

**Title of Unit:** Southern Women and Children in the Civil War

**Vital Theme of the unit:** Women and children were deeply affected by the Civil War. Women took on many different roles, and many families suffered great hardships.

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**Grade Level:** Fifth Grade

**Number of lessons in the unit:** Two

**Time needed to complete unit:** Two Weeks

**Curriculum standards addressed:** 5.0 History involves people, events, and issues. Students will evaluate evidence to develop comparative and casual analysis, and to interpret primary sources. Era 5-Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877) They will construct sound historical arguments and perspectives on which informed decisions in contemporary life can be based.

5.01 Understand the causes, course, and consequences of the Civil War

5.5.spi7. Interpret a primary reading sample

**Technology Used:** During computer labs, students will use the Internet to do research on some women and children from the Civil War era.

**Unit introduction and overview of instructional plan:** A Civil War unit has been completed which dealt with sectional differences before the war. The students have had instruction on the major battles and will recognize military and nonmilitary leaders from the North and South. This unit will focus on a very personal side of the war as the students learn more about Southern women's varied roles in the war. There were many hardships suffered by the women and their children on the home front. Some were forced to become refugees. Other women became actively involved as nurses, doctors, soldiers, and spies. Students have access to maps, timelines, and primary and secondary sources. By using activities that require the student to analyze such sources as diaries, letters, and ledger books from the Civil War period, students will deepen their understanding of the effect the War had on women and children. The unit will draw on previous learning as we have already discussed the determination, faith, and patriotism shown by the Rebel soldiers. Now they can experience what the women and children were doing and feeling during this same time. The students' understanding will be tested through class discussions, interpretations of primary and secondary sources, worksheets, and research projects and presentations. Writing skills will be reinforced, as students will be writing diary entries, letters, and essays. The lessons in this unit will take one day each and will be on the following topics: Women as Nurses and Doctors, Women who Served as Soldiers, Female Spies, Dealing with Federalist Occupation

in Our Area--*Myra Inman Diary* and "Miss McKamy's Recollections," Refugee Children During the Civil War, and Southern Women Receiving Help from the North. Students will spend two days doing research on the Internet and writing a short essay about a Southern woman in the Civil War. The unit will culminate with discussion questions centered around whether or not we see women experiencing similar hardships, becoming refugees, or taking on different roles in our present day life.

## **Southern White Women as Refugees During the United States Civil War**

Many Southern white women and their families become refugees during the Civil War. As many as 250,000 women and children left their homes as they feared the very real possibility of starvation and the uncertainties that might accompany living under Yankee rule. Some families had to leave quickly as they found themselves in the middle of the battles. Young girls and women endured many hardships, and their faith and patriotism were severely tested. Community support was also vital to survival during this time of war.

As their fathers, husbands, sons, and other male relatives went off to war, Southern white women faced the everyday challenge to feed their families. Many women were now in charge of farms and plantations. Those who had slaves saw many of them leave, so the women and their children often labored in the fields. They did what they could to support their families and the Confederate cause. Added to the problem was the fact that Confederate money was not worth a great deal due to the high inflation rates. Prices of food and shoes increased around ten times by the end of the war.

Food became even scarcer as the Union army won battles and moved through the South. Myra Inman writes about the Yankee invaders in her diary in 1863, "The soldiers are dealing very badly, taking corn, leaving down fences, stealing horses, chicken, hogs, and everything else they see...Mother commenced putting corn in the little front room this eve. (Mother was hiding corn, which broke the floor down and filled the house full of mice.)" (Inman, 223) Miss Minerva McKamy also recalled the Union occupation, "They prowled through the house and then went to the barn yard where our cow was and without any hesitation whatever shot her down before our eyes. It did not take them long to skin and

dress the meat...It was useless to plead with those Yankees for mercy as they had no conscience and seemed to enjoy making us suffer.” (McKamy, 2)

Cornelia McDonald was one of the many refugees during the Civil War who fled because of the lack of food and fear of Yankee occupation. Her husband was in the Rebel army, and she was in charge of her family home and seven children. Northern troops had searched her home, took food, and destroyed the outside property. They also used her house for wounded and sick soldiers. She feared that the Union soldiers might kick her family out of their home, so she left and took her children further south to Lexington, Virginia. Cornelia had to support her family with limited resources, especially after the death of her husband.

Unfortunately, Cornelia McDonald was still faced with the possibility of starving in her new home, but she would not let others know. She later remembers being with friends, “I would sit and talk to them, and be as cheerful as I could.” When they left, she would “go up stairs and throw myself on my knees and cry to God for food.” (Ash, 167) After she was seriously burned, she hit bottom and “was seized by utter despair. I felt that God had forsaken us.” (Ash, 169) Cornelia soon grasped her deep faith again, and she remembered “the goodness of my God had shown me in the former dark hours I had passed through...and she resolved, ‘Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.’” (Ash, 169)

Faith and patriotism were intertwined for many Southern women. Myra Inman showed her passion for the Southern cause as she wrote a prayer, “Let our enemy be totally routed, driven back, and their baggage captured from them. Let Lee in Virginia achieve a glorious victory over Grant. Let peace soon dawn on us and we be made to rejoice and praise God for giving us victories and causing us to establish our independence.” (Inman, 261) Through the years, Cornelia McDonald’s patriotism would be tested. Before the war,

she opposed secession. However, after the war began, she fully supported the Confederate cause. In 1863 she said she would “give all I have, even my six boys.”

(Ash, 42) She felt certain that God would help the South “triumph over those who would deprive us of our right to do as we pleased with our own.” (Ash, 42)

As with many women on the home front, survival did depend on the support of the community. Many times during the war, people came to the aid of Cornelia and her family. A shoemaker made shoes for the whole family knowing that she could not pay at the time. Even after she began teaching drawing and French lessons, she had to rely on others at times for clothing and food. Her older boys worked on shares to provide firewood and food. In late 1865, a friend told Cornelia that she would be receiving a hundred dollars from a secret fund. The next day she said, “God was...good, (and) with the trial he provided the needful help.” (Ash, 205) Cornelia made it through the war with a great deal of determination, faith, and support.

Many other Southern women and children found themselves as refugees when they were actually trying to outrun the Union armies. As the Battle of Chickamauga in Georgia became more intense, families had to leave the area. Some of these refugees left so quickly that they didn't take anything with them. Julia Kittie Snodgrass Reed was only six at the time; but remembers her father, who was too old to fight, taking the family to a ravine northwest of the house. They and other refugees had to live on field peas. One neighbor contributed meal, coarsely ground grain. There was also a shortage of water as the weather had been dry, and the springs and wells were dry. The families endured cold September nights. In an article written to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Battle of Chickamauga, it was stated that “the band of homeless people were in wretched conditions and were eager to return to their homes, but they had to stay in camp for eight days, because

their houses were filled with wounded.” (*Chattanooga Times*, 1933) Mrs. Reed’s mother was resourceful as she used Yankee overcoats from dead soldiers to make dresses. The article states, “because of destitute circumstances this little southern girl had to wear Yankee blue.” (*Chattanooga Times*, 1933)

As communities supported each other in this Chickamauga area, help also came from an unexpected source. Account books of the Indiana 42nd Infantry Regiment show that rations of food were issued to destitute families living on or near the Chickamauga battlefield. Entries name the heads of families and number of members in family, location of residence, and date and amount of food issued. One entry was for “Mrs. Mullis, 8 children, (lives on Chickamauga battlefield)...1864, Jan 7: Pork, 10 pounds; Ham, 18 pounds; Coffee, 1 pound; and Sugar, 2 pounds” (Indiana 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Account Books, 1863-64)

When the Federalists entered the Chattanooga, Tennessee, area in June, 1862, a young seven year old girl, Lilla Webster, recalls the fact that “the family was packed into an ox cart and rushed to a place near Green’s lake, hoping for safety from shells which were falling in the village.” (*Chattanooga Times*, 1936) The Union army did withdraw, and the family came back to their home. They still showed their patriotism for the Southern cause. The newspaper article states “women then...organized committees to meet the troop trains with coffee and bread, as long as they had coffee and bread and no one believed that the Yankees would come to Chattanooga. (*Chattanooga Times*, 1936) Another young girl, Lizzie Kaylor Nicklin recalled “to each company a flag was given and a young lady would be selected to make the presentation speech.” (*Chattanooga Times*, 1913)

The young girls, Lizzie and Lilla, were both at a church service being conducted on August 21, 1863 in Chattanooga. A day of fasting and prayer had been called for by President Jefferson Davis. The Presbyterian service was packed, but after the Union attack

everyone hurried away. Lizzie Nicklin did remember that “my mother seemed not much disturbed, but then she was a woman of great courage, and we were among the last to leave the church.” (*Chattanooga Times*, 1913)

This time, the Webster family, including young Lilla, fled Chattanooga in a boxcar. Mr. Webster was an iron founder and had made ammunition and cannons for the Confederacy. Even though he had secured their passage in the boxcar, he wasn't able to go with them. Lilla's mother experienced trying times taking care of her six children, most often, by herself as they were shuttled from town to town. They also were able to live in several southern cities. Lilla, being so young, did not remember how long it was before they were able to return home. However, she recalled a long journey in a train that included many detours because of bridges being down. When they reached home, they found it to be a wreck. “It was many months, even years, before comfort was attained.” (*Chattanooga Times*, 1936)

Lizzie Nicklin's family fled to an area about five miles from Chattanooga, but after a few days returned to their home. The next time the city was attacked they went to the Joseph Ruoh home in the country, and then they rented a house across the street. Lizzie remembers that “during a skirmish my mother would hastily gather up something to eat in one hand and with the baby in the other, she would fly across the road to the Ruoh's cellar...”

(*Chattanooga Times*, 1913) The family was told that they would have to return to town because fighting was near. The journey was difficult because it was done at night with no roads to follow, and there were fortifications to cross. Lizzie states that times were terrible because “the town was full of half-starved soldiers. They would snatch the food from off the dishes before it could be brought to our table. I have seen them eating the dry corn on the cob.” (*Chattanooga Times*, 1913) The family finally knew that they would truly become

refugees. Lizzie recollected, “I well remember the day we left. It was in the early fall and on Sunday, late in the afternoon. Our neighbors came to say goodbye. We were in government wagons drawn by six mules—several families in the party...after crossing the Cumberland mountains, we were ragged and almost barefooted from having to walk down the mountain holding on to bushes and small trees to keep from falling and rolling down.” (*Chattanooga Times*, 1913) The family then rode in stock cars to Nashville. “It was some years before I saw Chattanooga again,” writes Lizzie. (*Chattanooga Times*, 1913))

Another Chattanooga family to flee the area was the Judge Hooke family. Judge Hooke was connected to the railroad and had secured a railroad boxcar for his family. Josephine Hooke, Judge Hooke’s daughter, writes in her diary, “Before I got back to our cars, could hear the cannonading distinctly-think I shall not attempt to go home. We are anxious about Father.” (Hooke, 1) When Josephine heard about the destruction of Chattanooga, her religious upbringing surfaced and she wrote, ” and where O where are they all gone-fled for refuge from the vile merciless invaders of our homes. How long, O how long will God permit this cruel war to rage. Are we not humbled? Why do we not forsake our sins and be saved.” (Hooke, 5 ). As fall came, colder weather was a hardship those on the trains had to endure. In her diary entry for September 18, 1863, Josephine laments, “ Never have we felt the loss of home so much as tonight. We have no stove in our cars and to feel the bleak weather coming on makes us think of the dear old home we have left and all the comforts with which we were surrounded. None but those who have been exiles, wanderers in a strange land can sympathize. “ (Hooke, 8) As the trains traveled on, all passengers were anxious for news from home. She wrote in her diary about hearing news of the terrible battle on Missionary Ridge. Josephine’s patriotism was still evident as she wrote, “O, that we were nearer the scene of conflict that we might assist in taking care of the

wounded. To be able to relieve in some degree the suffering of any soldier who bleeds in defense of our homes should be esteemed an honor and a privilege by Southern women.”

(Hooke, 10)

A North Carolina colonel wrote his wife in 1861, “So long as we have such wives, mothers, and sisters to fight for so long will this struggle continue until finally our freedom will be acknowledged.” (McPherson, 20) Many of the women for whom these brave Confederate soldiers were fighting, also had to fight their way through the Civil War as refugees. It would be their determination, faith, patriotism and assistance from others that saw them through this difficult time in American history. Cornelia McDonald was one of the many refugees who had to travel to another town. She survived even when her faith and patriotism were challenged; but she could not have done it without community support. She never did return to her home in Winchester, Virginia. In Tennessee, little girls such as Julia Kittie Snodgrass Reed, Lilla Webster Davenport, and Lizzie Kaylor Nicklin left their homes quickly on foot or traveled by ox carts, wagons, railroad boxcars, or stocks cars to outrun the Yankees. Miss Josephine Hooke, a young woman in her twenties, accompanied her family on the railroad cars also. These children and women, along with their families, suffered many hardships; but they also kept their faith and eventually returned to the Chickamauga and Chattanooga areas.

## Bibliography

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## **Refugee Children in the Civil War**

Submitted by Joan Brown, Cleveland, Tennessee

**Unit:** Southern Women and Children in the Civil War

**Lesson Title:** Refugee Children During the Civil War

**Grade Level:** Fifth Grade

**Essential Question related to Vital Theme:** What happened to children and their families when they were under siege by the Union armies?

**Lesson Time:** One hour

**Curriculum Standards:** 5.0 History involves people, events, and issues. Students will evaluate evidence to develop comparative and casual analysis, and to interpret primary sources. Era 5-Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877) 5.01 Understand the causes, course, and consequences of the Civil War 5.5. spi7. interpret a primary reading sample

**Materials:**

- \* Kahler, H. E., "Woman Who Heard Roar of Guns In Battle Attends Celebration." *Chattanooga Times*, September 21, 1933
- \* Kidd, Ronald. *Family Under Fire*. Chattanooga: Chattanooga Regional History Museum, 1995
- \* Nicklin, Kaylor Lizzie Mrs. "Personal Reminiscences of War Times in Chattanooga." *Chattanooga Times*, May 27, 1913
- \* Venn Diagram

### **Activity Description and overview of instructional strategies:**

In a previous lesson, I read *Family Under Fire* to the students; and we discussed the impact the battle in Chattanooga had on the children. These children had remained in their home during the siege. In this lesson, we will begin with a short review of that book. The first question of the new lesson will be "What is a refugee?" Next, using overheads, I will show them two newspaper articles that appeared in the *Chattanooga Times*. I will pass out excerpts from the articles, and we will read them together. A discussion will be held, and I will see that the students understand the term, refugee. There will be a discussion on primary and secondary sources. Students will then be asked to fill in a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting Julia Kittie Snodgrass Reed and Lizzie Kaylor Nicklin when they were little refugee girls fleeing the Yankees. Students will be given the opportunity to share their results.

**(Supporting Assignments/Homework:** Students are to write a diary entry to describe what might have happened to their family as they became refugees and fled the city of

Chattanooga as the Union army came close to their home. Required elements will include why they are fleeing, where they are going, and how they will travel. Also they must include any hardships encountered.

**Assessment:** Informal assessment will be made during discussions as I try to engage all students. A formative assessment may be made as I look at their Venn Diagrams. Finally, the post assessment will be on the students' diary entries.

Excerpt from “Woman Who Heard Roar of Guns In Battle Attends Celebration,”  
by H. E. Kahler  
September 21, 1933, *Chattanooga Times*

Recollections of Julia Kittie Snodgrass Reed during  
Battle of Chickamauga

The next day the sound of battle grew louder and when bullets started dropping around the house the father, too old to fight, but loyal to the South, took his wife and four children to a ravine northwest of the house. The bullets soon came shirring in that area, which made it necessary to move several more times.

In their westward trek the Snodgrasses joined the Kellys, McDonalds, Brocks, Brothertons, Mullises and perhaps others—about sixty-three in all. The families had left their homes in haste and had not provided themselves with food and clothing. The foragers had passed through the country and taken all provisions and live stock. This little band of refugees managed to live on field peas they found and the meal Larkin Poe had brought.

There was a great a shortage of water as food, for the weather had been dry for weeks and springs and wells had gone dry. The September nights were very cold and in the morning the ground was covered with frost. The band of homeless people were in wretched conditions and were eager to return to their homes, but they had to stay in camp for eight days, because their houses were filled with wounded. When the Snodgrass family returned they still found dead men and horses in their yard. Mrs. Reed recalls seeing the gold teeth knocked out of the mouths of dead Yankees and the shoes taken off their feet. Yankee overcoats were gathered up and the mother made dresses of them for her daughters. Because of destitute circumstances this little southern girl had to wear Yankee blue.

The house with its blood-stained interior was not suitable for immediate occupation. Consequently the family moved to Elis Springs, near Ringgold, where the mother on Oct. 14 gave birth to a child. The babe was assisted into the world by a Yankee doctor. The Snodgrass family did not again return to their former home until the close of the war.

Excerpts from “Personal Reminiscences of War Time in Chattanooga,” by Mrs. Lizzie Kaylor Nicklin, May 27, 1913, *Chattanooga Times*

#### Personal Recollections of Mrs. Lizzie Kaylor Nicklin during the Battle of Chattanooga

There was, of course, much excitement and confusion—soldiers leaving in haste to rejoin their regiments, women crying out in fright. My mother seemed not much disturbed, but then she was a woman of great courage, and we were among the last to leave the church. On our way home we saw people fleeing in every direction, eager to find places of safety. We drove out to Boyce that afternoon which is about five miles away. We found other families there, but after a few days the bombardment having ceased, we returned to our home.

The next time the city was shelled we went out to the home of Joseph Ruohs who lived near what is now East End avenue. It was at the time considered in the country and thickly wooded. The house was filled with their relatives, and friends and not thinking it safe to return to town, my father rented the place across the road from the Ruohs home.....

We were living there when Chattanooga was taken possession of by the federals. I was in town with my father the day they crossed the river, and on returning to our country home, what was our surprise to be stopped by a guard in blue uniform at our fence corner. The Ruohs home and ours set between the two armies, and during a skirmish my mother would hastily gather up something to eat in one hand and with the baby in the other, she would fly across the road to the Ruohs' cellar followed by my father with the other children. The cellar had been fortified by heavy lumber piled up all around. There the two families would remain until the firing ceased and it was safe to come out. After several days of this sort of excitement my father was ordered to vacate and take his family to town as they expected matters to grow worse.....

The wells and cisterns were nearly dry and it was almost impossible to find water for her (mother) to drink. That was a dry summer—the dust, almost a foot deep. I never knew the river to be so low before or since....

At last we decided to refugee. There was so much fighting going on around here that my parents were uneasy on account of the children. I well remember the day we left. It was in the early fall and on Sunday late in the afternoon. Our neighbors came to say goodbye. We were in government wagons drawn by six mules—several families in the party...

After crossing the Cumberland Mountains we were ragged and almost barefooted from having to walk down the mountain holding on the bushes and small trees to keep from falling and rolling down. The roads were in such a terrible condition that it was unsafe to remain in the wagons. After reaching Bridgeport we were put in stock cars in which to go to Nashville, and it was some years before I saw Chattanooga again.

## **Southern Women Receive Help from the North During the Civil War**

Submitted by Joan Brown, Cleveland, Tennessee

**Unit:** Southern Women and Children in the Civil War

**Lesson Title:** Southern Women Receive Help from the North During the Civil War

**Grade Level:** Fifth Grade

### **Essential Question related to Vital Theme:**

Southern women suffered many hardships during the Civil War. How did they survive when the Yankees invaded their homelands and took or destroyed their food supply?

**Lesson Time:** 45 minutes

**Curriculum Standards:** 5.01 Understand the causes, course, and consequences of the Civil War

**Materials:** \*Six Ledger Sheets from Indiana 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, 1863-1864  
\*Student Worksheet to be used when analyzing the Ledger Sheets

**Activity description and overview of instructional strategies:** In a previous lesson, the students learned about children who became refugees as the Civil War came to their area. Using the a transparency, I will show the students a ledger sheet from the Indiana 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, 1863-1864 (A primary source) which was part of a gift to the Chattanooga Library from the Evansville Public Museum, Evansville, Indiana, in September, 1949. Together we will decipher each part of the sheet. I will ask questions about why it was necessary to help these destitute women and families. I will elicit discussion about whether this was a surprise to them to see help coming from the Northern army, especially after learning earlier that the Northern troops had been taking, not giving, food from the Southerners as they passed through each area. I will divide the class into six groups and students will examine six ledger sheets and answer questions on the worksheet I have provided. The lesson will conclude with each group presenting a summary of what they learned from the ledgers.

**Supporting Assignments/Homework:** Students will write a letter to someone who is still fighting in the Southern army telling them about the help they received from the Indiana 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry. This letter may be to a husband, father, brother, or friend. They are to include details not only about the food received, but also how they felt about this assistance.

**Assessment:** Pre assessment will occur informally during the initial discussion as we look at the first ledger sheet together. I will assess the students understanding of the ledger sheets by listening to their group discussion and presentations. The final assessment will be on the letters that they are to write. How they react to the women receiving assistance will let me see the level of their understanding of these trying times.

Indiana 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, 1863-1864 Account Book

Discuss the ledger sheet and answer the following:

Who was given rations?

How many are in the family?

Where does the family live?

Where is the husband?

Chose one day such as January 12, 1864, and tell what goods the woman received that day.

Why do you think this woman may have needed assistance?

What are your feelings about the Northern army assisting this Southern woman?