Maud Murrow

The Civil War brought a number of people through our town. In their letters, diaries, journals, and their books, they recorded the impressions of old Cross City. Some of them fell in love with Corinth, others did not, but all carried away memories when they left.

Private Sam Watkins of the 1st Tennessee Infantry was glad to shake the dust from his feet when he left Corinth at the end of the Siege in May of '62; "Its history was black and dark and damning. We left it to the tender mercies of the Yankees without one tear of sorrow or regret."

Sergeant Sam Barron of the 3rd Texas Cavalry saw the town in a different light, "I found Corinth all aglitter with brass buttons and gold lace, the beautiful Confederate uniform being in much evidence everywhere. I had never seen anything like it before."

Opinions varied from man to man be they civilian or military, officer or enlisted, Confederate or Union. Perhaps the most unique perspective came from the eyes of an eight year old girl from Ohio.

Maud Ella Murrow was the eldest of four children to Dr. Coridon Morrow and his wife Emma. Coridon was the Assistant Surgeon of the 43rd Ohio Infantry and was present for the Battle of Corinth. His regiment fought on the very ground where the Interpretive Center now stands and the doctor worked at a field hospital in the railroad cut adjacent to the modern Long Distribution warehouse.

Dr. Morrow made it through the battle unharmed but later fell victim to dysentery brought on by the bad water that plagued Corinth. Soon he was a patient in his own hospital ward and he wrote a note to Emma to come to Corinth at once.

Emma left two of the children with family and set off on a journey with eight year old Maud and five month old Mary. By stagecoach, train, and riverboat, the trio made their way southward. On November 4th, the fifth day of travel, they arrived in Corinth and Maud's first impression was the smell. "A horrible odor, which the driver informed us was caused by the burning of horses and mules killed in the late battle." The smell must have been overpowering as the dead animals had been rotting on the field for a month before they were burned.

Mrs. Murrow and the girls found the Dr., ill but stable, on a cot in the hospital on College Hill. Maud was impressed by the enormous building. "Prior to the war it was known as the Corona Female College. It was a large three-story structure of brick, with portico in front supported by massive pillars, and never was a hospital more

conveniently located with reference to a battlefield. To me it was the Castle Beautiful . . . The building was also known by the name of General Hospital and Seminary Hospital."

There was no room for the family to have a private chamber of their own so an extra cot was set next to the doctor and a blanket thrown up for a screen. During the night the baby began to cry and the effect it had on the soldiers was astounding. Men who had not seen their own families and children for months were moved to tears at the sound. "It was a treat to hear a baby cry," recalled one of the doctors. Mary was taken through the wards and pronounced the "Little Rosebud" by the soldiers who delighted in the infant.

As for Maud, she became a shadow to a Mrs. Penfield, one of the female nurses, and in the days to follow she kept herself busy bringing cups of cold water to the wounded. "I became familiar with scenes of sadness and suffering, with the sight of pale faces, crutches and armless sleeves, and, ever and anon, a stiff form wrapped in a blanket would be carried to the dead house, thence to a soldier's grave."

In many ways it was a simpler time and Little Maud was allowed to explore the neighborhood on her own. "With the happy freedom of childhood I roamed about at my own sweet will," she recalled. Maud made the acquaintance of cooks, bakers, soldiers and nurses including the renowned May Ann "Mother" Bickerdyke, the outspoken hospital matron who once infuriated a surgeon who demanded to know under whose authority she was working. She replied, "On the authority of Lord God Almighty, have you anything that outranks that?"

Eventually Dr. Morrow recovered to the point where he was able to move his family into the more spacious Tishomingo Hotel. The hotel was then being operated by the duo of Spencer & Wells who had gone to great lengths to restore the hotel furniture and its reputation for good meals. The hotel had twice been used as a hospital but the sick and wounded had been moved out and the Murrow's were able to secure an entire room for themselves.

Corinth had become a destination for runaway slaves from across Alabama and Mississippi. Known as "contrabands" they became a familiar sight to Maud and her family, and an elderly couple, "Aunt Katy" and "Uncle Sandy," became particular friends. Maud was particularly delighted, for the young contraband children were the first youngsters of her own age she had seen in weeks.

"From among the children of the refugees I organized and taught a school on the upper veranda of the Tishomingo, which was situated at the crossing of the Memphis and Charleston and the Mobile and Ohio Railroads. The pupils were all girls, some older some younger than myself, and as far as I have ever been able to learn to the contrary,

this was the first crude, little contraband school organized in the great state of Mississippi, and humble though I was, I feel very proud of my share in it. I taught them the alphabet, and how to make a few figures. Our textbooks were the heads of newspapers, and cards with figures numbering the rooms which we tore off the doors. Many trains passed our schoolroom daily and each whistle that pierced the air was a signal to suspend lessons, and teacher and pupils alike would scramble to the front and leaning over the rotten railing would wave and cheer at the blue-coated being borne onward to victory or defeat, life or death, God alone knew."

At long last Dr. Morrow returned to duty and the family made their way back to Ohio. Maud's wartime experiences were at an end and she returned to her friends and make believe tea parties.

The memories of Corinth and the war stayed with an adult Maud and though she was never a soldier, she was deeply affected by the war. She became a faithful follower and supporter of the Grand Army of the Republic for the rest of her life. Maud never married and in 1949, at the age of 95, passed away and was laid to rest next to her parents in Bainbridge, Ohio.