

Civil War Nurses -

Confederate

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Women of the Confederacy, volunteered as Nurses during the Civil War. The following are excerpts from memories and short summaries of their accomplishments.

Contents

Civil War Nurses - Confederate.....	2
Augusta Jane Evans	4
Juliet Opie Hopkins.....	5
Kate Cummings, 1828-1909	6
Phoebe Yates Levy Pember, 1823-1913	6
Sally Louisa Tompkins (1833-1916)	7

Civil War Nurses - Confederate

Approximately two thousand women, North and South, served as volunteer nurses in military hospitals during the American Civil War. In the antebellum north and south women had “a duty to care”¹ and were expected to serve as nurses for their families, and neighbors.²

The American edition of Florence Nightingale’s book *Notes On Nursing* was published in 1860 and *Godey’s Lady’s Book* wrote of her experiences in the Crimean War.³ When war was declared and their men went off to war, women on both sides of the conflict went to their respective army hospitals to offer their services some as volunteers, some as paid nurses.⁴ Revenby credits the Civil War for bringing the attention of the American public, as the fighting in the Crimea had for the British, the dangers of a disorganized hospital and sanitary services.⁵

There were no organizations defining the uniform of a Confederate nurse during the Civil War..



However, they did take a cue from their northern counterparts. They dressed in a simple fashion. They also rid themselves of hoop skirts in favor of clothing that was easy to work and breathe in.

Confederate Nurse at work⁶

¹ Reverby, Susan, 1987, *Ordered to Care: The Dilemma of American Nursing 1850 to 1945*, pp 11 -12

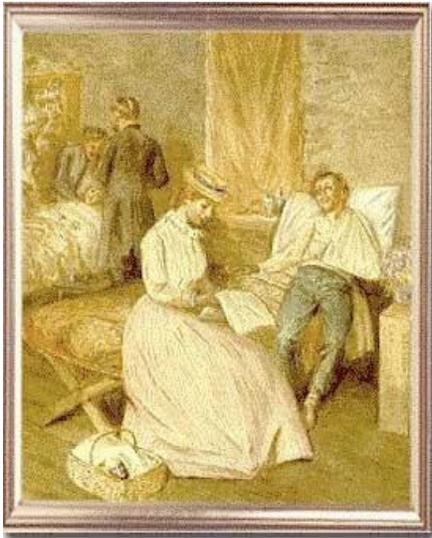
² <https://www.civilwarwomenblog.com/nursing-in-the-civil-war-south/>

³ *Godey’s Lady’s Book* was a popular women’s magazine that was published in Philadelphia from 1830–1878. It was the most widely circulated magazine in the period before the Civil War.

⁴ Revenby, p 44

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ Source – Google Images – downloaded 9/28/3017



Southern women, lacking a concentrated central authority, formed numerous local societies sewing for their soldiers and collecting necessary supplies, food, clothing and blankets⁷

William Ludwell Sheppard

In the Hospital, 1861, is a tribute to Southern nurses. Civil War nurses were sometimes called "angels of the battlefield," working long hours to heal and comfort wounded and dying soldiers.⁸

Virginia Benson, writing for the Website Emerging Civil War about female civil war nurses writes⁹)

“In the South, military nurses were men; women were called matrons.

As with the Northern Civil War nurses, Southern nurses usually confined their duties to providing religious counsel, aiding the mortally wounded soldier to face a “good death,” and writing about that death to the family. Duties varied, depending on whether the matron was serving in a large Confederate hospital or in the field. In the field, there was more varied work, and harder or labor-intensive work. “¹⁰

Among the better known confederate nurses are.¹¹ Augusta Jane Evans, Juliet Opie Hopkins, Kate Cummings, Phoebe Pember and Sally Louisa Tompkins. Several recorded their memoirs – some sent letters home which were later published.

⁷ Bullough, Vern and Bonnie Bullough. 1979, *The Care of the Sick: The Emergence of Modern Nursing*, p.110

⁸ Downloaded Google Images 10/1/2017; <https://emergingcivilwar.com/2016/02/29/southern-nurses-civil-war-women-nurses-part-five/>

⁹ <https://emergingcivilwar.com>

¹⁰ <https://emergingcivilwar.com/2016>

¹¹ <http://www.civilwarhome.com/civilwarnurses.html> Downloaded 9/17/2017

Augusta Jane Evans¹²

May 8, 1835 – May 9, 190



After most of the Southern states declared their independence and seceded from the Union into the Confederate States of America, Augusta Evans became a staunch Southern patriot. Her brothers had joined the 3rd Alabama Regiment and, when she traveled to visit them in Virginia, her party was fired upon by Union soldiers from [Fort Monroe](#). "O! I longed for a Secession flag to shake *defiantly* in their *teeth* at every fire! And my fingers fairly itched to touch off a *red-hot-ball* in answer to their *chivalric civilities*", she wrote to a friend.¹³ During the American Civil War, Evans devoted herself to

the Confederate cause as a volunteer nurse and organizer

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augusta_Jane_Evans

¹³ <http://acumen.lib.ua.edu/u0003/0001563/?page=1&limit=40> Guide to Augusta Evans Letters and papers

¹³ Civil War Nurses in the South <http://civilwarrx.blogspot.com/2013/08/juliet-opie-hopkins-florence.html>



¹⁴Juliet Opie Hopkins

Operating out of a supply depot in Richmond, she converted three tobacco factories into hospitals during the four-month period of December 1861 through April 1862. The three facilities served an aggregate case load exceeding 500 patients and were daily overseen by on-site visits from Juliet. Her personalizing the effort included handling patient correspondence and supplying reading materials for the soldiers. When a patient died, Juliet personally sent a lock of their hair to their next of kin.¹⁵

She additionally visited the areas of conflict to help tend the wounded, sustaining two hip wounds at the Battle of Seven Pines on May 31, 1862 that left her with a permanent limp. For this action she was nominated for, and later received over a century later, the Confederate Medal of Honor. During this time period, she was given the nickname "Florence Nightingale of the South".¹⁶ That same year, the Confederacy merged the patient load at the smaller hospitals into the larger facilities elsewhere throughout Alabama.¹⁷



¹⁴ Julie Opie Hopkins "Florence Nightingale of the South" <http://civilwarrx.blogspot.com/2013/08/juliet-opie-hopkins-florence.html>

<http://www.civilwarwomenblog.com/juliet-hopkins/> (Profile accessed 9/25/2017)

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juliet_Opie_Hopkins

Kate Cummings, 1828-1909¹⁸



“At the age of 27, in April of 1862, and against the wishes of her family, who felt that "nursing soldiers was no work for a refined lady," Kate left for Northern Mississippi in April 1862, along with forty other women. The group of women, largely untrained, arrived outside the battlefield of Shiloh, while the battle was still in progress. Most women left soon after, but Kate remained in nearby Corinth and Okalona, Mississippi until June, 1862. She then spent two months in Mobile, Alabama, but soon volunteered to work at Newsome Hospital, in Chattanooga, Tennessee. She would remain there for a year, until the summer of 1863, when the city was evacuated. During the time that Kate was at Newsome Hospital, the Confederate government officially recognized the role of women in hospitals.

From 1863 to the end of the war, Kate worked in the caravan of mobile field hospitals set up throughout Georgia to handle the effects of Sherman's devastation. The towns included Kingston, Cherokee Springs, Catoosa Springs, Tunnel Hill, Marietta, and Newnan.

Kate's work as a nurse was nothing extraordinary, but the detailed journal she kept during the War is invaluable.”¹⁹

Phoebe Yates Levy Pember, 1823-1913 ²⁰

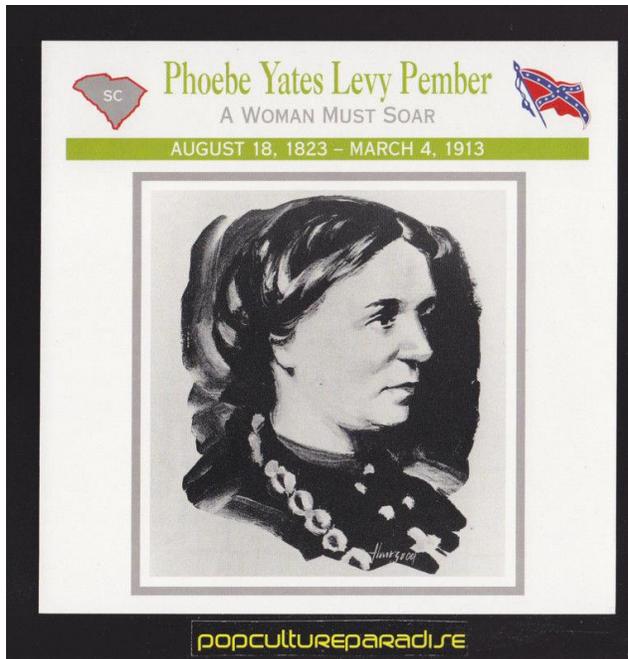
Phoebe Yates Levy Pember, was a widow at the time of the civilwar. She was the well-educated daughter of a wealthy Jewish family from Charleston SC.

¹⁸ Originally published in *A Journal of Hospital Life in the Confederate Army of Tennessee*, from the *battle of Shiloh to the end of the war*. Downloaded on 9/28/2017 from https://loa-shared.s3.amazonaws.com/static/pdf/Cumming_Nameless_Dead.pdf

Information from Civil War Wiki.Net

¹⁹ http://civilwarwiki.net/wiki/Kate_Cummings

²⁰ http://civilwarwiki.net/wiki/Phoebe_Yates_Levy_Pember



“Pember wanted to serve the Confederate cause and used her friendship with the wife of Secretary of War George W. Randolph to obtain an appointment. On December 1, 1862, Pember became chief matron of the 2nd division of Richmond’s Chimborazo Hospital.

“Though plagued by severe shortages of the supplies and medicine, and having to battle with doctors who did not approve of women's roles in hospitals, Pember labored unceasingly for the rest of the war to care for sick and wounded soldiers. In response to criticism that horrors should not be seen by ladies, Pember replied, “in the midst of suffering death, hoping with those almost beyond hope

in this world; praying by the bedside of the lonely and heart-sicken; closing the eyes of boys hardly old enough to realize man’s sorrow, much less suffer man’s fierce hate, a woman must soar beyond the conventional modesty considered correct under different circumstances.”

Pember stayed with the hospital and her patients after the fall of Richmond and until the facility was taken over by Federal Authorities. In 1897 she published her memoirs, *A Southern Woman’s Story*, in which she vividly describes the suffering and the spirit of her patients. ²¹

Sally Louisa Tompkins (1833-1916) opened a 22-bed hospital, using mainly her own



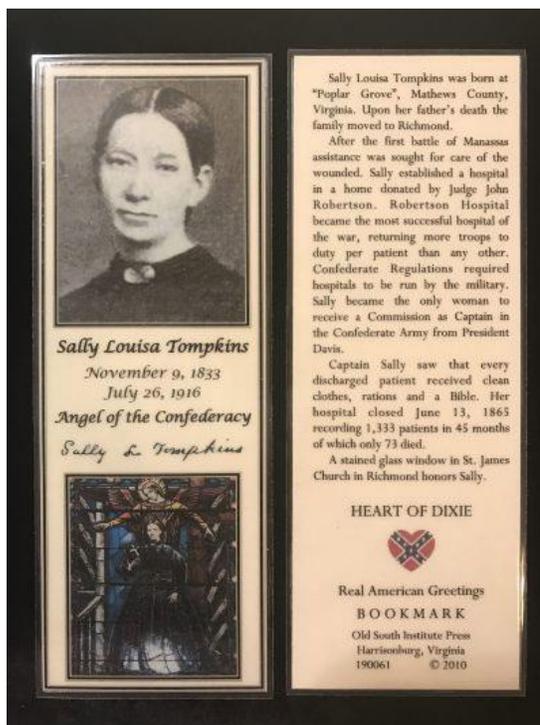
funds, in a Richmond mansion. Remembered as the "Angel of the Confederacy," Tompkins may have been the only woman officially commissioned in the Confederate Army.²²

According to the Mathews County Historical Society website:

²¹ Op Cit

²² <http://www.pbs.org/mercy-street/uncover-history/behind-lens/nursing-civil-war/>

“She opened Robertson Hospital in the home of Judge John Robertson at 3rd and Main Street in Richmond soon after the first battle of Manassas on July 21, 1861. Soon after Sally opened her hospital, Surgeon General Samuel P. Moore decided that large military hospitals that would be operated by commissioned officers should replace the many private hospitals since they did not necessarily provide their patients with sufficient care. When Jefferson Davis realized that Robertson Hospital had the highest number of former patients returning to duty, he commissioned her a captain on September 9, 1861 to keep her hospital open. She refused payment for her service and wrote on her military commission "I accepted the above commission as Captain in the CSA. when it was offered. But, I would not allow my name to be placed upon the pay roll of the army." Sally Tompkins became the first woman to be commissioned by the Confederacy. Robertson Hospital remained open until June 1865, when the last of the patients were discharged.”²³



24

²³ <http://www.mathewscountyhistoricalsociety.org/sally-louisa-tompkins.html>

²⁴ Bookmark Souvenir <https://confederateshop.com/shop/merchandise/sally-louisa-tompkins-bookmark/>