



Mrs. Elrod inherited her grandmother's quilt from her mother

Confederate Cover

Secret cabinets hid from the Yankees the flag which was later converted into a quilt now owned by a Nashville woman

By MOLLIE HOLM

ALTHOUGH many fancy quilts may have survived the 1860's in Middle Tennessee, there is one that has more claim to distinction than mere beauty. A frail and worn veteran of its kind, this once gay red and white "double Irish chain" is now brought out from its 40-odd year wrappings of blue paper for occasional appearances at fairs and bazaars. The blocks in the chain pattern are yellowed and faded, but the fine even stitches of the grapevine design quilted in the border are as neat as they were the day of the quilting.

Mrs. Frances Brewer Elrod, of Nashville, received the quilt from her mother, who was Mary Louise Brewer, first-born daughter of Mrs. Virginia Glenn Brewer, its maker and original owner. Frances, one of several granddaughters, received this particular family keepsake in accordance to her grandmother's plan of ownership succession—from the eldest daughter to the eldest daughter.

Mrs. Elrod says the story of the quilt's history was her grandmother's favorite of many war tales. She could make her grandchildren almost smell the road dust stirred up from the dried mud on the Nashville pike by the Union army. Ft. Donelson's capture on February 14, 1862, opened the way from Clarksville to Nashville, and it seemed to the families who lived on that road that the whole Union army was passing.

Mrs. Brewer's husband, Sterling Brewer Jr., was schoolmaster and preacher at Williams chapel, one of the earliest schools established in that part of the state. Their home and the church-school building was built in a grove of virgin oaks on the Nashville highway 14 miles south of Clarksville. On the day the last 30 schoolboys old enough for military service left to join the Southern army, a Confederate flag made by Mrs. Brewer and the school-girls was raised with ceremony on the school-grounds. James Brewer, the eldest son, left with the group to enlist with Gen. Nathan B. Forrest.

WHEN the news came through the Confederate lines that Ft. Donelson was near surrender to the Federals, the boom of guns firing from the boats on the Cumberland river north of Clarksville was especially dis-

turbing to 16-year-old Lucy Brewer, already delirious with pneumonia. The Confederates lost the fort on the day that Lucy died. Three months before, she had been one of the makers of the school flag.

Organized school work was stopped by the threat of the approaching army, but the school-girls did not plan to lose the colors of their cause to the first ransacking soldier that came. Mr. Brewer, aside from teaching and preaching, was also handy with carpenter's tools. He had built into his house a pair of secret cabinets on each side of the living room fireplace. This seemed a good place to hide the flag along with his wife's coin silver spoons.

When the advance guard reached the Brewer place, the mounted officers rode through the big front gate to the house and asked for breakfast for the staff. Although there were many trees on the lawn around the house, that morning it seemed to the family that they couldn't see the trees for the Yankees. Mrs. Brewer, master of every situation since the day in September, 1844, when as orphaned Virginia Grace Glenn, she left the Clarksville Female academy by way of a window to become the young bride of a parson and teacher, bargained with the Union officer. Breakfast would be prepared for the lot on condition that her property was left undisturbed, or at least not burned.

THE tired soldiers granted this favor and agreed to pass the command to the rear guards. In the midst of stirring the batter for cornmeal hoe-cakes, Mary Louise Brewer startled her mother by dropping the spoon and staring into the room where the soldiers were resting. Two of the Yankee officers had removed their boots and were tilted back in chairs against the walls over the hidden cabinets. Mother and daughter spent little time in looking, but hurried to get the men to the table and off the place.

The last straggling troops finally passed, but the flag was not raised again, for it looked as if the Confederate cause was doomed. Because of the scarcity and high prices of cotton cloth, practical Mrs. Brewer thought of a way for the rebel banner to continue to serve, and the flag so carefully stitched up by the school girls found its way into her bag of quilt pieces.