



MATILDA “TILLIE” PIERCE



As Portrayed by Hannah Opdenaker

“The horrors of war are fully known only to those who have seen and heard them. It was my lot to see only part, but that was sufficient.” – Matilda “Tillie” Pierce.

And the part that 15 year old Tillie Pierce experienced was the Battle of Gettysburg. Her personal narrative was written 25 years after the war, but still touches people today as a dramatic novel that puts you right next to her as she witnessed this horrible event.

Tillie was born on March 11, 1848 to James and Margaret Pierce. Tillie was 13 at the start of the war. She had 2 brothers, James and William, and an older sister named Margaret. Both brothers fought for the Union and both survived the war.

Tillie’s story began when Confederate soldiers marched into Gettysburg. She was in class at Rebecca Eyster’s Gettysburg Female Institute in the building once known as the Gettysburg Academy.

They were sent home where she found confederates taking away her family’s beloved horse. She often rode the filly, describing it as “gentle and pretty”.



Late July 1, 1863, Tillie fled town with her neighbor Mrs. Henrietta Shriver and her children to her parent’s farm near the round tops. They left thinking that they would be safer, but ended up going almost in the line of battle. On July 2nd and 3rd, Tillie tended to wounded soldiers who were sent to the farm, and baked bread for the passing soldiers.

When she finally returned home, Tillie tended to five more wounded soldiers. In August 1863, Tillie served as a nurse at Camp Letterman where she volunteered as a nurse until that November.

In September 1872, Tillie Pierce married Horace Alleman, who was an attorney. They moved to Selinsgrove, PA. Tillie helped raise funds for the aftermath of a devastating fire that ran through Selinsgrove. Tillie’s book, entitled “At Gettysburg: What a Girl Saw and Heard of the Battle” was published in 1888. It was named a best-seller and was reprinted several times.

Tillie suffered from cancer and died in 1914 at the age of 66.



Tillie Pierce is portrayed by Hannah Opdenaker, a student at Solanco High School. She has been re-enacting for 8 years. Her interests and hobbies are researching history and 19th century living and sewing.

