



West Point - Va
Feb 14th 1861

All the girls of my Class
are busy sending love missives.
I get know nothing of Casida or
his missives and to keep pace with
them, I send you the above
May your Administration be
as pure as those flowers
Like the green leaves - may
it live fresh in the memory of
posterity, and when others, in future
occupy your position, may they feel,
it was consecrated by a Hamilton
Truly, yours
Blanche

From a
Confederate Valentine
to the Nancy Harts



By Patricia A. Kaufmann



Valentines that truly match their conveying covers are quite scarce in Confederate postal history collections. One such as that shown in Figure 1 are treasured. Many offered “Confederate Valentines” are questionable or, at the least, not readily verifiable. The subject cover and homemade valentine on the previous page (which was, in effect, a handwritten letter with pressed and dried flowers) represent a use on the first Valentine’s Day of the newly formed Confederacy, but before the first shots of the war were fired.

The cover is a 3¢ Star-Die entire (Scott US #U-26), manuscript canceled and postmarked from West Point, Ga., 15 February [1861]. This represents Confederate use of U.S. postage, defined as the period from when a state joined the Confederacy until the Confederate States of America Post Office Department (CSAPOD) took over its own affairs from the United States on June 1, 1861.



“From the nebulous “facts,” you can deduce that such research is challenging at best. One laughable source shows the date of Blanche’s birth as about 1844 and the date of her death as about 1887...Although it shows as her dying about 1887 it also shows her residence in Houston in 1910...”

Georgia seceded on January 19, 1861, and was an independent state for 16 days before it joined the Confederacy on February 4, 1861, as one of the first six states. Until June 1, 1861, U.S. postage was still valid within the Southern states and postmasters still collected and remitted monies to the US Post Office Department in Washington, DC, at the request of the CSAPOD.

The cover is addressed to “The Hon. Vice President Confederate (sic) States of A.a., Montgomery, Ala. Up the left side is docketing, typical of the Alexander H. Stephens correspondence, although usually found on the back flaps. It informs us that the missive is from “Blanche of W. Point, Valentine, Feb. 1861.”

Enclosed is an exquisite handwritten Valentine written on fine laid-paper stationery with an embossed maker’s mark at upper left, “Extra Super Fine.” Shown in Figure 2, the valentine is headed “West Point Ga, Feb 14, 1861,” with pressed flowers and satin ribbons attached. It is from a young woman signed Blanche and declares,

All the girls of my class are busy sending love missives. I yet know nothing of Cupid or his missives, and to keep pace with them, I send you the above.

May your administration be as pure as those flowers.

Like the green leaves, may it live freely in the memory of posterity and when others in future occupy your position, may they feel it was consecrated by a Hamilton.

Blanche, your missive lives in the “memory of posterity,” not just the administration of Vice President Stephens, as you had hoped for.

Catherine Anna “Blanche” McNeill Collier (1844-1873)

Blanche, as she was known, was born in McDonough, Georgia, in 1844 to Hector George Robert McNeill and Nancy Ann Elizabeth George. She was married to Lieut. Charles Bruce Collier (1837-1888) on April 2, 1865, in West Point, Georgia, just a week before Lee’s surrender at Appomattox.

Charles served in the 24th Texas Cavalry, also known as the Second Texas Lancers, in the Trans-Mississippi Department and Army of Tennessee. The 24th Texas was also known

(Confederate.)

6 | 24 | Texas

C. B. Colyer +
2^d Lieut Co D 24 Texas Inf

Appears on a
Roll of Prisoners of War

forwarded from St. Louis, Mo., by the Provost Marshal General, Department of the Missouri, to Camp Chase, Columbus, Ohio, January 27, 1863, under instructions from Washington.

Roll dated St. Louis, Feb. 5, 1863.

Where captured Arkansas Post, Ark

When captured Jan 11, 1863.

NOTE: "The Arkansas Post Prisoners were all transferred directly from the Boats in which they came up the river, to the Cars which took them East."

Remarks :

Number of roll:
226; sheet 3

(639b)

K. H. ...
Copyst.

by a plethora of other names, including Wilkes's Cavalry, Taylor's Cavalry, Swearingen's Cavalry, Neyland's Cavalry, Weldon's Cavalry, Mitchell's Cavalry, Fly's Cavalry, and Jerald's Cavalry.

Military records show Collier signed the roll as commanding officer of Company E, but is listed initially in Company K. He enrolled at Jasper, Texas, December 21, 1861, for the period of the war. Part of this regiment was captured at Fort Hindman, Arkansas Post, January 11, 1863, including Collier (sometimes mistakenly noted as "Colyer."

Members of the 24th Texas Cavalry surrendered with Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith on May 26, 1865, as well as at Durham Station, North Carolina, on April 26, 1865. It appears there were less than fifty men enlisted in the unit upon surrender. Sgt. Z. M. Guynes of Company B recalled, "When we first started out the company had 110 men; at the surrender we had four left."

Charles was listed on a roll of prisoners forwarded from St. Louis to Camp Chase, Columbus, Ohio, on January 27, 1863. (Figure 3) From there, Charles was transferred to Fort Delaware April 10, 1863. He was described as 26 years old, 5'7"

Figure 3. C. B. Colyer (sic) shown on roll of prisoners of war taken at Arkansas Post.



tall, grey eyes, light hair and light complexion. On April 29, 1863, he was forwarded to City Point for exchange. Figure 4 shows Confederate States form No. 3, Officer's Pay Account, for the period from April 30 to October 31, 1863, signed by Collier.

Blanche and Charles had several children, the first of whom was born nine months after they were married. Several sources show as many as six children born to them. Most sources show at least three children by name; one source shows only two. None I consulted show six by name.

By the most believable accounts, Blanche died in Houston, Texas, before even reaching her thirtieth birthday. She is recorded in the Third Ward of Houston, Harris County, Texas,

in the 1870 census. The entrance to Glenwood cemetery, said to be the site of Blanche's final resting place, appears in Figure 5. There is a footnote that her place of burial at Glenwood is conjecture, pending further information or confirmation.

From the nebulous "facts," you can deduce that such research is challenging at best. One laughable source shows the date of Blanche's birth as about 1844 and the date of her death as about 1887. The title does not mention her married name of Collier except in the content body. Although it shows as her dying about 1887 it also shows her residence in Houston in 1910 (!) as well as intervening decades. Many sources use words such as "about, approximately, auto-generated biography, needs editing," and so forth. Yes, genealogical research

Figure 4. CSA Officers' Pay Account signed by Collier, November 15, 1863.

Form No. 3--Officers' Pay Account.

The Confederate States of America.

To Charles B. Collier 2nd Lt Co 2nd Tex Cav 1st Div.

ON WHAT ACCOUNT.	COMMENCEMENT AND EXPIRATION.		Term of Service charged.		Pay per Month.		Amount.		REMARKS.
	From	To	Months.	Days.	Dollars.	Cents.	Dollars.	Cents.	
PAY--									
For myself.....	<i>April 30</i>	<i>Oct 31</i>	<i>6</i>		<i>90</i>	<i>00</i>	<i>540</i>	<i>00</i>	
For year's service.....	<i>1863</i>	<i>1863</i>							
FORAGE--									
For horse							<i>540</i>	<i>00</i>	

I hereby certify that the foregoing account is accurate and just; that I have not been absent without leave during any part of the time charged for; that I have not received pay, forage, or received money in lieu of any part thereof, for any part of the time thereon charged; that the horses were actually kept in service, and were mustered for the whole of the time charged; that for the whole of the time charged for my staff appointment, I actually and legally held the appointment, and did duty in the department; that I have been a commissioned officer for the number of years stated in the charge for every additional five years' service; that I am not in arrears with the Confederate States, on any account whatsoever; and that the last payment I received was from *Gen. A. Barksdale Capt 70 Regt* and to the *30th* day of *April* 1863.

I, at the same time, acknowledge that I have received of *Capt. W. H. Moore* Q. M., C. S. A., this *15th* day of *November* 1863, the sum of *Five Hundred and Sixty* Dollars, being the amount, in full, of said account.

Pay. \$ *540 00*

To years' service.

Forage

Amount. \$

Chas B Collier
2nd Lt 2nd Tex Cav

[SIGNED DUPLICATES.]

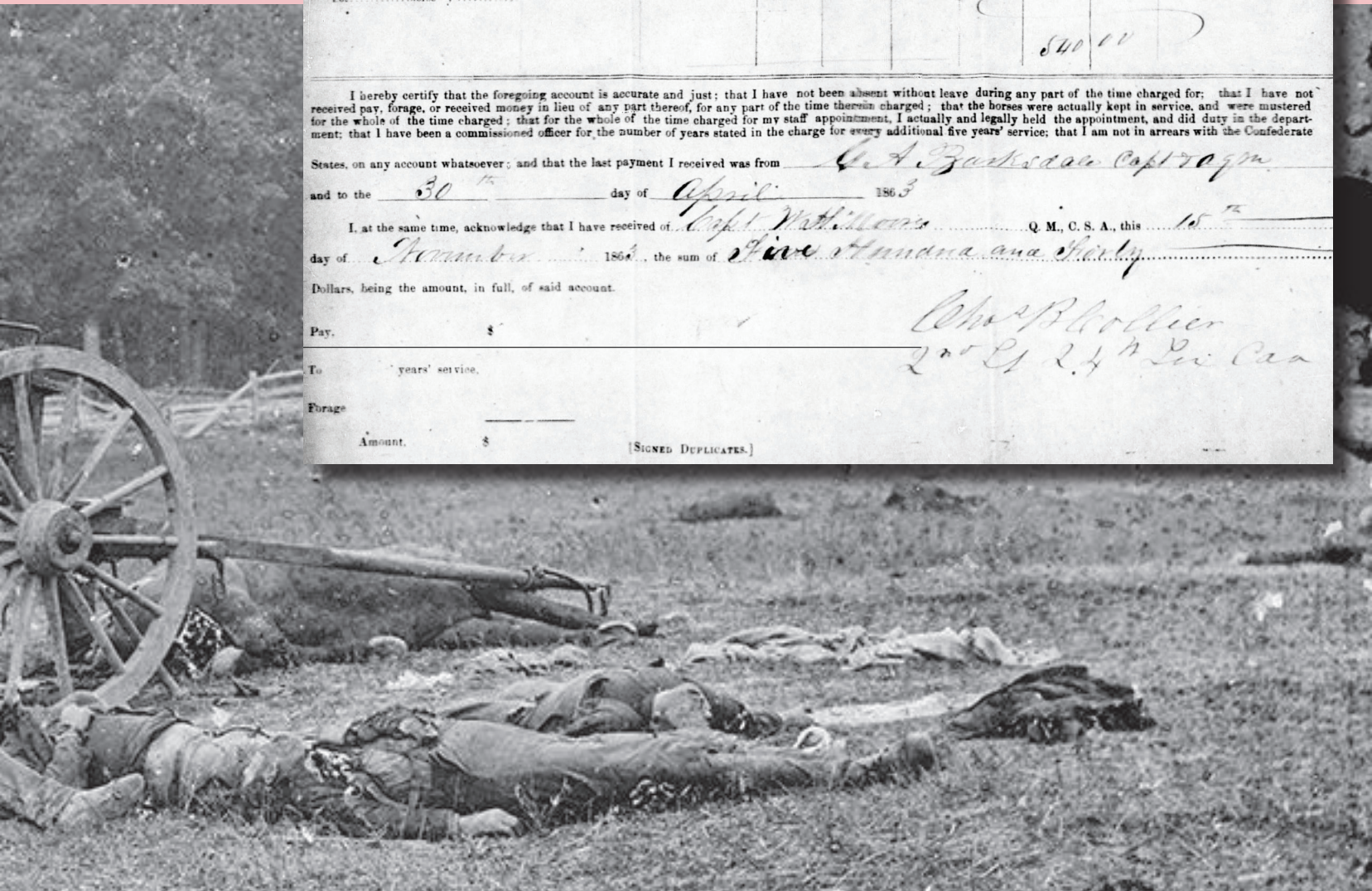




Figure 5. Entrance to Glenwood cemetery, site of Blanche's final resting place



Figure 6. Charles Collier's gravestone at Woodville Magnolia Cemetery

can be fraught with peril. The clear caveat is to check as many sources as you can find and utilize your own words of warning if you pass along information in articles such as this.

Charles' gravestone at Magnolia Cemetery, Woodville, Texas, is shown in Figure 6. A Masonic symbol adorns the top of the gravestone. Charles, too, died rather young at age 51. A Texas Historical Commission marker gives the history of the cemetery in Figure 7.

Charles was married again in 1877, several years after Blanche's death. His second wife was Charlotte A. Mushaway, a music teacher in Tyler County, Texas. She was born in Louisiana. They had one daughter who died before reaching her first birthday. The deaths of family members, young by today's standards, point up the difficulties of life during that period.

The Nancy Harts Militia

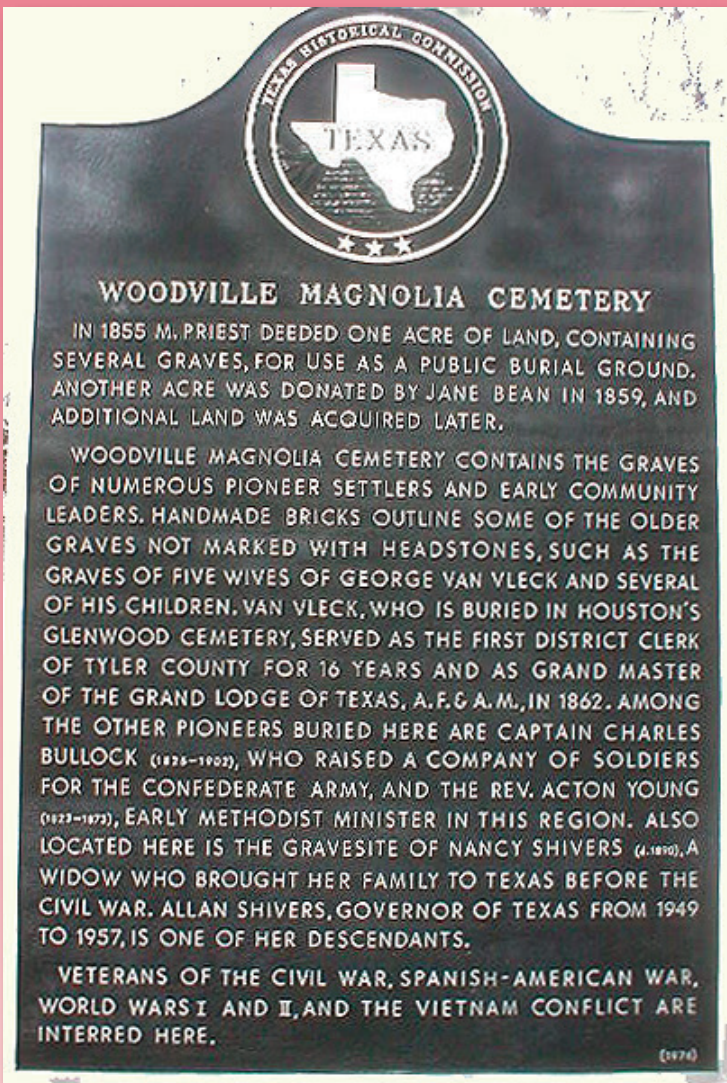
Blanche's location in West Point, Georgia, immediately suggested to me The Nancy Harts Militia, which brings me to a caveat. With this topic, I delve into speculation that I fully admit is a stretch, as I have found nothing to directly connect Blanche to the Nancy Harts. But it is a provocative thought that Blanche might have been a member of this impressive group and the story is too splendid not to relate to you, my readers.

The Nancy Harts Militia was formed in LaGrange, Georgia, during the first weeks of the Civil War. It was an all-female military unit organized to protect the home front. LaGrange is roughly fourteen miles from West Point.

Two weeks after the first shots were fired on Fort Sumter, the LaGrange Light Guards of the 4th Georgia Infantry left home to fight for the Confederacy on April 26, 1861. More than eight companies of men left LaGrange for the various fronts, making the town particularly vulnerable to Union attack due to its location midway between Atlanta and Montgomery, Alabama.

By 1860, Troup County had become the fourth-wealthiest county in Georgia, based on cotton as a commodity crop. It was the fifth-largest slaveholding county in the state. As the county seat, LaGrange was a center of trade for this prosperous area, and wealthy planters built more than 100 significant homes in the city. The area was developed for cotton plantations. The US 1850 census showed a population of 1,523; by 1870, the population had swelled to 2,053. The 2010 census recorded 29,588 and the estimate today is over 31,000.

Soon after the men departed, two of their wives, Nancy Hill Morgan and Mary Alford Heard, decided to form a female military company. The two women called a preliminary meeting at a schoolhouse on the grounds of US senator Ben-



jamin Hill's home. Almost forty public-spirited women attended, ready to join to defend their homes and families. The militia included both married and unmarried women, mostly the latter, as revealed by the roster of officers.

As the women were inexperienced with firearms, they turned to Dr. A. C. Ware for assistance in their training. Ware was a physician who remained in town due to a physical disability. The members initially elected Ware as captain but, not long after, instead elected Nancy Morgan (Figure 8) as captain and Mary Heard as first lieutenant. The regiment leaders were assisted by elected sergeants, corporals, and a treasurer. The group called themselves the "Nancy Harts," or "Nancies," in honor of Nancy Hart, a patriot spy who outwitted and killed a group of Tories at her northeast Georgia cabin during the Revolutionary War.

Although a few other Southern cities armed women briefly in response to local crises, LaGrange's women are considered unique because their group would become a well-organized, disciplined, commissioned military company that would train regularly for almost three years.

The women began their military training using William J. Hardee's Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics (1861) and met twice a week for drilling and target practice. The leaders offered prizes to the best markswomen and, after several mis-



Figure 8. Nancy Hill Morgan, Captain of the Nancy Harts.

Figure 7. Texas Historical Commission marker for Woodville Magnolia Cemetery.

haps—including shooting a hornet's nest and a cow—the women became expert shots. They were mostly armed with ancient weapons such as flintlocks, since the best and most modern weapons were taken to war by the men of the town.

The Nancy Harts are shown posing for a formal portrait in Figure 9 with what is likely Dr. Ware, although he is not identified.

Although the Nancy Harts organized as military, they primarily served as nurses while continuing to dutifully drill throughout the war. LaGrange's four hospitals were often full and, when overflowing, the Nancies, as well as other residents, often took patients into their homes for care.

In mid-April 1865, the key rail center of West Point, Georgia, drew the attention of Major General James H. Wilson. Realizing its importance to the Confederacy, he sent artillery units and 3,000 cavalymen to raze it.

The LaGrange telegraph operator received an urgent request from Confederate Brig. General Robert Tyler in nearby West Point on the morning of April 16. Federal troops were approaching the fort that guarded the railroad bridge, and he needed all able-bodied men to report immediately to help defend West Point. All the walking-wounded soldiers and aged men in LaGrange gathered and rode a train to the fort. The exodus left the town with no men capable of fighting.

The defense of the West Point fort was gallant, but the roughly 300 defenders could not hope to prevail against the Union's 3,000 attackers. Nineteen train engines and hundreds of railroad cars loaded with war supplies were destroyed and Confederate General Tyler was killed.

The Nancies were finally put to the test; the defeat at West Point was disheartening news. Many had family and loved ones at the fort. They were also concerned that the Federals would continue to LaGrange from West Point.

Sure enough, retreating Confederate cavalymen brought news that a Federal column was coming up the road from West Point. The Nancy Harts quickly assembled at the home of Mary Heard. As they were forming their ranks, several Confederate cavalymen unsuccessfully pleaded with them to return home and lock their doors. They refused and started marching to meet the column.

On April 17, 1865, the Nancy Harts marched to the campus of LaGrange Female College on the edge of town to meet the enemy forces. At the sight of blue uniforms, the Nancy Harts formed a line and prepared for the worst.

The women were shocked to see many Confederate prisoners from the fort near the front of the column, strategically placed there by the commanding officer. The Nancies could not fire without endangering their loved ones.

Union colonel Oscar H. LaGrange, coincidentally named, asked to be introduced to the unit's captain. Capt. Nancy Morgan informed him the women were determined to defend their families and homes. Col. LaGrange responded by promising that if the group would disarm, no homes nor peaceful citizens would be harmed.

Union troops destroyed facilities in LaGrange that were helpful to the Confederate war effort, including factories, stores, telegraph lines and railroad tracks, but spared most private homes and property. The homes and citizens of LaGrange fared far better than many other occupied areas.

In 1957, the Georgia Historical Commission placed a historical marker in front of the LaGrange courthouse, commemorating the women's service. (Figure 10)

The Revolutionary War Nancy Hart

So, who was this woman of Revolutionary War lore who inspired a group of spirited Southern women to take her name? A painting by Louis S. Glanzman portrays her in Figure 11.¹¹

A devout patriot, Hart gained notoriety during the Revolution for her determined efforts to rid the area of Tories, English soldiers, and British sympathizers. Her single-handed efforts against Tories and Indians in the Broad River frontier, as well as her covert activities as a patriot spy, have become the stuff of myth, legend, and local folklore.

Coincidentally, her name was Nancy Ann Morgan Hart, while the Confederate captain of the Nancy Hart Militia was Nancy Hill Morgan. Destiny?

According to contemporary accounts, "Aunt Nancy," as she was often called, was a tall, gangly woman who towered six feet in height. Like the frontier she inhabited, she was rough-hewn and rawboned, with red hair and a small-pox-scarred face. She was also cross-eyed. One early account pointed out that Hart had "no share of beauty—a fact she

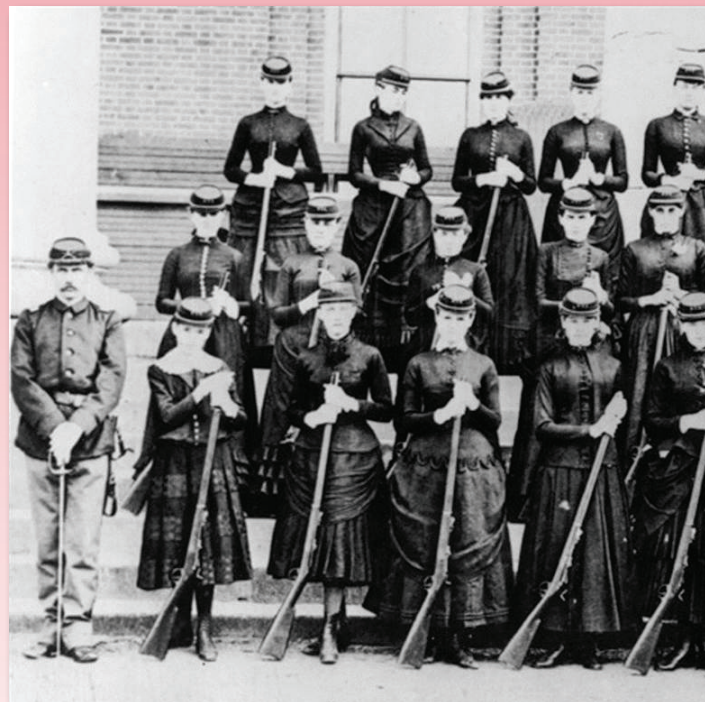
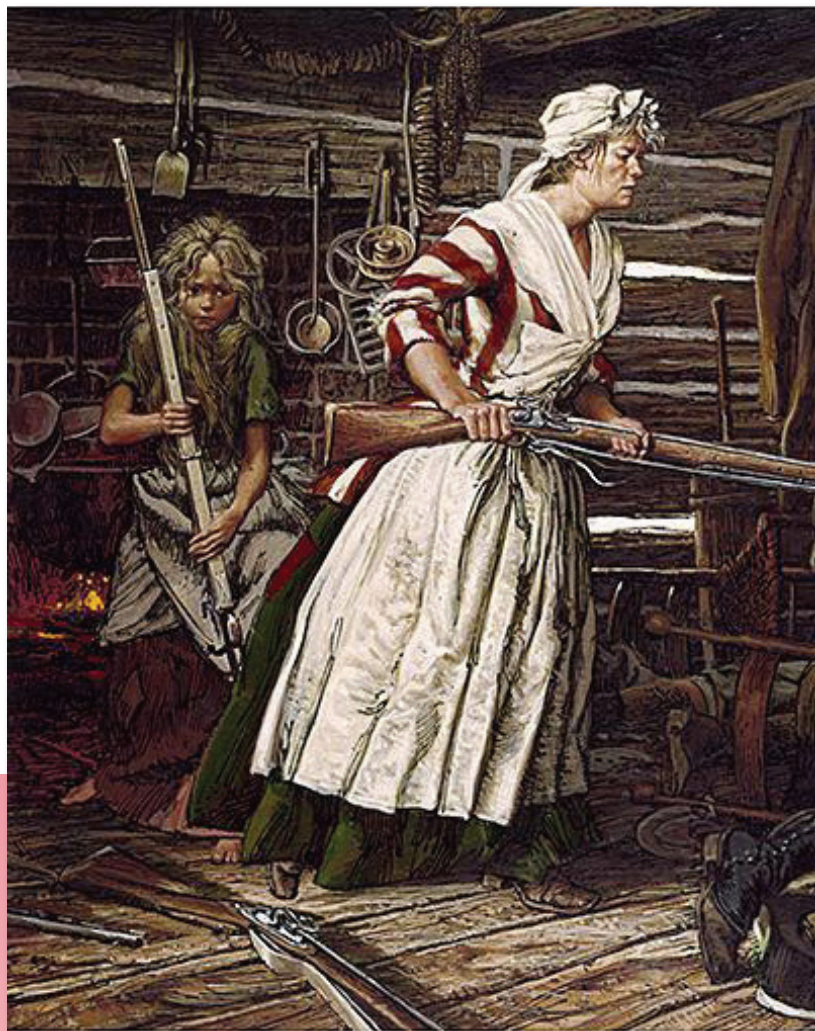




Figure 11. Painting by Louis S. Glanzman portrays Nancy Ann Morgan Hart, Revolutionary War legend. Courtesy *National Geographic*



Figure 9. The Nancy Hart Militia is shown posing with what may be their drillmaster, Dr. Ware.

herself would have readily acknowledged, had she ever enjoyed an opportunity of looking into a mirror."

Hart's physical appearance was combined with a hot temper and a fearless spirit. Local Indians referred to her as "Wahatche," which may have meant "war woman." Although she was illiterate, Hart was blessed with the skills and knowledge necessary for frontier survival; she was an expert herbalist, a skilled hunter and, despite her crossed eyes, an excellent shot.

She furthered the Patriotic cause as a spy. She often disguised herself as a simpleminded man and wandered into Tory camps and British garrisons to gather information, which she subsequently passed along to Patriot authorities.

The most famous of Hart stories was when she famously outwitted a group of Tories who had invaded her home. She served them the wine they demanded and, once they were feeling the effects, Hart sent her daughter Sukey to the spring for water. Hart secretly instructed her to blow a conch shell, which was kept on a nearby stump, to alert neighbors that Tories were in the cabin. Hart stole and secreted their weapons while they were imbibing, then used them to shoot two men who failed to listen to her warnings; she held the rest captive until help arrived. Her husband, Benjamin Hart, wanted to shoot the Tories, but Hart wanted them to hang. It is said that the remaining Tories were hanged from tree.

In 1912, workmen grading a railroad near the site of the old Hart cabin unearthed a neat row of six skeletons that lay under nearly three feet of earth and were estimated to have been buried for at least a century. This discovery seemed to validate the most often-told story of the Hart legend.

Georgians have memorialized Nancy Hart in many ways. Hart County was named for her, as well as its county seat, Hartwell. There is also Lake Hartwell, Nancy Hart Park, and Nancy Hart Highway. The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) erected a replica Nancy Hart cabin, using chimney stones from the original cabin overlooking Wahatche Creek. In 1997, Hart was inducted into Georgia Women of Achievement. A Georgia Historical Commission marker is shown in Figure 12. My favorite honor, of course, is that of the group of Southern women who took her name during the Civil War as the Nancy Hart Militia.

Yet Another Famous Nancy Hart

Nancy Hart (Douglas), shown in Figure 13, was a daughter of the South and a loyal Confederate. At the start of the Civil War, she ran away from home at age fourteen to join the Moccasin Rangers, a Confederate sympathizing guerilla militia in present-day West Virginia, where she served as their guide and spy. She later volunteered and joined the Confederate Army where she served as a guide and spy under General Stonewall Jackson.

The date of this Nancy Hart's birth and death widely vary from source to source, her stated birth ranging from 1843-1846 and her death as much as a dozen years apart in the early 1900s. Her memorial at Manning Knob Cemetery near Richwood, West Virginia, is "Dedicated to the Memory of Nancy Hart, 1846-1902, Civil War Heroine," placed there as a grammar school project. (Figure 14) Yet, two of her granddaughters recall attending her funeral in 1913.

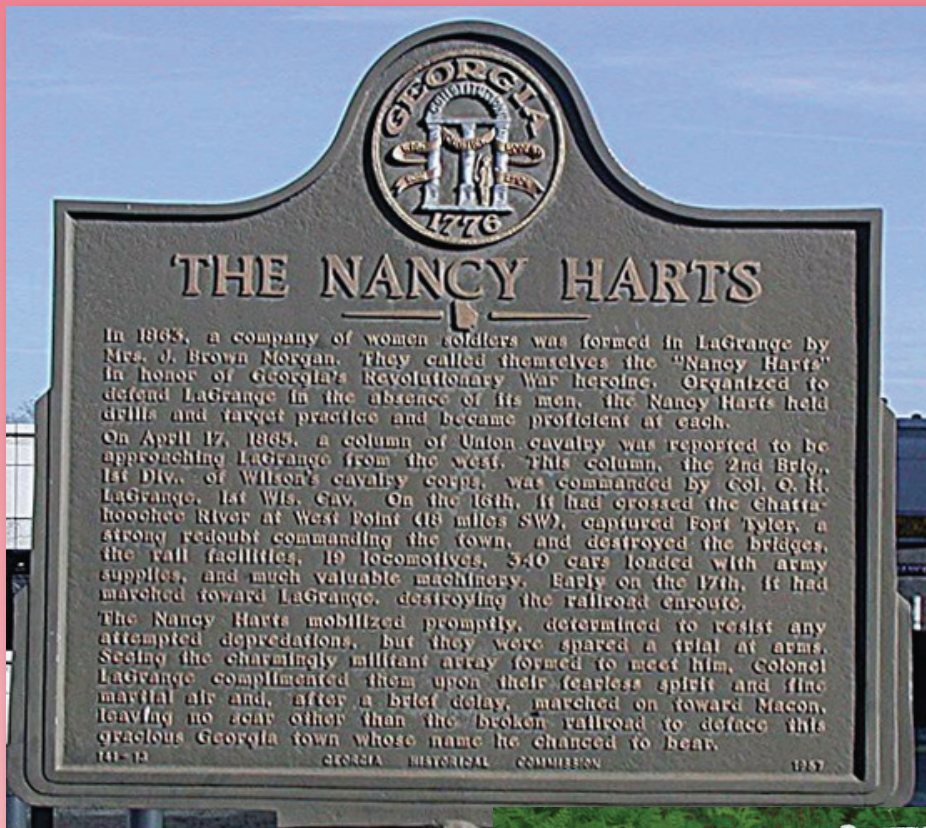


Figure 10. Historical marker in front of LaGrange courthouse, commemorating the service of the Nancy Harts Militia.



Figure 14. Memorial to Nancy Hart Douglas, Confederate scout, guide and spy.



As with the Revolutionary War Nancy Hart, much information may be found online about the Confederate spy, Nancy Hart, including a webpage sponsored on behalf of her descendants. According to that source, at nine years old, Nancy got that excited look in her eyes when she carried a musket, learned how to ride horseback, and learned to shoot, stalk, track, hunt, fish and look after herself. She thought she might be missing out on something exciting when she did such bothersome chores such as helping cook, clean, do laundry, and look after her younger siblings. She was a tall girl of Scotch-Irish descent who reportedly was not afraid of anything.

The descendants' webpage not only points up the date discrepancies of her birth and death, it also questions whether she was or was not married. At least one source shows her as having married fellow raider Joshua Douglas. Another legend has it that she was hanged by Union Troops. Such an execution seems unlikely to me, although not impossible. Most female spies were not executed, rather given strong warnings—which they generally did not heed.

Final Thoughts

Blanche's valentine is a special piece of collateral from the abundant Alexander Stephens correspondence, written at the onset of the Civil War. As many pieces of postal history do, it inspired research which led to fascinating anecdotes about some of the feisty ladies of the Confederacy. Being born with or taking the name Nancy Hart seemed to put these women on similar paths of derring-do, whether during the Revolution or the Civil War.

I am always happy to follow the path of such tales, no matter how far afield they lead from the original subject matter. While this departure would not be appropriate for a serious philatelic research article, it is appropriate when the purpose is to entertain.

Acknowledgement: Thanks is due Les Munson, who first found the information pointing to Blanche's identity and shared it with me, as well as the possibility of Blanche being part of the Nancy Harts.

Endnotes

¹Catherine Anna "Blanche" McNeill Collier, Find A Grave Memorial ID 91503405, <https://www.findagrave.com/memori->



Historical marker in the town square of Summersville, West Virginia.

Figure 12. Georgia Historical Commission marker to the Revolutionary war heroine, Nancy Hart.



Figure 13. Nancy Hart Douglas, scout, guide and spy for the Confederacy, 1862

al/91503405/catherine-anna-collier/ Accessed November 26, 2017

²Lieut. Charles Bruce Collier, Find A Grave Memorial ID 6799957, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/6799957/Charles-Bruce-Collier/> Accessed November 26, 2017

³Charles B. Collier, Fold3.com <https://www.fold3.com/image/271/14192743>. Accessed November 26, 2017

⁴Twenty-Fourth Texas Cavalry, Texas State Historical Association. <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qkt35/> Accessed November 26, 2017

⁵Charles Bruce Collier, MyHeritage Family Trees. https://www.myheritage.com/names/charles_collier/ Accessed November 26, 2017

⁶Catherine Anna "Blanche" McNeill. WikiTree. <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/McNeil-666/> Accessed November 26, 2017

⁷Forrest Clark Johnson. LaGrange, Counties, Cities & Neighborhoods. New Georgia Encyclopedia. <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/counties-cities-neighborhoods/lagrange/> Accessed November 27, 2017

⁸LaGrange, Georgia. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LaGrange,_Georgia/ Accessed November 27, 2017

⁹Katherine Brackett, Nancy Harts Militia, New Georgia Encyclopedia, History & Archaeology, Civil War & Reconstruction, 1861-1877. <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/nancy-harts-militia/> Accessed November 27, 2017

ology/nancy-harts-militia/ Accessed November 27, 2017

¹⁰R. Chris Cleaveland, "Nancy Harts: Female Company Defends Against Raiders." Troup County Archives. Originally appeared in Civil War Times Illustrated, June 1994, pp. 44-45. http://www.trouparchives.org/index.php/history/nancy_harts_female_company_defends_against_raiders/ Accessed November 27, 2017

¹¹Courtesy National Geographic.

¹²Clay Ouzts. Nancy Hart (ca. 1735-1830) History & Archaeology, Revolution & Early Republic, 1775-1800. New Georgia Encyclopedia. <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/nancy-hart-ca-1735-1830/> Accessed November 27, 2017

¹³Appalachian Waters Scenic Byway, Attractions, Nancy Hart's Gravesite. <https://scenic39.com/?p=638/> Accessed November 27, 2017

¹⁴Nancy Hart Douglas, Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nancy_Hart_Douglas/ Accessed November 27, 2017

¹⁵Mary Stephen, "Confederate Spy! Rebel Hart Civil War Heroine!" <http://www.richwooders.com/net/nancy/hart.htm/> Accessed November 27, 2017

¹⁶Maggie MacLean, "Nancy Hart Douglas, Confederate Spy and Guerrilla Fighter," Civil War Women. <https://www.civilwarwomenblog.com/nancy-hart-douglas/> Accessed November 27, 2017