in the diary. She simply reports without the empathy found in most other passages. Her empathy for the soldiers is mentioned in other entries, so apathy for the rebel soldiers is not likely a cause of her lack of discussion.

<sup>29</sup> Not dated. Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>30</sup> Edward O'Brien Correspondence with Lizzie O'Brien, Oct 22, 1862. HHC L&A, O'Brien Family Collection, MSS #390, Box 1, Folder 8.

<sup>31</sup> Biographical sketch of the O'Brien Family.

<sup>32</sup> Edward O'Brien correspondence with Mrs. O'Brien 1863. Western Union Telegraph Co. June 20, 1863. HHC L&A, O'Brien Family Collection, MSS #390, Box 1, Folder 7.

<sup>33</sup> Jan. 13, 1878, Theresa O'Brien's diary.

<sup>34</sup> HHC L&A, O'Brien Family Collection, MSS 390, Box 1.

"... truly a dark cloud was settled on my Heart & Home... if I could see you just once more. ... Oh! if you could only come to me."

~ Theresa O'Brien

Dixmont Hospital in the late 1800s, where Edward O'Brien spent his last days.

HHC L&A, Penal and Charitable Institutions of Pennsylvania.

