

VOICES FROM THE CIVIL WAR

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

All programs are one hour in length

Women Spies of the Civil War

During the Civil War, it was not uncommon for women to serve as spies. We'll take you into the covert lives of six of them. Hear about Belle Boyd—the self-described “most wanted Confederate spy”. Get acquainted with Rose O’Neal Greenhow, the well-connected Washington socialite who influenced the outcome at Bull Run; and Elizabeth “Crazy Betty” Van Lew—the Union loyalist in the Confederacy’s capital. Admire the courage of Harriet Tubman—conductor on the Underground Railroad, and the Moon Sisters, Ginnie and Lottie, spies and smugglers who operated out of Memphis, Tennessee.



Belle Boyd

Learn about female spy rings and a runaway bride, “innocent” knitting circles, disappearing toy balls, and the famous (male) detective who fell out of a tree. Their constantly underestimated mental and physical skills, ingenuity, and calm demeanor in life-threatening peril empowered these women in a male-dominated world. At least two of them were recognized for helping to win key battles.

Civil War Photography and Drawings



George Smith Cook

Photography came of age during the Civil War. Throughout the conflict, photographers traveled to military camps where they took thousands of individual portraits as well as group shots. Post-battle images exposed the horrors of war to civilians via the nation’s newspapers. Processing was a meticulous and time-consuming job performed in makeshift, wagon-borne darkrooms. But the images they produced were both wildly popular and durable. Of the roughly 10 million images taken by thousands of photographers, about 80% survive to this day.

With a mix of original prints and photographic copies, we’ll demonstrate the earliest forms of printed photos, including daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, tintypes, and the small, inexpensive and highly popular CDV’s (from the French carte de visite or visiting card).

We’ll have stories about famous Civil War photographers, including Matthew Brady, often called the father of photojournalism, who received credit for thousands of battlefield images shot by other photographers he commissioned. We’ll also visit with the “Photographer of the Confederacy”, George Smith Cook, who captured rare images of naval action off Fort Sumter.

Wives of Civil War Generals

We'll talk about the famous and not so famous, including...

Julia Dent Grant, the slave owner's daughter who married a young Lieutenant who would become General and future President, Ulysses S. Grant. During the war, she would often travel to battlefield camps to provide aid and comfort, sometimes accompanied by their four children. As First Lady, she earned renown as a lavish hostess. Among her innovations was a series of "Tuesday Luncheons" where any citizen off the street was free to attend.

Fanny Gordon of LaGrange, Georgia, the iron-willed wife of General John Brown Gordon. When war broke out, she took charge of their family coal mine with the tough-minded firmness required to keep unruly miners in line. Her subsequent decision to go to war as a camp follower ended up saving the general's life. More than just a cheerleader, she once took to the streets of Winchester, Virginia in the midst of battle to exhort retreating Confederate soldiers, "Go back to the front lines, you cowards."



Fanny Gordon

Teresa Bagioli was the daughter of a prominent Italian piano teacher. At the age of 15, she married 33-year-old New York State Assemblyman/noted womanizer and Tammany Hall star, Daniel Edgar Sickles. He would later become a Union general and serve with questionable honor at Gettysburg. Lonely in her marriage, she took up with Philip Barton Key, son of Francis Scott Key. The affair ended in murder, followed by a precedent-setting trial.

Giving Voices to Their Stories

Much has been written about the famous battles, military officers, tactics, and politics of the Civil War. Less well known are the personal stories, trials, valor, and emotions of everyday soldiers and civilians. We've uncovered riveting stories about some of the ordinary people who were there...what they went through, and how they managed to cope with the surrounding chaos.

Learn about the too-old-to-serve, War of 1812 veteran who wouldn't take no for an answer, and wound up walking to church with Lincoln. Then there's the story of Col. John Pemberton, a pharmacist severely wounded at the battle of Columbus, GA in 1865. Like many other wounded soldiers, he became addicted to morphine. In an effort to cure himself, he developed a wine and coca-based elixir, which became the basis for the original Coca-Cola.

This is a five-part series. Each part is a one-hour, stand-alone presentation, containing four stories.

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