

Matilda “Tillie” Pierce

Tillie Pierce was 15 years old at the time of the battle of Gettysburg. She was the daughter of butcher James Pierce, age 56 and Margaret Pierce, age 54. With her parents and younger brother, Franklin, age 14, Tillie lived at 301 South Baltimore Street. She also had two older brothers, James and William. Tillie was a student at the Eyster School for Young Ladies, located at the corner of Washington and West High Streets.

Friday, June 26

Tillie was at her school when the Confederate soldiers could be seen entering the town.

What a horrible sight! There they were, human beings! clad almost in rags, covered with dust, riding wildly, pell-mell down the hill toward our home! shouting, yelling most unearthly, cursing, brandishing their revolvers, and firing right and left.

Tuesday, June 30

A crowd of ‘us girls’ were standing on the corner of Washington and High Streets as these soldiers passed by. Desiring to encourage them who, as were told, would before long be in battle, my sister started to sing the old war song “Our Union Forever.” As some of us did not know the whole of the piece we kept repeating the chorus.

Wednesday, July 1

Our neighbor, Mrs. Schriver, called at the house and said she would leave the town and to go to her father’s, who lived on the Taneytown road at the eastern slope of the Round Top. Mr. Schriver, her husband, was then serving in the Union army, so that under all the circumstances at this time surrounding her, Mrs. Schriver did not feel safe in the house. She required that I be permitted to accompany her.

We started on foot; the battle still going on. As we were passing along the Cemetery hill, our men were already planting cannon. They told us to hurry as fast as possible, that we were in great danger of being shot by the Rebels, whom they expected would shell toward us at any moment. We fairly ran to get out of this new danger.

Tillie and her party reach the Round Tops.

After the artillery had passed, infantry began coming. I soon saw that these men were very thirsty and would go to the spring which is on the north side of the house. Obtaining a bucket, I hastened to the spring, and there, with others, carried water to the moving column until the spring was empty.

Now the wounded began to come in greater numbers. Some limping, some with their heads and arms in bandages, some crawling, others carried in stretchers or brought in ambulances. Suffering, cast down and dejected, it was truly a pitiable gathering.

July 2

Several field officers came into the house and asked permission to go up on the roof in order to make observations. As I was not particularly engaged at the time and could be most readily spared, I was told to show them the way up. They opened a trap door and looked through the field glasses at the grand panorama spread out below.

By and by, they asked me if I would like to look. Having expressed my desire to do so, they gave me the glasses. The sight I then beheld was wonderful and sublime. The country for miles around seemed to be filled with troops; artillery moving here and there as fast as they could go, long lines of infantry forming into position, officers on horseback galloping hither and thither. It was a grand and awful spectacle.

July 3

Carriages were in waiting out at the barn, to take us off to a place of safety. When we reached the carriages, and were about to get in, a shell came screaming through the air directly overhead. I was so frightened that I gave a shriek and sprang into the barn. Even with their suffering the poor fellows could not help laughing at my terror and sudden appearance. One of them near me said: 'My child, if that had hit you, you would not have had time to jump'.

Tillie and the Schrivvers leave for a time, but then later return to the Weikert farm near the Round Tops.

When we entered the house, we found it also completely filled with the wounded. We hardly knew what to do or where to go. I remember that Mrs. Weikert went through the house and after searching awhile, brought all the muslin and linen she could spare. This we tore into bandages and gave them to the surgeons to bind up the poor soldiers' wounds.

By this time, amputating benches had been placed about the house. I saw them lifting the poor men upon it, then surgeons sawing and cutting off arms and legs, then again probing and picking bullets from the flesh. To the south of the house and just outside of the yard, I noticed a pile of limbs higher than the fence. It was a ghastly sight!

July 4

On the summit, in the valleys, everywhere we heard the soldiers hurraing for the victory that had been won. Many a dying hero's last breath carried a thanksgiving and praise to Him, who had watched over and directed the thoughts and movements of the last three days.

July 7

Tuesday July 7th, in company with Mrs. Schriver and her two children, I started off on foot to reach my home. The whole landscape had been changed and I felt as though we were in a strange and blighted land.

Aftermath – Tillie returns to her home on Baltimore Street.

The friends and relatives who came to minister to the wounded were, on account of the crowded condition of the hotels, compelled to ask accommodations from private citizens. I was frequently invited to accompany these visitors, and in this way often found myself by the bedside of the wounded. One lady who was stopping at our house (was) a Mrs. Greenly. Her son lay suffering at the hospital ... After the operation had been performed, her son sank rapidly. At last came the words: 'Mother! Dear Mother! Good bye! Good ...! Mother!' And all was over. Her darling boy lay before her in the embrace of death; but a mother's tender love had traced a peaceful smile upon his countenance.

Tillie Pierce was 15 at the time of the battle; she wrote and published her account of it in 1888. In the meantime, she married attorney Horace Alleman in 1871, moving with him to Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania. The Allemans had three children. Tillie died in 1941.