



BARBARA FRIETCHIE.

A Lancaster Girl in History.

Although it is more than 152 years since Barbara Frietchie was born and fifty-six summers have come and gone since that famous day when she waved the stars and stripes over the heads of an army of Confederate raiders which furnished Whittier with the subject of his historic poem, there are those among us even now who doubt whether such a person ever lived.

It was largely because John Greenleaf Whittier was my favorite poet, and because Barbara Frietchie was a Lancaster girl by birth, and because of the numerous doubts I heard expressed as to the truth contained in Whittier's poem entitled "Barbara Frietchie," that I determined to investigate, and establish if possible the truth of the statements contained in his poem. I first visited Frederick, Md., in July, 1886, and then interviewed many who had a right to speak for the patriotic old lady. From investigations made since and from comparing what I learned from different persons at different times I am fully persuaded that practically all of Whittier's poem was founded upon fact.

Very little is known of Barbara Frietchie's parents. On the inside of the front cover of the family Bible is written the following:

"This Bible belongs to Niclaus Hauer, born in Nassau-Saarbrucken, in Dillendorf, Aug. 6, 1733, who left Germany May 11, 1754, and arrived in Pennsylvania Oct. 1, of the same year."

This Bible is bound in calf; the sides are oak boards and it was printed in German by Christopher Sauer, Germantown, Pa., in 1743. Barbara Frietchie gave it to a Mrs. Mergardt, of Frederick, Md.

Nothing else is now known of her parents, except that they first settled in Lancaster, Pa. They were members of the First Reformed Church. The church record of births and baptisms shows that Nicholas and Catherine Hauer had three children born and baptized during their residence in Lancaster—Catherine, Jacob and Barbara. They were baptized by the pastor, Rev. Wm. Hendel. Barbara was born December 3, 1766, and was baptized on December 14, 1766; her sponsor was Barbara Gamber. The family moved to Frederick, Md., either in 1767 or 1768.

Barbara was a very positive character even as a girl, she was very public spirited, and was somewhat of a leader among the young folks with whom she associated. Among the many events of her life that were more or less of interest in her early days was in 1791, when President George Washington had occasion to visit Frederick and spend the night there. He stopped at Mrs. Kimbal's Hotel (where the City Hotel now stands). That evening there was a quilting party at the hotel, and Barbara, then a young lady of twenty-five was there. As soon as word came that Washington would spend the night there she offered to bring her Liverpool china tea set, to grace the table,

which was accepted, and she was one of the ladies selected to wait upon the President at the table. The blue china teapot which Washington used upon that occasion is now among her grandniece, Mrs. Abbotts', mementoes.

In 1799 after Washington's death a sham funeral was held in his honor in Frederick, and on this occasion Barbara was chosen as one of the honorary pall-bearers.

On May 6, 1806, at the age of almost forty, she was married to John Casper Frietchie, who was then only twenty-six years of age. The service was performed by Rev. Mr. Wagner, of the German Reformed Church, Frederick, Md. Her husband was a glove-maker and his gloves were in great demand in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Ohio. He died on the 10th of November, 1849. A near neighbor when a girl who was often in his shop where he was working and who told me about him and Barbara, is Mrs. Elizabeth Zeigler, now in her ninetieth year, who today lives in the second house from where the Frietchie home stood.

Barbara was a very thrifty and industrious woman. She spent much time in spinning and knitting. Her great, great niece, Miss Eleanor D. Abbott, of Frederick, gave me a piece of linen made from flax spun by Barbara Frietchie and on which Miss Abbott embroidered the American flag and Barbara's name.

For many years she could frequently be seen sitting at her window, dressed in a black satin gown, busily engaged in knitting.

Mrs. John H. Abbott, her great niece, told me how "Aunt Frietchie," as she called her "was very fond of children, and was very good and kind to them, though she never had any of her own." She said: "We knew that when Aunt Frietchie told us to do anything we had to obey. When she got tired of us she would say, 'now run home,' and we knew we were expected to leave at once."

Mrs. Frietchie had considerable trouble from time to time after her husband's death owing to her strong utterances on the subject of human slavery and her devotion to the cause of the Union. Her husband's will was written by Dr. Albert Richie, of Frederick, Md., who was named as executor. She had a life tenure in the estate. After the doctor's death, which occurred in 1857, under the laws of Maryland, his three nephews became administrators. Of these Valarius Ebert was acting administrator and whenever he paid her her interest they had warm words about the war, his sympathies being quite strongly with the Confederate cause. On various occasions, she is said to have denounced him as an "arrant rebel." This friction between them seemed to continue to increase, so she finally persuaded Dr. Lewis H. Steiner, an Elder of the Evangelical Reformed Church, of which she was a devout member, to accept her power of attorney to transact her business for her, which he did until the time of her death. While she was a woman of very positive convictions, a strong, fearless character, who held pronounced views on public affairs, she had a desire to live as peaceably as possible in her old days, with even those with whom she so radically disagreed upon questions growing out of the war.

Barbara did most of her house work until she was nearly ninety-five years of age and even then she spent considerable of her time in looking

after sick soldiers and cheering up despondent and discouraged Unionists during the dark and cheerless days of 1861 and 1862. A neighbor whom she highly respected and in whom she had great confidence, but who from time to time took a rather gloomy view for the Union cause, was Harry Nixdorf, a very pious Lutheran and also a very patriotic Unionist. Mr. Nixdorf never tired of relating his interesting experiences with her and how she frequently came to his shop and explained: "Never mind, Harry, we *must conquer*, we *must conquer*." "We have seen darker times than these, Harry."

During the winter of 1861 and '62 she purchased a small silk Union flag, about 22 by 16 inches; this she had flying from her attic window, every day, unless the weather was very inclement.

It was early in September, 1862, that the Confederate forces crossed the Potomac at White Ford, entered Maryland and marched through Frederick county to the county seat, Frederick. They encamped mostly on the northwest side of the town, on Carroll creek, around Worman's mill, an old stone structure built in 1787, which is in use at the present time and on the north and northeast. An eye witness of their army at the time said: "The rebels were wretchedly clad, and generally destitute of shoes. The cavalrymen were mostly barefooted and the feet of the infantry were bound up in rags and raw hides. Their uniforms were in tatters, and many were without hats or caps. They had very few tents; the men mostly, where encamped, slept on the bare ground." General Stonewall Jackson, one of the Confederate generals in command, was a religious man, and the next day being Sunday, attended divine services at the Evangelical Reformed Church, of which Rev. Daniel Zacharias was pastor and of which Barbara Frietchie was also a member. It is said that Rev. Zacharias was not aware of the presence of General Jackson and among other hymns sung during the service was the hymn, "The Stoutest Rebel must Resign."

The correspondent of the Baltimore American in writing of this entrance and occupation of Frederick by the Confederates said: "A meeting of the citizens was called, at which an address was delivered by Bradley Johnson, who used the most conciliatory language, and made great predictions as to the power of the rebel army not only to hold Western Maryland, but to capture Baltimore and Washington, and dictate terms of peace in Independence Square at Philadelphia. The rebel sympathizers generally attended the meeting, but the few Union men who had remained kept to their homes. At 10 o'clock at night the men were all ordered to their camps on the outskirts of the city, and the first day of rebel rule in Frederick passed off quietly and peacefully.

"The Federal flag was lowered from all the poles in Frederick, and the rebel 'stars and bars' hoisted in their place. Most of the officers were quartered at the hotels, and at the houses of prominent rebels, though a good many of the latter had also fled the city."

After Frederick had been under Confederate rule for about five days, on September 9, the order came from General Lee for them to move early next morning. General Hill's troops were to take the lead. These began the march and came down through Mill Alley to West Patrick Street and moved toward Harper's Ferry, which they had been ordered to capture; at this same time

the force under Jackson, Jones and Longstreet came down North Market Street to the Square and there turned to the right and moved out West Patrick Street. The corps of the army commanded by Jackson got to the point where Mill Alley opens into West Patrick Street, before all of Hill's corps had gotten out of Mill Alley, and consequently was ordered to halt. Jackson's men then and there halted, but did not break ranks, but stood there fully ten minutes until Hill's troops got out of the alley. This is a very narrow alley only fourteen feet wide. The mouth of the alley is about seventy yards from where stood the house in which Barbara Fritchie lived.

Before any of Stonewall Jackson's troops reached the Fritchie home, Jackson who had been riding ahead, left his line at West Second Street and rode up to the Presbyterian parsonage, where Rev. Dr. Ross resided, a two-story brick house which is still standing, and slipped a note addressed to them under the door. The following is a copy of the note:

"Regret not being permitted to see Dr. and Mrs. Ross, but could not expect to have that pleasure at so unseasonable an hour.

"Sept. 10, 1862, 5.15 A. M.

"T. J. JACKSON."

In a minute or two after Jackson's men halted, all of a sudden great excitement burst forth near the end of the line, many of the Confederates becoming very angry. The report at once was passed along the line that an old lady was shaking a Yankee flag right into their faces. Order was soon restored however when the order came for them to march.

The old lady was Barbara Fritchie. The incident related to me by Mrs. John H. Abbott, her great niece, but a short time ago, is almost identically as she and a number of other intimate acquaintances of Barbara Fritchies gave it to me in July, 1886, nearly thirty-three years ago, and as Barbara herself related it to the niece of her husband, Caroline Ebert, more than fifty-six years ago.

It was very generally known that the Confederate army was to leave the town during the night or early the next morning. Excitement ran high and many persons were not in bed during the night. Soon after five o'clock in the morning, several persons rushed into Barbara's door and called her to get her flag, the soldiers are coming. Among those calling her was very probably her little niece, Hallie Hanshew, and her next-door neighbor, Mrs. Lizzie Miller, who was an intensely loyal woman. The old lady got her flag and began waving it. A confederate soldier soon stepped up and said: "Old lady go in with your flag." "I won't do any such thing," she said, "I'll make you ashamed of yourself," and she kept on waving the Union colors. An officer then rode up and said something to the men and she thought they were going to fire on her, but they didn't and he rode away but soon returned with another officer. This officer said, "Granny give me your flag, and I'll stick it in my horse's head." "No, you can't have it," she said and then there was a great commotion among the soldiers, and one of them called out: "Shoot her damned head off!" The officer turned to him angrily and said: "If you hurt a hair of her head, I'll shoot you like a dog!" Then he turned and said to Barbara: "Go on, Granny, wave your flag as much as you please." That

officer there are the very best of reasons for believing was Stonewall Jackson.

By this time Jackson could again join his men. He did not likely detain more than a minute at the parsonage where he slipped the note under the door. He had only two and a half short blocks to go from there to the corner of Mill Alley and West Patrick Street, a stone's throw from the Fritchie home.

I have seen it stated somewhere in referring to this incident, that the Confederates under Stonewall Jackson, marched down the "Betztown road." That is not the fact. There is no "Betztown road." In the early days of Frederick there was a group of small houses in the western end of the town which was called Betztown. There is a South Betz Street about a hundred yards west of Carroll creek, but it is a mere alley, being only fourteen feet wide. The Confederate army did not march down this narrow street; they marched out over West Patrick Street.

[I have here a map of the part of the town through which the Confederate army marched, showing the route Stonewall Jackson took from the point when he left his men to the point where he again joined them.]

What makes it all the more probable that the officer at the head of Jackson's men, undoubtedly one of his staff, should report this occurrence at once to Jackson was the fact that he was very anxious not to irritate the residents in any way and to avoid any kind of a disturbance; he had given the most drastic orders to that effect. In fact he had special instructions from General Lee not to tolerate any kind of disorder or disturbances. The invasion of Maryland at this time was for the express purpose of getting recruits. They knew they had many sympathizers in Western Maryland, and especially in Frederick County, and they hoped for many additions to their ranks.

Many contradictory reports had been started and repeated about the Fritchie incident without being corrected for the reason that these families and many other families in Frederick were divided in sentiment on the question of human slavery and on the issues growing out of the war. In many cases the feeling was very bitter among members of the same family.

The first time I was in Frederick there were persons there who told the inquiring stranger that no such person as Barbara Fritchie ever lived there. And when the house was damaged by a flood, the disloyal element, who fairly hated the brave old patriot, managed to have her house removed on the pretense of widening Carroll creek, so they could truthfully tell inquiring visitors: "No such person lives in the town, and there is no house in the town in which any one by that name ever lived."

I got much of my information in 1886 in strict confidence. Some of Barbara Fritchie's friends and relatives declined to make statements for publication because they wanted to avoid stirring up partisan and sectional feeling. At that time there was quite a large element in the town whose sympathies were very strongly with the followers of the Southern Confederacy. It is surprising the number of homes in this old town, even at this late day, in which you will find the pictures of Robert E. Lee, "Stonewall" Jackson and other Confederate leaders, on the walls of their sitting rooms and parlors.

LONGSTREETS
CORPS

STONEWALL
JACKSONS
CORPS

A.P.HILL'S
CORPS

CARROLL
CREEK

OLD
MILL

MILL ALLEY

PRESBYTERIAN
PARSONAGE

West Second St

Record St

COURT
HOUSE

NORTH
MARKET ST

West Church St

MARKET ST

West Patrick St

S. MARKET ST

BARBARA
FRITCHES'
HOME

SOUTH BENT ST

FREDERICK, MD.

Sept. 1862.

I have heard that Whittier himself doubted the story from what he had learned after the poem was written, and that he told some of his friends that it was the only thing he "had ever written for the truth of which he could not vouch." There was surely no occasion for regrets on his part. The poem was founded upon fact, notwithstanding a few incorrect statements.

It is a fact that all her life she was an intensely loyal woman. She had the courage of her convictions and was very outspoken in behalf of a cause in which she believed, as she did in the cause of the Union during the Civil War. And upon this occasion, on the memorable 10th of September, 1862 when the Confederates withdrew from the town of Frederick, the part of their army commanded by Stonewall Jackson marched over the street on which Barbara Frietchie lived, and as they did so, that brave and loyal old patriot, soon after five o'clock in the morning, in her ninety-sixth year, stood at her door waving the Union flag in the face of the Confederate soldiers as they marched by, not knowing what moment she would be fired upon.

The only part of the poem that can be questioned are the words:

"Fire!"—out blazed the rifle blast.
It shivered the window pane and sash;
It rent the banner with seam and gash.
Quick as it fell from the broken staff
Dame Barbara snatched the silken scarf."

It was but natural that this patriotic demonstration should raise the ire of many in the ranks of the foe, but not a gun was raised and nothing was done to molest her. The probabilities are however that this is what would have happened, but for the drastic order of General Jackson. "His nobler nature within him stirred to life at that woman's deed and word," together with the positive instructions from General Lee not to tolerate any kind of disturbance doubtless saved Barbara Frietchie from being fired upon and in all probability saved her life.

The words: "She leaned far out on the window sill" are not correct. She stood in her doorway or immediately in front of her door waving the flag.

Three months after this historic incident—on the 18th of December 1862—Barbara Frietchie breathed her last at the age of ninety-six years and fifteen days. She was buried by the side of her husband in the family lot in the old Reformed Cemetery.

The Frederick Weekly Examiner, of December 27, 1862, in giving an account of her funeral said:

"Barbara removed to this city when a child. She remembered the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the scenes of the Revolutionary War; she was familiar with the career of Washington and shared the popular joy on the announcement of peace.

"In the quiet of domestic life she literally grew up with the nation's growth, and participated in its passing history; in middle age she witnessed the War of 1812; and when the sands of life ran low, she justly regarded the Rebellion, which now hangs like a cloud over the hopes of freemen, as the saddest experience of her protracted life.

"To one thus strongly identified with the origin and growth of the

Republic, loyalty necessarily became a deep-seated sentiment; and when the rebels were expelled from this city, on the memorable 10th of September, this venerable lady, as a last act of devotion, stood at her front door, and waved the glorious star-spangled banner in token of welcome to our deliverers. On Sunday last her mortal remains were interred in the cemetery of the Evangelical Reformed Church of which she was a consistent and exemplary member for more than forty years."

Mrs. Hanshew, who was a niece of Barbara's husband, John Caspar Frietchie, had lived with her and nursed her until she died. To her Mrs. Frietchie left all her personal property, except the old family Bible; that she gave to Mrs. Mergardt.

When I visited Frederick in 1886, I found her grave and that of her husband marked by two marble stones bearing the following inscriptions:

JOHN C. FRIETCHIE
Died Nov. 10, 1849
Aged 69 years.

BARBARA FRIETCHIE
Died Dec. 18, 1862
Aged 96 years.

A small flag was waving over her grave. Patriotic citizens made a special effort to keep this Star-Spangled Banner flying over her resting place, but it was hard to do this, owing to the fact that it was repeatedly carried away by souvenir hunters.



In 1912 the Mount Olivet Cemetery Company of Frederick got permission of the nearest relatives to remove the remains of Barbara Frietchie and her husband to Mount Olivet. Soon thereafter a number of patriotic women of Frederick decided to organize to raise funds for the erection of a memorial to Mrs. Frietchie. On May 28, 1912, the Barbara Frietchie Memorial Association was organized, and aid was solicited for this fund.

The bodies were finally removed in the spring of 1913, and on Memorial Day, May 30th, of that year, with appropriate ceremonies, Barbara Frietchie was placed in her last resting place, which is a stone vault on a triangular lot in the upper end of Mount Olivet Cemetery. Over the vault a large mound is built on which is erected a beautiful monument, on which is inscribed Whittier's famous poem. The monument was designed by Alexander Doyle, the designer of the beautiful Francis Scott Key monument, which stands at the entrance to Mount Olivet.

The services on this memorial day were presided over by Judge Hammond Usner, and the religious services were conducted by Rev. Henri L. Kieffer, pastor of the Evangelical Reformed Church. The pall bearers were the members of the Consistory of the Reformed Church of which Mr. and Mrs. Frietchie were members. The veterans of Reynolds Post, G. A. R., formed the guard of honor. In the procession were the Patriotic Order of Sons of America, the Daughters of the Revolution, the Barbara Fritchie Memorial Association, the Junior Order of American Mechanics, the Francis Scott Key Council, No. 88, Boy Scouts and other organizations.

It seems to be specially appropriate that the bodies of Barbara Frietchie and that of Francis Scott Key, author of "The Star-Spangled Banner," should rest in the same cemetery.

I am especially indebted to Mrs. John H. Abbott for much information about the life of this grand old woman, also to Mr. John D. Byerly, Mr. J. H. Markins, Mr. Jonathan Bielfeld, Miss Eleanor D. Abbott, Mrs. Hanshew, Mrs. Elizabeth Ziegler, Mrs. Winebrenner and others, for whose kindness I am under many obligations for their assistance in this humble effort to honor the memory of this Lancaster girl in history—Barbara Frietchie.

Author: Landis, John H. (John Herr), 1853-1923.

Title: A Lancaster girl in history / by Hon. John H. Landis.

Primary Material: Book

Subject(s): Fritchie, Barbara, 1766-1862.
United States--History--18th century.
United States--History--19th century.

Publisher: Lancaster, Pa. : Lancaster County Historical Society, 1919

Description: [84]-93 p. : ill. ; 23 cm.

Series: Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society ; v. 23,
no. 5

Call Number: 974.9 L245 v.23

Location: LCHSJL -- Journal Article (reading room)

=====

+++++

Institution Name
Institution Address
Institution Phone Number
Institution E-mail Address