

Women Of The Civil War

Posted on January 10, 2020

The American Civil War goes down in the history of the United States as the most brutal and devastating war fought. To this day, The United States has not opposed a more deadly war. So many people were killed that almost every household felt the effects of the war. The Civil War was so intense that even women from both sides joined the war effort. This essay details the women who fought during the Civil War as spies, contrary to the customs of that time (Righthand, n.d.).

The American Civil War was fought during the Victorian era, an era known for its moral repressiveness against women. The women of that time were confined to the domestic sphere, and everything, from a woman's education to her dress, was mindfully compared with the norms of that time. The launch of the [Civil War](#) certainly did not bring any difference in a woman's life. She was still meant to stay at home and wait for her man. But as news of the intensity of the war reached the towns, more men left their homes, families, and jobs to go and serve in the battle zone. It meant that the man's duties would be taken over by women for the family to survive. However, many women decided that merely working on farms and doing their husband's jobs was not enough. They joined the war themselves to fully support their country. They became nurses, ran the army's administrative activities or became spies ("Deadlier Than the Male-Female Spies During the Civil War - Legends of America," n.d.).

During the Civil War era, men considered spying as a dishonorable and dangerous task. For women, spying was worse than prostitution. However, as the war grew intense, men had no choice but to let women join the war as spies, putting aside their moral values in favor of a victory for their nation. Though women found success in spying because men usually did not suspect them of doing such a *lowly* job, allowing women to gather information very easily. The people of the South were so used to ignoring the slaves that they ignored the presence of women as well while discussing secrets. While many female spies of that era remain unknown, the few known have been mentioned here.

Rose Greenhow

Rose O'Neal Greenhow was the wife of a prominent and wealthy doctor in Washington, D.C. However, her secure and comfortable life changed dramatically when, in the 1850s, her husband and five children died. In the days leading up to the Civil War, Greenhow became a staunch supporter of the Confederate cause, becoming a leader of a group of spies spying against the Union. Using her charming personality and conversation skills, she was able to acquire critical information from major politicians and bureaucrats. She would pass the secrets to her contact, General P.G.T Beauregard (Staff, n.d.).

She was awarded by Confederate President Jefferson Davis for her services, which led to their success in the First Battle of Bull Run. However, the Federal Government's secret service had her arrested in

1861, though she managed to transmit messages from the prison. After being released, she was sent away to Europe. She died later when she was returning to America, and her ship ran aground.

Harriet Tubman

Among all the famous women in America's history, Harriet Tubman's name remains at the top. She was the one who led the slave population to freedom through the famous Underground Railroad in the 1850s. In fact, she was the one who set up this espionage ring. In 1862, Tubman, with help from abolitionist friends, traveled to the South to serve as a teacher and nurse for the liberated slaves who were taking refuge in Union camps. There, she recruited black men as spies. They used to slip past Confederate lines as slaves to collect confidential information.

With information collected by Tubman, the Union troops were able to destroy plantations and free slaves. However, in a shameful act, Tubman was paid only \$200, with no pension for the three years she served the Union. Hence, she had to do other things like sell pies, bread, and beer to feed herself.

Belle Boyd

Born in the South, with strong loyalty to her native land, she was the most celebrity of the Confederacy. She became famous when she had an encounter with a Union soldier who broke into her home and spoke rudely to her mother. It led her to kill the man with a rifle. She was known in the Union army for charming the Unionists to tell her war secrets, which she transmitted to her Confederate commander.

In 1862, she eavesdropped on the Union officers when they took over the hotel where she was staying. She ran all the way through enemy territory to give the information to General Stonewall Jackson. This incident later led to her arrest in the same year, from where she was soon released. In 1864, Boyd left for England and got married to a Union officer with whom she fell in love. In England, she took action as a career and would act for the rest of her life.

Elisabeth Van Lew

She grew up in a wealthy slave-holding family in Virginia. Growing up, Elisabeth had strong abolitionist sympathies, especially after attending a Quaker school. After the death of her father, she convinced her brother to free their slaves. During the Civil War, she helped Union officers by bringing them food, medicine, and clothing, smuggling their letters and delivering them valuable information about Confederate plans. However, she died in poverty because she spent all her wealth on espionage activities during the war.

References

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