



“The Belle of the Battlefield”: Lucinda Dogan

At the start of the first Battle of Manassas on July 21, 1861, Lucinda Dogan was a 53-year-old widow living with 6 of her children in a small house in a little community called Groveton. Groveton had been named after her plantation home, “Peach Grove” that had burned in 1860. Lucinda’s husband had died just a few years earlier in 1856. At the time of the war, Lucinda was living in a smaller house on her family’s land. However, despite all the bad things that Lucinda experienced in her life, one of her friends said this about her:

“I never in my life heard Mrs. Dogan utter a [discouraging] word. Somehow she never seemed to me to feel poor. She always had something to give to those who were worse off than herself.”



Lucinda Dogan House in 1940

When Lucinda heard the battle raging to east of her, she sent a someone in a wagon filled with barrels of water and other supplies to help wounded soldiers from both armies. For her efforts, Lucinda Dogan began to be called, the “Belle of the Battlefield.” This name was a reference to the fact that the men appreciated her character and personality; and that they appreciated all the things that she had done for them.

After the second battle of Manassas in 1862, she went out with her children to take care of the wounded and dying men. Lucinda said:

“When the children and I got home parties of men were collecting the wounded and putting them in rows here in the yard and wherever there was shade. Doctors were cutting off legs and arms and the moaning was awful. There were hundreds of [wounded men] all around the farms. The children and I took buckets of water out into the fields and we worked that day and into the night, doing what we could for the poor fellows. Most of the [men] on our farm were Yankees but that didn’t make any difference to us after they got hurt. All of our bed sheeting and table linen went for bandages.”

Years after the war was over, both Confederate and Union soldiers still remembered the kindness that Mrs. Dogan showed them. In 1906, a Union General gathering for the dedication of monuments to soldiers from New York would say,

“Old Mrs. Lucinda Dogan, who was in the house during the battles of both First and Second Bull Run, now eighty-nine years of age, white haired and wrinkled, was cheerful and communicative, her mental faculties apparently all unimpaired. Displaying a wonderful memory of incidents of those terrible times, this strong-faced, good-faced, lovely old lady chatted familiarly with [me]... Mrs. Dogan’s presence added greatly to the interest of the occasion.”

When she died in 1910, a newspaper called the Manassas Democrat wrote:

“Wounded and dying soldiers, some wearing uniforms of gray, others clad in blue, but all alike to her as human beings in distress invoked blessings upon her, as she pressed a cup of cold water to their fevered lips and soothed their agony. Through two battles of Manassas, she went about like a ministering angel... Now her death has cast a shadow over the reunions and veterans assembled on Manassas battlefield today feel deeply their loss of a friend, whom they knew was true.”



The Dogan House today.

Today, if you visit Manassas National Battlefield Park, you will still find the house Lucinda Dogan and her children were living in during the war. It is one of three original buildings left in the park from around the time of the war.

Questions:

1. Who was Lucinda Dogan? What are some of the problems that she faced?
2. When she died, one of her friends commented: *"Somehow she never seemed to me to feel poor. She always had something to give to those who were worse off than herself."* What do you think her friend meant when she said this?
3. What did Lucinda Dogan do to earn the nickname, "The Belle of the Battlefield?"
4. Why do you think that Mrs. Dogan's death was such bad news for former soldiers that it would, *"...cast a shadow over the reunions and veterans..."* gathering in Manassas?
5. Based on Mrs. Dogan's story, and what you know about the Civil War, what are some of the problems that local civilians might have faced when the battles of Manassas were being fought in their backyards?
6. How do you think local civilians solved the problems you listed in question 5?