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## “SMALL BUT MIGHTY HOST” BENEFIT AND FUND RAISING DOLLS IN THE CIVIL WAR

Virginia Mescher

“The doll is one of the most imperious necessities, and at the same time one of the most charming instincts of female childhood. To care for, to clothe, to adorn, to dress, to undress, to dress over again, to teach, to scold a little, to rock the cradle, to put to sleep, imagine that something is somebody—all the future of woman is there. Even when musing and prattling, when making little wardrobes and little baby clothes, while sewing little dresses, little bodices, and little jackets, the child becomes a little girl, the little girl becomes a great girl, the great girl becomes a woman. The first baby takes the place of the last doll.”—Victor Hugo *Les Miserables*

“Leaves from Little Daughter’s Life,” April 1861,  
*Harper’s New Monthly*



We often read about how funds were raised in the civil war. Taxes were levied; branches of the United States Sanitary Commission (established in 1861) held fairs in many northern cities, north and south, individual people donated both money and supplies to their respective causes, women gave of their time for sewing, knitting, making comfort bags, writing letters, and numerous other “comforts from home” for their soldiers and children knitted, wrote letters, set up fairs, and sent their pennies. One “small but mighty host” that we don’t often read about also added to the total of donated funds. This small overlooked group really had no voice to promote their contributions but has to depend upon others for assistance to promote their overall place in history. Few remain to tell their stories and most remain nameless but that does not make their influence any less important. Even today they can still make a difference. Read on, learn their stories, find out how their legacy still lives, and how you can help them continue their tradition.

At one time or another most young girls have had dolls. They are a universal fixture and most of the time unless one is a collector or has a daughter who loves dolls, one does not pay much attention to dolls. In the 1860s many types of dolls were available, anything from the humble rag doll to the expensive wax and china dolls; there were homemade dolls and store-bought dolls from Europe and most little girls had a beloved doll, no matter how humble or elaborate they might have been.

This love of dolls worked well with fund raising. At the civil war fund-raising or benefit fairs, there were booths that just sold dolls; children's booths that sold toys that included dolls, and there were donations of dolls that came with and without complete wardrobes. Raffles were held for more elaborate dolls and those with extensive wardrobes. [It is unknown if the raffles were like modern raffles but there was a great deal of controversy on the moral correctness, despite the fact the raffles were for a good cause.] The *Record for the Metropolitan Fair* stated that "Shares for a wax doll sold for \$1." This may be an indication that they may have been much like our modern raffles but no additional information could be found. It is unclear as to the total amount of money raised by the dolls but by reading the individual accounts one can only imagine how much may have been collected in all. Cashin, included in her book, one account of the 1864 Baltimore Fair that stated that the "Children's Table with toys and dolls raised \$700." Most of the recorded amounts for the sales of individual dolls were in the hundreds of dollars but two brought more than \$1000 by being raffled twice or in the south, the inflated price was more than \$1000. A few of those dolls exist in museums and private collections and some tell us fascinating stories of creativity, sacrifice, generosity, love and yes, wealth.

The United States Sanitary Commission was established in June 1861. The organization collected goods to send to the soldiers to supplement what was not provided by the army. Many items were donated but funds were needed to purchase what was lacking. One method to raise money was the fair — large and elaborate ones which took many months to plan. A number of these were held in cities across northern states and the first was held in Lowell, MA in February 1863. The United States Sanitary Commission sanctioned fairs were held in Lowell, MA, Chicago, IL (2), Portland, ME, Boston, MA (2), Rochester, NY, Cincinnati, OH, Brooklyn and Long Island, NY, Albany, NY, Cleveland, OH, Poughkeepsie, NY, Buffalo, NY, Troy, NY, Louisville, KY, New York, NY, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, MD, St. Louis, MO, Pittsburgh, PA, Philadelphia, PA (2), Dubuque, IA, Springfield, MA, St. Paul, MN, and Milwaukee, WI with multiple fairs being held at some locations as noted. Many smaller fairs, not under the auspices of the Sanitary Commission, were held all over the north. Most of the fund-raising or benefit dolls were sold or raffled at Sanitary Commission Fairs. Of these fairs, it is probable that all of them had doll sales but the following fairs are associated with surviving dolls — Baltimore, Zanesville, OH [this fair has not been documented], Boston, New



From a CDV of dolls at a quilting party. Image taken to support April 1864 New York Sanitary Commission Fair.

York (2), Philadelphia (2), Brooklyn/Long Island, Chicago, and Poughkeepsie. Some of them are in private collections but a majority are in museums. Unfortunately not all are on display but photographs and descriptions of some of them may be found in various doll magazines and books. The known surviving dolls are only a small portion of those which were sold to raise money for soldiers on both sides of the war.



Image from *The Tribute Book*, 1865

Over the past 140 years, much history has been lost about these existing dolls but by sheer luck and a great deal of love for these bits of china or wax, fabric and lace, a little or sometimes a lot is known about these treasures — oh, if the dolls could talk and tell us their stories.

## THE DOLLS

Most of the accounts of dolls at the fairs did not specify the type of doll or even warrant any further description; in fact, the display booth was often given more importance than the dolls. A majority of the Sanitary Fairs and ladies' fairs had a speciality doll booth — “The Old Woman Who Lived in A Shoe” was a common site at the Sanitary Commission fairs. It was usually a display of a large wooden shoe with a child dressed as an old woman and dolls of all sorts were scattered on and around the shoe with all the dolls being for sale. Nellie Grant, daughter of General Grant, was probably one of most famous children to play the part of the old woman and she participated in the St. Louis Fair in 1864. One such booth, at the Great Central Fair, held in Philadelphia in 1864, displayed the following motto in gilt letters above the giant shoe:

“I hope you all know me, little dears.  
I bring you some hundreds of volunteers;  
For their country, they come, not to die, but to be sold;  
I am willing to give all my children for gold.  
A mother most tender, a patriot true,  
I sacrifice all for the red, white and blue.”

Other dolls have been found and documented; there were child dolls with appropriate child-type clothing and accessories, while others were lady dolls with grown-up clothing and only one has been documented as a “baby doll.” All were either wax or china dolls, one had a composition head and two were of unspecified materials. The sizes of the dolls differed and two were sold as “boy” dolls. A bride and groom doll set was also among those sold.

A number of the dolls came with a “trousseau” or large collection of clothing plus a trunk or two

and these dolls were often named “Flora M’Flimsey” after the poem by William Butler, titled, *Nothing to Wear: An Episode of City Life*. [The full length poem/book is available to read on Google Books by searching “Nothing To Wear.”] Flora, of the poem, was a fashionable young girl who went on shopping sprees and had to have the latest in fashions and all the accessories that went with her wardrobe; yet she cried that she “had nothing to wear.” Flora became almost a cult figure of her time and appeared in newspaper articles in debates with “Booby Brooks,” a similar inane fictional figure. Women that were overly concerned with fashion were called “Flora M’Flimsey’s” but the term was also used to describe someone with an extensive wardrobe.

According to an article by Ann Bahar, a Flora doll was sold at the 1864 Philadelphia Sanitary Fair for \$250 to Mrs. Henry Drayton. The doll was originally purchased, in 1863 by Mary Kuhn who arranged for her wardrobe and accessories to be made and donated by numerous Philadelphia dressmakers and merchants. The lady-doll is twenty-six inches high with a bisque head painted with oil paints, the arms and legs are wood with a cloth body and she also has inset glass eyes and has a human hair wig. [Another source indicated the doll’s head and arms were composite which was papier-mâché that was painted and then covered in wax.] Her current wardrobe and accessories are extensive, containing one hundred and fifty-one items plus a leather and wood trunk. The remaining trousseau (some items have been lost over the years) includes, eight dresses, a skating costume, a wool paletote, under sleeves, chemisettes, wire hoop (made by M. A. Jones, a Philadelphia shirt-maker), two petticoats, three pairs of split drawers, three chemises, five nightgowns, a bed jacket, eight handkerchiefs (three monogrammed with “Flora” and five were fringed), a robe, a wrapper, three corsets, a raincoat, a black umbrella, a white parasol, leather monogrammed purse, two pairs leather shoes, ice-skates (made by Clarenbach & Herder, a Philadelphia cutler), a feather fan, gloves, a toilet box (containing a toothbrush, comb, hairbrush, key) jewelry, two photograph albums (made by J. E. Tilton & Company), calling cards and monogrammed note paper (printed by Edward Mason & S. H. Fulton of Philadelphia), stockings and knitted red wool socks, slippers, Berlin work bag, cdv (taken by Winderoth & Taylor of Philadelphia) of Flora in a skating costume, six bonnets, a straw hat, hair net with velvet on top, a beaver riding hat (made by Warburton, a Philadelphia hatmaker), doll stands and a wicker needlework basket containing a pincushion, scissors, and needles. [Part of the extensive wardrobe is missing because the *carte de viste* (abbreviated cdv which is a small sized photograph popular in the time period) shows Flora in a skating complete with a fur trimmed jacket, fur cuffs, and muff, none of which are listed in the existing wardrobe. Also, a riding hat is listed but no riding habit or costume or accessories are listed.] The doll was donated by Mrs. J. Madison Taylor to the Historical Society of Philadelphia in 1945 and is now held in the collection of the Atwater-Kent Museum in Philadelphia. Flora’s role in fund raising did not end with the civil war; she was used as an exhibit to raise money during World Wars I and II. From time to time, she was also part of other doll exhibits but, although she has been professionally cleaned and has had some restoration, she is not on display at this time. The listing of Flora’s current wardrobe as well as some of the information about the doll was courtesy of the Atwater-Kent Museum.

Another Flora doll was shown in the April 23, 1864 issue of *Harper's Weekly*. The article described the accompanying illustration. "The view entitled 'Flora M'Flimsey' on this page represents a Doll contributed to the Fair [New York Metropolitan Fair] by a lady and her daughter, with twelve complete sets of dresses, etc., all of the finest description, and made entirely by the hands of the contributor. The wardrobe thus provided for the miserable Flora includes every garment and accessory the richest taste or heaviest purse could suggest, and yet the whole is offered at a price which would not, probably, pay for the material at the present rates." No additional information could be found about this doll.



Illustration from *Harper's Weekly*

According to Wendy Lavitt, the Litchfield, Connecticut Historical Society is supposed to own a Flora McFlimsey doll that was purchased at the Milwaukee, Wisconsin Fair (1865) but they have no record of a doll meeting that particular description in their collection catalogue. The contact at the historical society did mention that the collection database will be updated in the future and she will contact me if any further information is found.

*The Boatswain's Whistler*, one of the newsletters for 1863 Boston Sanitary Fair, reported that a "Flora McFlimsey" doll was sold for \$300. It was a twenty-one inch china lady-doll and was sold to or won by Annie Kelley. The doll was accompanied by a doll-sized Saratoga trunk which contained thirty-five items including five dresses, corsets, a riding habit with accessories, and a toilet case and toilet articles. This doll is supposed to be owned by the Newport, Rhode Island Historical Society. I have contacted the Historical Society for information on the doll but have received no response.

Most of the dolls are nameless and can only be described by their collectors or by the museum that owns them. Others are lucky enough have specific names such as Rose Percy and Ethel Newcome which will be discussed later in greater detail.

According to doll collectors and authors, Dorothy and Evelyn Coleman, a thirteen-inch swivel headed china infant doll, with painted blond hair and blue eyes and was dressed in infant clothing of the 1860s (long dress, two petticoats, belly band, and diaper). The doll was auctioned at the Baltimore Sanitary Fair. [The Colemans state the date of the fair was 1861 but this date is confusing since the Baltimore Fair was held in 1864 and the original owner just stated that the doll was sold at the Baltimore Sanitary Fair and indicated no date.] The doll was called "Little Mac" in a letter

(dated 1942 and written by the doll's original owner's daughter) of provenance that the Colemans acquired when Claire Hallard Fawcett sold it to them in 1965. The doll was supposed to look like an infant version of George Washington and according to Ms. Fawcett it was exhibited, along with a collection of other dolls "in a large wooden shoe" and Lincoln was quite taken with the exhibit. This is the only infant doll and one of the male dolls that have survived and has been documented with ownership. A drawing of the doll was shown in the Fawcett book and a photograph of the doll was included in the Coleman's *Collector's Book of Doll Clothes*.

Another doll that Ms. Fawcett documented was sold at the Zanesville, Ohio Sanitary Fair. [I have not been able to find any information about a Sanitary Fair held in Zanesville, Ohio but it is possible that she meant the Great Western Sanitary Fair that was held in Cincinnati, Ohio in December 1863.] The doll is a twelve-inch china head doll with center parted hair (indicates that at least the head might have originally been a lady doll and the shape of the body is that of a lady doll, with a distinct waist and hips) but it was dressed as a Union soldier. It was supposed to have been purchased by General William Ball for his son, Robert Edward, but apparently his daughter appropriated the doll. In the Fawcett book, the history of the soldier doll was recounted along with the subsequent owners, who had, in turn, almost loved the doll to death as well as being changed from him into a her. [The dates of the written history of the doll do not match up with the dates of the battles and known locations of General Ball so much of the doll's history is probably supposition or inaccurate family lore. Ball enlisted in the 122<sup>nd</sup> Ohio as a Colonel in October 1862 and was not promoted to a General until October 1864. The doll was supposed to have been purchased around the time of the battle of Antietam which occurred in 1862 before Ball enlisted and the Cincinnati Fair was held in 1863.] The mother of the current owner, (at the time of the writing of the book) Claire Fawcett, restored and dressed the doll in a Union uniform. No current information is known about this doll, other than what was written in the book which was published in 1949.

Fund-raising dolls, with wardrobes, sold or auctioned at Sanitary Fairs, were not always called "Flora McFlimsey." In the collection of the Chicago Historical Society is a twenty-one inch wax doll that was dressed and donated to the second Sanitary Fair (1865) by the J. H. Dunham family. The doll has a trunk and a wardrobe consisting of a cape, a complete set of underpinnings, three dresses, a jacket and skirt, and shoes. It was given to the Chicago Historical Society by Miss Mary V. Dunham in 1924. The above information was courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society.

A doll from the Brooklyn - Long Island Fair (1864) deserves special mention. She does not have a name or much of a documented history but the doll has an extensive surviving wardrobe, which is partially pictured in *The Collector's Book of Doll Clothes*. She is an eighteen-inch china lady doll with blue eyes and has a black natural-hair wig instead of just painted hair. Her body is cloth and her arms are tan kid. Eliza Lefferts, a professional dressmaker from New York, dressed the doll and it was purchased by Ira Downs for an unknown amount. The Colemans described the wardrobe in great detail and also provided full size patterns for some of the clothing. The clothing was both hand and machine sewn and a majority of the seams were felled. The remaining wardrobe includes five dresses, two bonnets, a hat, a long paletot, a velvet jacket, a challis cape, a dozen items of underpinnings consisting of cotton petticoats, flannel petticoats, a cage crinoline, chemises, and drawers, stockings, socks, nightgowns, chemisettes and undersleeves, and a corset, a parasol, leather

boots, leather slippers, a tippet and muff (made of canton flannel embroidered in black wool to simulate ermine), two knitted sontags (called mantillas in the book), a knitted shawl, a crocheted scarf, a handkerchief, a toilet box containing scissors, combs, brushes and a trunk. In 1924, it was lent to the Brooklyn Museum by Mrs. Louise Lefferts Downs (daughter of the original dresser of the doll) and is still in their collection. According to the museum, the doll is not on display but in storage and is no longer available for viewing even with a special request. They have no additional information other than what was in the Coleman book.

## MYSTERY DOLLS

Primary sources can sometimes provide details on benefit dolls that doll collectors have overlooked. In my research for this article, I went down a great many rabbit holes searching for any tidbit on the subject of fund raising or benefit dolls. A 1912 article caught my attention: “The evening closed with the auctioning of an historic doll, made during the Civil War and first sold at a sanitary fair in the aid of union armies. The bidding was spirited, Mrs. Marshall Field finally secured the doll by paying one hundred and eighty dollars.” Unfortunately this morsel did nothing to answer any questions but only whetted the appetite and created more curiosity. No additional information was found about this particular doll but I do not think it was the same doll that is owned by the Chicago Historical Society.

Brief references of two additional dolls from New York Sanitary Fairs were found. In a 1954 *New York Times* article there was a picture and excerpt in an article on “Dolls of Long Ago.” The article described an exhibit of antique dolls at the Museum of the City of New York. One vignette was depicted as “A handsome landau was about to deposit its china bride and groom. The pair was made to be sold at the Sanitary Fair — the Civil War equivalent of the Red Cross — to raise money for the wounded.” There was no picture of the pair and after contacting the museum, I have not had a response from them with current information on the dolls; if they were owned by the museum or if they were on loan at the time of the exhibit — fifty-three years is a long time to retain exhibit records.

Not all sources are reliable! I thought I had another lead on a New York Sanitary Fair doll, with White House connections. A 1924 article from *Youth's Companion*, which had been taken from an *Atlantic Monthly* article written by Julia Taft Bayne told the story of a doll dressed as a New York Zouave soldier that had been sent to the White House at the end of the New York Sanitary Fair. The doll, named Jack, had been charged with sleeping at his post or desertion, was to be shot and the children request a pardon from Lincoln. He complied with writing the following on official note paper, “The doll Jack is pardoned.” and signed his name. Upon further research and reading additional accounts of the story, including the original account of the incident written by Bayne, I found that there were flaws in the 1924 article. The event occurred in the fall of 1861 and the both Sanitary Fairs in New York were held in 1864. Julia mentioned both Tad and Willie Lincoln in her account and Willie died in 1862. There are also accounts of Mary Lincoln having a soldier doll made for Willie but that has not been documented and other accounts of the same incident just mention a doll dressed as a soldier. I contacted the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and they

do not have the doll “Jack” and there is no record as to what happened to the doll; they also do not have any documentation as to where the doll originated. This was a learning experience that should be well remembered — always check one’s sources and double and triple check them if there is any doubt.

Some sources are promising but leave one wondering where to go next. In my research, I found secondary source reference of a doll, trunk, and clothing that was sold at the Albany Army Relief Bazaar in 1864, was exhibited at the Albany Institute of Art in 2001 but no additional information is known about the doll. I contacted the Albany Institute of Art but have not received a response. Still, another source led nowhere; a doll from the Poughkeepsie fair was supposed to have survived but I have not been able to locate any information about this doll other than it existed at the time of the writing at the time of the doll collector’s book. Sometimes there will be a reference or picture in a doll collectors’ book but it becomes a dead end because either the book was published so many years ago and the author is dead or the original collector is dead and the collection has been sold or dispersed. This is the case of the next doll. In Catherine Christopher’s 1949 book there was a picture of a “Liberty Doll” that was identified as being sold at the 1864 Boston Sanitary Fair; it was a china headed doll that had been made into a door stop with the lower part of the body being a bag filled with sand to weight the bottom. Other than the picture and the brief description, that was the only information given about the doll. Oh, research can be so rewarding and frustrating!

## TWO MEMORABLE DOLLS: ETHEL NEWCOME and ROSE PERCY

Ethel Newcome is one of the named dolls that has survived. The doll was important enough to be mentioned in *The Tribute Book*. “Ethel Newcome, a doll so perfect in demeanor and so gorgeous in wardrobe that she was sold twice, and the money was not refunded once.” Ethel was named after “Ethel Newcome” in William Makepeace Thackeray’s novel, *The Newcomes: Memoirs of a Most Respectable Family*, which was supposed to be somewhat biographical. The Ethel in the novel was the thought to be the “perfect woman, nobly planned to guide, to counsel, and to command.”

Ethel, the doll, was presented to society at Great Central Fair that was held in Philadelphia in June 1864. She a poured wax lady doll (I have not been able to ascertain the size of the doll) initially purchased by Mary Cadwalader in Paris. Her professionally made clothing was donated as were all the accessories. (There is a complete list of her clothing and accessories but it was not published in either of the articles that I have read which were written by Ms. Jennylou Scheolwer and I have not been able to establish contact with the author or the owner of doll.) From the pictures in articles, Ethel’s wardrobe consisted of red and green plaid taffeta dress, a white silk dress trimmed with plaid ribbon and has a matching filchu, a white afternoon dress with a scarlet jacket trimmed with black velvet, a cream and plaid silk day dress trimmed with velvet braid patterns, a pink silk ball gown, a complete riding ensemble, a cage crinoline, ice skates, jewelry and ivory domino game (made by Mr. Frank Heseltine of Philadelphia), coin purse, fans, spectacles and a case, opera glasses, note paper, toilet items of brushes, combs, powder boxes and puffs, calling cards and a case, a traveling sewing kit complete with accessories, complete sets of underpinnings, corsets, handkerchiefs and



handkerchief cases, gloves, garters, furs (made by F. A. Fleishmann Fancy Furs of Philadelphia), shoes, bonnets and hats and two steamer trunks.

This doll has the honor of being at least one of the dolls sold/won twice at Sanitary Fairs; the first winner was a bachelor, William Chancellor who when he found out that he had won, was shocked at his prize and even refused to look at the doll. Mr. Robert Sturgis quickly paid another \$500, the amount the first raffle raised, and Ethel found a new home with his young daughter, Henrietta. Ethel apparently lived a satisfying life with her new family. In 1897 Ethel graced the public with her presence at a benefit for the Howard Hospital and for the occasion, her original purchaser and organizer of her wardrobe, Mary Cadwalader, now Mrs. S. Weir Mitchell, wrote an autobiography of Ethel which included a six-verse poem, titled, "The Two Ethels." The poem compared the "life" of the doll Ethel with that of the character Ethel in the Thackery novel. [Both the autobiography and poem may be found in Ms. Schoelwer's article in *Antique Doll Collector*.] The doll has made several appearances at doll shows and displays and is currently owned by the Ingersoll family of Philadelphia.

Rose Percy is the second named doll and holds an important place in my heart. She is the doll who, several years ago, roused my interest in benefit dolls but is important in her own right. Rose currently resides at the American Red Cross in Washington, D. C. and is the only one of these dolls that I have visited. Her story is as remarkable as the other ones told earlier and is all the more personal since I have seen and handled her. It was truly an honor to view Rose and be allowed to photograph her and most of her wardrobe and accessories.

Rose Percy was raffled at the New York Sanitary Fair in April 1864 and was displayed seated on a doll-sized sofa surrounded by her wardrobe. Of the known amount of money that other dolls raised, Rose brought the most; more than \$1200 because she was raffled twice — the first time she was won by one of New York City's Mrs. Astor (the first amount raised is unknown); a second raffle raised \$1200 and the winner was unidentified. The second winner returned Rose to the school who had donated the doll and her wardrobe to the Fair and they gave her to Dr. Peters and his daughter, Bertha. In 1920, Bertha, then Mrs. Horace H. Chittenden placed the doll on permanent loan to the American Red Cross and in 1954, Bertha's son and daughter-in-law gave Rose to the Red Cross.

The doll, a twenty-three inch English poured wax doll, has blue eyes and blond hair. Rather than being a lady doll, like Ethel Newcome, she is a child-doll and has a young girl's wardrobe. Rose was dressed by the students of Miss Ogden Hoffman's girl's boarding school in New York and it took over a year to complete her wardrobe, which was both machine and hand sewn. Rose, being a fashionable young lady, has a complete wardrobe that still contains many items; it is thought that there were many more items and that some may have been lost over the years but what is left is still impressive.

Her current wardrobe (some of the clothing may not have been part of the original contents but there is no real way to know what clothing was added later) consists of: a yellow silk taffeta dress (all the dresses were short sleeved and came to about mid-calf on the doll) trimmed with black velvet ribbon, a white cotton pique dress, a white cotton dress trimmed with lace and plaid taffeta ribbon,

a printed cotton calico dress with patch pockets, a green silk taffeta dress paired with a sheer muslin chemisette with short puffed sleeves, a purple taffeta dress trimmed with black bobbinett lace, red wool dress trimmed with black velvet ribbon, blue wool dress, magenta silk taffeta party dress trimmed with silk velvet ribbon, black and white plaid wool dress, blue velvet party dress trimmed with lace and short sheer sleeves; skating outfit with a skirt, white waist, and fur jacket, a wool hooded cape, three sets of closed drawers and tucked chemises, two chemisettes with short sleeves, two chemisettes with short sleeves, two cotton petticoats trimmed with tucks and embroidery, wool flannel petticoat with embroidery and van dyked edge, hand-knit wool petticoat, cage crinoline, cotton nightgown, blue and white wool wrapper, three pairs of cotton knit socks, a pair of red wool knit stockings, ice skates, four pairs of leather boots, crocheted bedroom slippers, a pair of long gaiters, an ermine tippet, muff, cuffs, and cap (donated by New York furriers, Gunther), a box of toilet items including brushes, combs, toothbrush, shoehorn, and buttonhook), a silver powder box and puff, hairnet, small bag containing hairpins, jewelry (donated by Tiffany & Co.), engraved stationery (notepaper, envelopes, and calling cards and case all donated by Tiffany & Co.), ivory dominos in a wooden box, jump rope with ivory handles, a traveling rug with rolled up with leather straps, handkerchief case and three handkerchiefs, six miniature red leather-covered books, a small ivory-covered *carte de viste* album and a larger leather-bound *carte de viste* album [both of these still being miniature albums], a leather-bound travel album with scenes of Paris, a small sewing or visiting basket (holding a needle case, thimble, mirror, pincushion, and a handkerchief printed with a pattern waiting to be embroidered), a feather fan, a straw hat, a chip bonnet, a velvet bonnet, a blue and white silk Marie Stuart bonnet, and a black lace bonnet with pink trim, a leather coin purse containing three half-dimes, a leather purse having a chain, and a sectional leather case.

Unfortunately, the American Red Cross Museum is currently closed and Rose Percy is not on display. The Red Cross is trying to raise funds to assist in Rose’s conservation and her future display when the museum reopens. Financial assistance is always appreciated for the ongoing restoration of Rose Percy and the conservation of her wardrobe. Please read the “The Tradition Still Continues” section to find out how you can help.

Samples of Rose’s Wardrobe and Accessories



Rose and her “Standard” Dress she wears when she is at home (in her box). Her hair is human hair.



A Shear Dress with Plaid Belt and Accessories



One of Rose’s Bonnets. Note the ruching around the edge and remember the bonnet is small enough to fit Rose.



Rose’s Fan with a modern quarter for size reference

## THE HEART BREAK

When one thinks of dolls, a carefree childhood comes to mind — one with no worries or tears; no sorrow or loss; only time for play and joy with time to dream of “happily ever after.” War does not usually enter into the picture but it creates a time for sacrifice and children were not exempt. This next account tears at the heart strings and to picture the event makes even more of an impression. The event was recorded in the *History of the North-Western Soldier's Fair*:

“There was no end to the contribution of the children. . . . One little girl brought a beautiful wax doll handsomely dressed, which had been carefully kept — a parting gift from her only brother, who was killed by guerrillas. With a lingering, wistful look, she laid it on the counter of the booth, and sighing, turned away. ‘Don’t give your doll to the Fair, my child,’ said the lady in charge, who saw the sad look of the little one, ‘if it makes you feel badly.’ ‘Oh, no; *that* doesn’t make me feel badly; but I can’t help crying to think I shall never see my brother again.’”

I am sure that this is not the only instance where a beloved doll was given up in the service of the country. Not all were donated to fairs but there are several accounts of dolls being tucked into soldiers boxes, often with notes attached. These small bits of cloth and china or wood brought the thought of home to lonely soldiers and showed them that even the little ones cared for them.

## SOUTHERN DOLLS

Very little has been written about fund raising dolls in the south but in research, some snippets have been found. Since there is very little information on southern ladies’ or soldiers’ relief fairs available, it is no surprise that information about fund raising dolls is so difficult to locate. Combining the two topics, neither of which have a wealth of information, provides very few resources but some was information on dolls were found.

At the Ladies’ Fair, held in Charleston, South Carolina in May 1862, there was a “Daughter of the Confederacy, a beautiful, large doll in costume.” Unfortunately, the *Charleston Courier* included no additional information and no other subsequent information has been located.

Not all dolls were part of fairs but they could still raise funds for charity. The following was taken from the December 26, 1863 issue of the *National Democrat* of Little Rock, Arkansas. “New Year's Gift.—Mr. Palmer, at the Anthony House, has in charge one of the most beautiful dolls we ever saw, belonging to the Sisters of Mercy. It will be raffled off as soon as the number of chances are taken. Tickets can be purchased from Mr. Palmer. The cause is one of charity and ought to be patronized. If you wish to make a nice New Year's Gift to some nice little girl take a chance for the doll.”

While most fund raising dolls were store-bought and were dressed either commercially or by loving hands, some dolls came from the heart and which made the gift all the more precious. This last excerpt came from the August 20, 1864 issue of the Augusta, Georgia *Daily Constitutionalist*:

“The ladies who gave the entertainment on yesterday at Col. Davison’s Grove take pleasure in acknowledging the liberal contributions sent to them to furnish the refreshment tables—grab-bag, &c., and mention in particular, the case of Miss Lizzie Munnerlyn, aged 10 years, who presented her magnificent wax doll, which added \$135 to the fund. The amount realized will exceed \$1000, and will be appropriated for such articles of food and other necessaries as the wounded and sick soldiers most need, and will be dispensed to them in person by the association.”

Emma Le Conte was very indignant about the prices charged for the dolls at the 1865 Columbia, South Carolina fair. In her diary she wrote, “Some beautiful imported wax dolls, not more than twelve inches high, raffled for five hundred dollars, and one very large doll I heard was to raffle for two thousand. ‘Why’ as Uncle John says, ‘one could buy a live Negro baby for that.’ How people can afford to buy toys at such a time as this!” No additional information could be found concerning the large doll at the Columbia fair.

Dolls not only were raffled to raise money; they worked. They were used to smuggle contraband and medicine through the blockade and into the South. After consulting with the Museum of the Confederacy, I was told it does not have any benefit dolls in their collection of dolls, but they do have at least two examples of smuggling dolls, Lucy Ann and Nina but their stories are for another time.

### DOLLY’S DRESSMAKERS

Although several of the girls’ activity books had directions for making large and small dolls and research has indicated that all the documented dolls sold at the Sanitary and Ladies’ Fairs were commercially or professionally made but that did not always apply to the clothing. Some of the more elaborate wardrobes were made by professional dressmakers who donated the materials and their time; sometimes girls’ schools or individual girls made the clothing.

Making doll clothing had long been a way to teach a young girl to sew. She could learn to sew and garment construction and have something to show for her work such as the woman and her daughter who made the clothes for the doll featured in *Harper’s Weekly*. Sometimes entire girls’ schools participated in dressing a single doll, as in the case of Rose Percy, or dressed several dolls. In the *Record of the Metropolitan Fair* the following was noted. “Five little girls belonging to the Brick Church Mission School, prepared a doll with a complete set of dresses is for sale for \$10.” There was no other information found about this doll but it was probably listed among the overall donations of the fair and has been lost in time.

An article titled, "What Little Children Can Do for the War," related a story of two small girls, in Philadelphia, who held a "fair" in their bedroom. "The admission fee was three cents. They had little dolls' things of their own manufactures, dressed some china dolls, made pin-cushions, book-marks, had candy-bags, etc., and with the aid of some cakes and fruit, by way of refreshments, realized the sum of \$1.50." The newspaper story went on to relate that the little girls were going to return to their home in Washington and donate the money and other items to soldiers in hospitals. This was just one example of the contributions of a children's fair and most of them sold dolls.



A Children's Fair illustrated in The Tribute Book. The engraving includes what appears to be a doll just to the left of the head of the girl on the far side of the table.

Dressing dolls had a benefit to all girls; it was a life lesson that could be fun in childhood and would serve her in adulthood. Louisa May Alcott wrote of her skills as a doll dressmaker. “At twelve I set up as dolls’ dressmaker, with my sign out and wonderful models in my window. All the children employed me, and my turbans were the rage at one time, to the great dismay of the neighbors’ hens, who were hotly hunted down that I might tweak out their downiest feathers to adorn the dolls’ headgear.”

Many girls’ activity books had doll-making instruction in them as well as advice columns for mothers. *Godey’s* published a series of “How to Dress a Doll” in 1860 but it was copied directly from the book by the same name or a portion of *The Girl’s Own Toymaker*, although *Godey’s* did leave out some of the sections included in the longer publications.

*How to Dress a Doll* stated in the introduction:

“This [dressing a doll] is not only pleasant employment, but it is extremely useful; to be able to make your doll’s clothes, you will acquire the knowledge of making your own dresses when you are older . . . Sewing is particularly a ladies’ accomplishment, and it cannot be too early practiced or encouraged. Cutting out requires more art and skill, but in making doll’s clothes experience may be gained, and a little practice will soon enable any one to make them neatly and properly; so that you will thus gratify your own taste, and afford amusement your juvenile companions and friend.”

Not only were there instructions for making dolls’ clothing in activity books, there were books and magazines published that focused only on the making of dolls’ clothes and provided patterns. One of the first, was *Dolly’s Dressmaker*, published in 1860 (No. 1), 1862 (No. 2), and No. 3 (1876) were originally written in German and translated into English by Mme. Clara de Chatelain. The booklets contained full sized patterns for an eighteen-inch doll and provided extensive instructions for constructions the garments and adjusting the patterns to fit individual dolls; the last edition, published in 1896 was written only in English was a combination of doll clothes patterns and paper dolls with costumes. Also, in 1863, the *Journal des Demoiselles* started publishing *La Poupée Modèle* or *Gazette de la Poupée* which was a monthly publication that included dolls’ clothing with patterns. Apparently it was very popular and various editions were published until the end of the nineteenth century. Both *Godey’s* and *Peterson’s* published patterns for doll clothing and knitted items in 1868 and 1874.



Cover of *Dolly’s Dressmaker*

*The Household* published the following article:

“We believe the great secret of teaching needlework to children, is to let every little girl to have a doll baby, or a number of them even, and all the odds and ends of lace, and lawn, and silk, and ribbons, and bits of cambric ruffling and velvets. It is surprising how a little girl will contrive and manage and conjure up pretty, and wonderful things, out of the refuse and waste of a mother’s work basket and bureau drawers. From an old heap of stuff, a troublesome accumulation given to a child, I have seen a family of four dolls, Fannie, Nellie Grant, Nettie Elders, and a rosy creole boy doll, named Eugene, dressed charmingly, and in excellent taste. Such jaunty hats with drooping plumes and nodding feathers, and hoops and trailing dresses, and cloaks, and furs as the girl dolls did wear! Their gallant attendant stood stiffly beside them, hat in hand, with all due deference, in wide pantaloons, flashy vest, and short coat.

The economy and ingenuity that belong to ripe womanhood manifest themselves in little girlhood, with proper surroundings to bring them out; those are estimable traits in the character of a good and useful woman. Let them have separate baskets and boxes to keep their own things in, a needle book, and spools of thread of different colors, and all the refuse bits you can spare. Teach them how to cut little doll dresses by patterns, by measuring around the waist, across the shoulders and breast; and by the time a girl is sixteen years old she can cut out and make her own dresses. She will have acquired all the art without the tyranny of being taught. There will be on wonderful mystery then.”

Mary Hungerford included the following statement in her article on “Dressing Dolls”:

“But for the great reform in dressing dolls we owe thanks to the great Sanitary Fair which was held during the war, and which had a whole large department devoted to dolls and their belongings. Seven hundred of these dolls were dressed with sensible removable clothes, and sold so readily that people began to understand what little imitation mothers really wanted, and ever since then the spangled and beruffled beings whose finery cannot be taken off without the help of scissors have been left to pine in the show-cases of the toy dealers.

The little girl who cuts and makes all the clothes her dolls wear learns very valuable lessons and will be able to do many things for herself when she grows up.”

One would think that dolls dressed by young girls would have relatively simple and plain clothing but this was not the case the Rose Percy. As the pictures have shown, her wardrobe was elaborate and well made. The clothing that we were able to examine was well made, being both hand and machine sewn. The girl’s school was an exclusive one and it would be expected that quality work would be taught but this was exceptional and the attention to detail was extraordinary.

Most often professional dressmakers provided the elaborate wardrobes for the Sanitary Fair dolls. I have not been able to closely study any other dolls and their wardrobe other than Rose but I would

imagine that the construction would be on the level of the best dressmakers of the time period. The furs and leathers were donated by local merchants as were the jewelry and stationery. The miniature toys, small books, toilet items, photograph albums and the like were exact in every detail and if not shown to scale, one would not know that they were in miniature.

As Mary Hungerford stated, an industry grew which was devoted to making dolls' accessories so it would not have been that unusual to find such a wide variety of items that accompanied some of the Fair dolls. After seeing all the doll-sized accouterments ranging from spectacles to toys, I began to notice accessories that are seen with similar dolls not associated with Sanitary Fairs. The Toy Museum in Old Salem, North Carolina has an example of a doll and her accessories, which include a chamber pot, hair combs, and eating utensils. *Lady Dolls of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* has many pictures of examples of the accessories that were available for purchase and also includes detailed pictures of fashions worn by the dolls. The Coleman book included a list of 148 different accessories (they indicated that the list was incomplete) considered "necessary" for the well-equipped doll. Unfortunately, no manufacture's inventory or a complete price list for 1860-1865 could be located but one advertisement from the mid-1870s was found. It listed accessories for dolls that included powder boxes and puffs, parasols, fans, shawls, stockings, various styles of shoes and boots, fur sets, lace collar and cuff sets, handkerchiefs, garters, ribbons, underpinnings, wrappers, bonnets, and even a baby's nursing bottle. The prices ranged from ten cents for a swansdown powder puff to \$1.50 for a Paisley shawl. The modern "Barbie doll" craze with all the doll accessories is not something that was just created in the mid-twentieth century; the seeds were planted over a century ago.

### THE TRADITION STILL CONTINUES

The purpose of this article was not only to let people know about the fund raising or benefit dolls of the civil war but also to advise the readers of current opportunities where they can still assist in a similar tradition of supporting worthy causes.

Dolls are still continuing their roll in fund raising. Currently, Elizabeth Stewart Clark has donated an eighteen-inch china lady-doll (almost identical to the one from the Brooklyn Museum), named Civility. She is traveling around the country and various people or groups are contributing to her wardrobe and accessories; by the time Civility's journey ends in September 2007, she will be a well-dressed lady with a complete "trousseau" and many accessories in the tradition of the Sanitary Fair dolls. Raffle tickets may be purchased through Elizabeth Clark's web site at <http://www.elizabethstewartclark.com/DC/Civility/About.htm> or from those individuals or groups who are participating in Civility's travels. The money raised from the Civility raffle will be donated to the Civil War Preservation Trust which uses the money to purchase civil war battlefield land that is in peril of being lost to development.

If you live near the Washington, D.C. area, you will have a chance to take part in a period-style Ladies' Fair and meet Civility; she will be visiting the Washington, D.C., area in September 2007. The Atlantic Guard and Soldiers' Aid Society (AGSAS) is sponsoring a Ladies' Fair similar to those held in the south during the civil war; the Fair will be held at Belair Mansion in Bowie, Maryland



on September 8, 2007. AGSAS members have been busy making items for Civility to carry back home with her and there will be flyers at the Fair with information for purchasing raffle tickets for Civility and there will be a display that features Civility and portions of her wardrobe. The winning ticket for Civility and her wardrobe and accessories will be drawn in November and the winner will be contacted by Elizabeth Clark.

As well as Civility being at the Fair, there will be booths similar to those found at period fairs. One will find a fortune teller who will tell your fortune in one of several ways; The Old Woman Who Lived in A Shoe will be selling handmade dolls; a fish pond where young people may take a chance to win a prize; a table where all sorts of period fancy-fair goods may be purchased; and lastly, there will be tableaux performed during the fair at scheduled times. For refreshments, there will be a Jacob's Well where cooling beverages may be purchased and at the Baker's Dozen, one may purchase period baked goods. Additional information about Civility or the Fair may be obtained by e-mailing [mmescher1@cox.net](mailto:mmescher1@cox.net) or [secesh1860@gmail.com](mailto:secesh1860@gmail.com).

Below are photographs of my doll Emily, a cousin of Civility, in several of her dresses; these images will give one an idea of what Civility looks like and the types of items that may come with her. Please consider attending the fair and/or purchasing raffle tickets.



Emily with her Day Dress, Bonnet, and Shawl



Emily's Work Dress, Slat Bonnet, and Apron

Another worthy cause that could use your assistance is helping in the rescue of Rose Percy, the American Red Cross Sanitary Fair doll. At this time she is in storage because of lack of funding for the ongoing conservation of the doll and her wardrobe. The doll has been repaired twice over the years but time and past storage conditions have left her with some residual damage. Her wardrobe needs further conservation so that in the future it may be possible for Rose to be displayed for others to view. Your monetary assistance would be appreciated by Rose and the American Red Cross. If you would like to contribute to Rose's conservation, please consider a donation to the Red Cross in the name of Rose Percy. Contributions may be sent to the following address. Please include "Rose Percy" in the memo line of the check. Any amount will be appreciated and Rose thanks you for your assistance.

Annie Bartholomew, Collection Manager  
American Red Cross  
2025 E. St. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dolls may seem like a toy or inconsequential matter but as one can see, they did play an important part in raising money for soldiers in the civil war and in other time periods since. Their mission still continues but they need assistance from human companions to have their contributions be actualized. Remember one is never too old to play with dolls and the playing can benefit others.

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