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**BLOOD ON THE FLOOR: PUBLIC MEMORY, MYTH, AND MATERIAL
CULTURE IN AMERICAN HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUMS**

by

Alyssa B. Caltabiano

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of History
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in History
at
Rowan University
June 1, 2020

Thesis Chair: Jennifer Janofsky, Ph.D.

Dedications

I would like to dedicate this research to my parents, Steve and Denee´ Chomo.

Thank you for instilling in me the value of hard work and for teaching me to always think for my-self. I wouldn't be the woman I am today without your guidance.

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First and foremost, I would like to thank my husband, John Paul, for giving me the opportunity to pursue this research. Thank you for accompanying me on my research, and for tending to our many responsibilities while I was immersed in this project. Your hard work, sacrifice, and support has provided me with the ability to pursue my goals. To my siblings, Amanda, Abigail, Amy, Angeline, and Steve, thank you for filling in the gaps. I would like to thank Rowan University's History Department, specifically Jennifer Janofsky, Stephen Hague, and Emily Blanck. Their guidance throughout the research and writing process has been invaluable, both academically and professionally. I would also like to thank William Michel. Your great mentorship over the last several years is what sparked my research interests and the basis of this project. And to Anthony Melita, thank you for teaching me that there is always more to be discovered and that history is always up for debate.

Abstract

Alyssa Caltabiano
BLOOD ON THE FLOOR: PUBLIC MEMORY, MYTH, AND MATERIAL
CULTURE IN AMERICAN HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUMS
2019-2020
Jennifer Janofsky, Ph.D.
Master of Arts in History

This research examines the historic narratives of the Hancock House Historic Site, The Jennie Wade House Museum, and the Shriver House Museum, analyzing the historical accuracy of each. Each site has used historic human bloodstains and other elements of material culture, authentic and fabricated, to facilitate and support their historic narratives. The traditional Hancock House narrative, as well as the current Jennie Wade House narrative, are each sensationalized and riddled with myth and legend. The Shriver House represents a well-researched and interpreted narrative, that tastefully uses historic human bloodstains as an element of their interpretation. The evolution of each site and their interpretations represent historic trends in American public memory. In addition, this research examines the relationship of each site within the overall movement of dark tourism and argues that historic human bloodstains serve as an attractive element for some visitors as they present a tangible link to human past.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The field of public history, as defined by the National Council on Public History, refers to the application of history to “real world issues” through a variety of outlets.¹ Public historians include museum professionals, oral historians, resource managers, archivists, preservationists, and a variety of other professionals engaged in disseminating history to the general public, most commonly in nonacademic settings.² The rise of the field of public history largely came out of the 1970s job crisis.³ Prior to this period, Ph.D. graduates in history worked almost exclusively in academia. Robert Townsend of the American Historical Association reported that during the 1970s, the disparity between history PhDs and available academic jobs was around fifty percent.⁴ This forced a large portion of historians to pursue jobs outside the realm of higher education, and consequently came the creation and professionalization of public history. In 1976 the first program for public history was implemented under the direction of Robert Kelley at the University of California, and the same year the American Historical Association created a group dedicated to increase the demand for professional historians in public and private sector employment.⁵ Before this academic movement towards public history, higher education in history was less diverse in its teachings and those who chose to work outside

¹ National Council on Public History, “About the Field”, *Indiana University*, <https://ncph.org/what-is-public-history/about-the-field/>, (accessed April 11, 2020).

² Ibid

³ Robert Townsend, “Precedents: The Job Crisis of the 1970s”, *The American Historical Review* (April 1997), <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/april-1997/precedents-the-job-crisis-of-the-1970s>, (accessed April 11, 2020).

⁴ Townsend, “Precedents: The Job Crisis of the 1970s”.

⁵ Robert Townsend, “History in Those Hard Times: Looking for Jobs in the 1970s”, *The American Historical Review* (September 2000), <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/september-2009/history-in-those-hard-times-looking-for-jobs-in-the-1970s>, (accessed April 11, 2020).

the realm of academics received little education on public engagement, programming, interpretation, and other areas related to the field of public history.

Today, there are a variety of higher educational programs geared towards the study of public history. Public historians have the capacity to engage a diverse general public and disseminate historical information to an audience beyond the traditional classroom. Museums and historic sites have the opportunity to provide a more accessible alternative to academic history. Public historians are tasked with managing historic collections, giving educational tours, creating museum exhibits, and a variety of other tasks. Through outlets such as museums, libraries, and other historic sites, the public is able to interact with history through material culture.

Historic house museums in particular provide tangible links to the past through the display of artifacts and the interpretation of the home's history. When visitors enter a historic house museum, they should be presented with an experience of the historic patterns of everyday life that occurred within the dwelling. Antique kitchen tools, dishware, furniture, and a variety of other objects, paired with the historic narrative given by professionals and employees allows visitors to engage and interact with the history that took place within the walls of the house. Artifacts of material culture allow people the ability to experience history in the most tangible way possible.

One of the challenges faced by public historians is using material culture in a way that supports an accurate historical interpretation, while simultaneously garnering and maintaining public interest. The significance of historic house museums is usually predicated on a specific historic event or person. Using the house, along with the artifacts

and materials within it to tell those stories is an extremely important task. The ways in which public historians choose to interpret history contributes greatly to popular historic memory. The shaping of public historical memory is a responsibility that lies almost solely on the shoulders of public historians. A study conducted by Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen in the late 1990s interviewed roughly one thousand five hundred Americans concerning their connection to the past and how it influences their present lives.⁶ One element of their survey asked a group of Americans to rate on a scale of one to ten the trustworthiness of several different sources of information regarding the past. From the national sample, museums and museum professionals were ranked the highest in terms of trustworthiness.⁷ From seven hundred and seventy eight respondents, museums were given an average rating of 8.4, while college professors were given a 7.3 and high school history teachers were given a 6.6.⁸ Given the accessibility of public history, more people are engaging with the past through museums and other institutions as opposed to higher education. Therefore, museum professionals and public historians have a large amount of influence in disseminating historical information, shifting public discourse, and shaping collective memory.

Given the accessibility and influence of public historical institutions, it is of paramount importance that they disseminate accurate historical information. Prior to the professionalization of public history, people from a variety backgrounds engaged in public “historymaking.”⁹ Those tasked with running institutions of public history

⁶ Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of American History in American Life*, (New York: Columbia University Press).

⁷ Rosenzweig.

⁸ Rosenzweig.

⁹ This term is derived from Rosenzweig’s study and refers to the outcome of nonacademic or untrained historians engaging with the past and the understanding of history that comes from this process.

included caretakers, volunteers, business professionals, and enthusiasts of the past. Many of these employees were untrained in how to navigate the dilemma of disseminating an accurate historical narrative while maintaining public interest. Many institutions have placed public interest over historical accuracy and a well-researched narrative in their approach, resulting in falsely shaped public discourse and historical memory. Several of these institutions have used material culture and historic objects to facilitate their historical narrative. These objects prove powerful in capturing attention and shaping public memory. Seth Bruggeman discusses this dynamic in his book *Here George Washington Was Born: Memory, Material Culture, and the Public History of a National Monument*.¹⁰ At sites of public history, “historic objects can be positioned over time like chess pieces by players eager to achieve the greatest mnemonic advantage.”¹¹

This paper will analyze a selection of three historic house museums in which historic human blood stains have been interpreted as part of the site's collective history. The history of each site involves the death of one or more people during a time of war, and subsequent interpretations have incorporated blood stained floorboards into their historical narrative. At each site the bloodstained floorboards have been positioned within the historic narrative in different ways, and for purposes of this research will be analyzed as historic objects or artifacts. They have served to represent the death that occurred at each site and provide visitors with tangible proof of the events that took place.

Chapter One looks at the Hancock House Historic in Salem County, New Jersey.

The Hancock House was the site of a Revolutionary War attack in which ten to fifteen

¹⁰ Seth Bruggeman, *Here George Washington Was Born: Memory, Material Culture, and the Public History of a National Monument*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

¹¹ Bruggeman, 115.

continental soldiers were killed. The site became the property of the New Jersey State Park Service in 1931, and the first caretaker of the property promoted the narrative that the attack took place in the attic of the home. During her tours she would showcase blood stained floorboards in the attic. A look at the primary source material and early published accounts of the attack indicates many factual errors in the original historic narrative presented at the site and suggests that the bloodstained floorboards presented by the first caretaker were misrepresented and potentially fabricated. The mythology of the attic bloodstains became ingrained in the popular memory of the site. This chapter also examines the relationship between the original sensationalized narrative, the local population, and the efforts of current historians to restore an accurate historical narrative at the site.

Chapter Two examines the Jennie Wade House Museum in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Jennie Wade was killed by a Confederate soldier during the Civil War. Current interpretations assert that Jennie was making bread for Union soldiers at the time of her death and has since been recorded as the only civilian death to have occurred during the battle. However, further research suggests that Jennie Wade was not making bread for Union soldiers at the time of her death, was not the only civilian killed during the battle, and may not be the faithful Union supporter that she has been portrayed to be. A floorboard supposedly stained with Jennie's blood remains on display in the museum, as well as several other artifacts from within the house during the battle. This research challenges the accuracy of the site's interpretation and examines their use of artifacts to interpret the death of Jennie Wade and the civilian experience during the Battle of

Gettysburg. It also analyzes the relationship between the for-profit institution's commercialized nature and the historic narrative presented.

Chapter Three reviews the Shriver House Museum, also located in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The Shriver House interpreters the civilian experience of the Civil War and tells the story of George and Hettie Shriver. George served in the Union Army, and when war came to Gettysburg the family was forced to flee town. Their home was taken by Confederate soldiers, and in the attic of their home several sharpshooters were killed and wounded. Through forensic testing the Shriver House has scientifically authenticated the blood stains in their attic and uses them to tastefully demonstrate the death and suffering that occurred during the Battle of Gettysburg. The Shriver House incorporates the story of its restoration and development into the historic narrative of the museum, and expertly incorporates objects and artifacts from the home's restoration to help interpret the civilian experience of the battle. The Shriver House represents thorough research, detailed interpretation, and factual representation while appealing to public interest.

The flawed interpretations, sensationalized narratives, and manufactured histories examined in this research represent the power of public historical institutions in influencing public historical memory. The original historical narrative presented at the Hancock House and its influence on local populations, along with the commercialization and interpretation at the Jennie Wade House, both demonstrate the importance of thorough research and an accurate historical narrative. The utilization of bloodstained floorboards within both sites narratives demonstrates the power of material culture in appealing to the public and reinforcing historic memory. Public historians should first and foremost remain dedicated to thorough research and accurate historical

representation. Transparency and the use of historic artifacts to facilitate accurate historical narratives, appeals to a public audience and contributes to a historical memory rooted in fact. The Shriver House Museum represents the success of an institution dedicated to transparency and an accurate historical narrative.

Chapter 2

Historiography

The inspiration for the approach to this research comes from Collin Dickey's, *Ghostland: An American History in Haunted Places*.¹² Dickey documents his travels to a variety of historic sites within the United States, each characterized by paranormal stories, myths, and legends. He analyzes a variety of sites including historic houses, bars, restaurants, and hotels, prisons, cemeteries, parks, cities, and towns. Dickey's research asks deeper questions regarding the meaning and place of these stories in public history. Dickey examines the historic narratives associated with each site and uncovers both historical truths and myths. Most importantly, Dickey seeks to uncover "where [these stories] came from, how they've evolved, [and] how they're recounted."¹³ While myths, legends, and sensationalized history often obscure and distort historical accuracy, the processes through which these stories are created often reveal a great deal about the past.

This research asks similar questions regarding the creation of sensationalized historical narratives, as well as the role of material culture and objects in creating and facilitating these stories. This research began with questions concerning the significance and place of historic human bloodstains in public history. The Hancock House Historic Site, with its original sensationalized narrative surrounding bloodstained attic floorboards, served as the launching point for this research along with questions such as: Why do stories of bloodstained floorboards draw the attention of so many visitors, whether authentic or fabricated? Where do these historic bloodstains fit within larger

¹² Collin Dickey, *Ghostland: An American History in Haunted Places*, (New York: Penguin Random House LLC, 2016).

¹³ Dickey, 11.

theories concerning public history and museum operation? Many sites associated with the death and suffering of an individual, or a group of individuals, boast bloodstained artifacts.

The bloodstained floorboards of each site analyzed in this research are considered to be artifacts of material culture. They have been presented at each site, as such, and have innately drawn the attention of the general public. Cultural historian, Thomas Schlereth, refers to material culture as the totality of objects used by humanity to cope with the physical world.¹⁴ In other words, material culture can be defined as the physical manifestation of culture. In public history, material culture provides a tangible connection to the past. The narratives given at historic sites seek to convey history to the public, while objects and artifacts provide historic narratives with physicality. They serve as physical proof of the history presented, and reinforce the narrative given at a particular site of public history.

While artifacts present a tangible connection to the physical past, historic human bloodstains present a tangible link to a human past. While objects, in their own right, represent a physical past, an object stained with blood represents a human past. It represents past life, as well as the loss of past life. This idea of the representation of death and suffering in public history is often referred to as dark tourism. Richard Sharpley defines dark tourism as visitation to “sites, attractions, or events that are linked in one way or another with death, suffering, violence or disaster.”¹⁵ Pieter Spierenburg discusses

¹⁴ Thomas Schlereth, “Material Culture in Studies in America, 1876-1976”, in *Material Culture Studies in America*, ed. Thomas Schlereth (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 2.

¹⁵ Richard Sharpley, “Shedding Light on Dark Tourism”, *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*, ed. Philip R. Stone (New York: Channel View Publications, 2009), 4.

the fascination with death or the public spectacle of suffering in his book, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Repression*.¹⁶ The spectacle of suffering has been a phenomenon for centuries, but is most commonly associated with the Middle Ages and public executions.¹⁷ The intersection of public history and the spectacle of suffering results in dark tourism. Sites of genocide, such as Auschwitz, are most commonly associated with dark tourism. Other sites such as prisons, graveyards, and battlefields, and memorials are all common sites of dark tourism. While the sites analyzed in this research may not be immediately identified with dark tourism, they are predicated on the death of an individual or groups of individuals. The bloodstained floorboards presented at each site, are intended to serve as tangible evidence of the death and suffering presented in each historical narrative. They provide visitors with a sense of authenticity.

Through the initial stages of this research, it became evident that the bloodstains of the Hancock House and Jennie Wade House, were small parts of much larger narratives riddled with myth, legend, and other elements of historical inaccuracy. Stories like the ones examined in this research, are the “celebrity gossip of history, the salacious underbelly of the past.”¹⁸ People are often drawn to these stories because they seem to offer “new” or alternative versions to the histories frequently taught in schools. While many of these stories may be far from historically accurate, they shed light on the process of historical memory and the role that public historical institutions play in this process. The Hancock House, Jennie Wade House, and Shriver House each demonstrate

¹⁶ Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Repression: From a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

¹⁷ Spierenburg, 81.

¹⁸ Dickey, 10.

relationships between material culture and historic interpretation in reference to death and suffering. The death and suffering associated with each site is also tied to the national historic memories of the Revolutionary and Civil War. This element, and the politicized narratives given at the Hancock and Jennie Wade houses, transforms the historic bloodstains into political relics. John Bodnar discusses the patriotism and politics of public memory in his book, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*.¹⁹ These bloodstains facilitate a public memory, “produced from a political discussion that involves...fundamental issues about the entire existence of society: its organization, structure of power, and the very meaning of its past and present.”²⁰ The bloodstains on the attic floorboards of the Hancock House and Jennie Wade House, each facilitate historic narratives regarding the United States two most transformative wars. In addition, each of these narratives were developed in the post-World War II period of tourism and national patriotism.

Michael Kammen discusses the overall phenomenon of public and popular memory, and touches on each of these themes in *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*.²¹ Kammen makes several assertions regarding the public’s relationship with the past, three of which are particularly valuable to this research. The first is that we have highly selective memories of what we have been taught about the past. As individuals, we are more receptive to information that confirms or supports our particular views and ideas about the past.²² The second is that the past is

¹⁹ John E. Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992).

²⁰ Bodnar, 14.

²¹ Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

²² Rosenzweig.

commercialized for the sake of tourism and related enterprises. Public historical institutions, regardless of private, for profit, or public ownership, must present narratives or materials that are some interest to the general public, because visitation is what justifies and sustains operation. The third is that history is an essential ingredient in defining national, group, and personal identity.²³ Individuals who identify with a given historical narrative serve to support and perpetuate that narrative, regardless of its historical accuracy. Kammen further divides American historical memory into four periodic stages. The first ranges from colonization to eighteen seventy, the second ranges from eighteen seventy to nineteen twenty, the third ranges from nineteen twenty to nineteen forty-five, and the fourth ranges from nineteen forty five to the present.²⁴ Kammen defines the second stage as a time when “national history in general became the means used to transform un-American identities into those of compliant citizens with shared values.”²⁵ American’s began celebrating all manners of things, and a rise in patriotism and national identity accompanied this. The third stage is characterized by an American aesthetic defined by museums and collectors.²⁶ “Regional chauvinism” played into this new sense of national pride, and myth-making society developed.²⁷ The fourth stage, the post-World War II period, was characterized by nostalgia, an interest in tradition, and an “obsession with heritage.”²⁸ During this period, Kammen argues that the

²³ Kammen, 10.

²⁴ Kammen, 11.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Kammen, 12.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

government became a “custodian of tradition,” preserving historic sites and buildings through governmental funding and organizations.²⁹

The characteristics described by Kammen in his last three stages of historical memory are evident throughout the shaping of historic narratives at the Hancock House and Jennie Wade House. Mixes of patriotism, state and local influence, local heritage, dedication to tradition, and profit defined the historic narrative of each site and the public memory of each. Patriotism and trends of political memory characterize both sites interpretation of death and suffering experienced during the American Revolution and the Civil War. The original historic narrative of the Hancock House and the attack on Hancock’s Bridge, sought to portray British forces as unnecessarily and exceptionally violent. While many elements of this original narrative have been unfounded in current research, original versions of the home’s history perpetuate the idea of the American Revolution as war between American’s and a foreign enemy. It venerated the lives of patriot militia members lost in the attack and attributed exceptionally barbaric military tactics to the British soldiers. This narrative, crafted and promoted in the post-World War II period, played upon the themes of heritage and a unifying sense of patriotism. Local support and heritage also served to perpetuate this narrative.

While the narrative currently presented at the Hancock House has been thoroughly researched and reworked on the grounds of primary source evidence and first-hand accounts, the Jennie Wade house currently presents a narrative still rooted in legend and tradition. The Jennie Wade story also plays upon the theme of post-World War II

²⁹ Ibid.

unifying patriotism. However, the Jennie Wade story originated in the Reconstruction era and is characterized by memorialization and the rise of commercialized Gettysburg. The death of Jennie Wade (the supposed patriotic Union girl), by the bullet of a Confederate sharpshooter, has been used to represent, validate, and reinforce the outcome of the Civil War in public memory. Jennie, often labeled a martyr for the Union cause, serves to represent the sacrifices made the Civil War. The story, or myth, of Jennie Wade's death is riddled with legend indicative of local Gettysburg lore and national trends of patriotic remembrance. The rise in commercialization of Gettysburg during the post-World War II period has also contributed to the endurance of the Jennie Wade story.

Overall, the histories of both sites are representative of trends in the formation of popular historical memory and the ways in which these processes evolve over time. The significance of each of these narratives and how they came to be standard, goes beyond historical trends in popular history making. How exactly did the many sensational and mythical details of each narrative take hold over any dissent or challenge of historical accuracy? Post-World War II patriotism and a cultural desire for political unification alone cannot be attributed for the staying power of the Hancock and Jennie Wade House legends. Each of these sites, along with their narratives, have been crafted by individuals; employees and local historians, family members, and businesspeople. These individuals have contributed their own influence in creating these narratives, and using several artifacts, objects, and elements of material culture to achieve the prominence of their sensationalized and inflated narratives.

Chapter 3

Hancock House Historic Site

The Hancock House Historic Site is a small historic house museum located in rural Salem County, New Jersey. The house is most well-known for its involvement in an attack carried out by British forces during the Revolutionary War. Roughly twenty minutes South of the Delaware Memorial Bridge the house is located along one of the many creeks that run from the Delaware River in the town of Hancock's Bridge, which is situated in the slightly larger jurisdiction of Lower Alloway's Creek Township (LAC). While LAC spans an area of 45.3 square miles, it is home to just 1,661 residents, according to a 2017 census report.³⁰ Hancock's Bridge itself only spans an area of .2 square miles and includes 191 residents.³¹ Hancock's Bridge is one of several small towns established throughout the Salem County area during the early phases of English settlement. Several of these small towns are still referred to locally by their original names.³² Salem County as a whole has predominantly existed as a rural area from the colonial period to present day.³³ Farming remains a tradition for many families, and many local farms still provide grains, produce, and meat to surrounding areas. Many local families throughout LAC and Hancock's Bridge can trace their lineage to the colonial period and are very interested in preserving local history and tradition. Despite the small

³⁰ U.S. Census Bureau 2017, *American Community Survey 5-year estimates*, Retrieved from *Census Reporter Profile page for Hancocks Bridge, NJ*, <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US3429520-hancocks-bridge-nj/>.

³¹ U.S. Census Bureau 2017, *American Community Survey 5-year estimates*, Retrieved from *Census Reporter Profile page for Lower Alloways Creek township, Salem County, NJ*, <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US3403341640-lower-alloways-creek-township-salem-county-nj/>.

³² Examples include Canton, Harmersville, and Maksells Mill.

³³ Frank Stewart, *Salem County in the Revolution*, (New Jersey: Salem County Historical Society. 1932).

size of LAC, an eighteenth century log cabin museum is owned by the township and operated by local officials.³⁴ The Lower Alloway's Creek Historical Museum was restored using local hand-hewn lumber, nearby sandstone, and local clay. Open one Sunday a month, the museum is run by several local volunteers, interpreting local farming and trapping traditions.³⁵

The Hancock House Historic Site also serves as a source of local pride. The existence of two historic museums within such a small and secluded town, speaks to the strong sense of local identity, tradition, and pride that runs throughout LAC. Owned and operated by the New Jersey State Park Service, the site employs two staff members, a full-time historian and a part-time visitors service assistant.³⁶ While the site is owned by the State of New Jersey, a volunteer group known as the Friends of the Hancock House comprised of local residents helps to provide fundraising and event support. Open year round the site receives an average of 3,000 to 4,000 visitors per year, with the bulk of visitation occurring between the months of May and December.³⁷ While the bulk of visitation includes New Jersey residents, the site draws in a large portion of school groups, and out of state visitors during the Spring and Summer months. While the house is most well-known for the Revolutionary War attack that took place within its walls in 1778, the site currently interprets a dynamic history ranging from the mid-eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century. The Hancock family arrived in North America in

³⁴ Lower Alloway's Creek Township, "Historic Log Cabin", *Lower Alloways's Creek New Jersey*, lowerallowayscreek-nj.gov (accessed November 20th 2019).

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ The NJ State Park Service is a division of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection

³⁷ Hancock House Historic Site, "Hancock House Visitation Records", Hancock House Sign in Sheets, 2016-2018.

1677, claiming 1,000 acres of land purchased directly from John Fenwick, a proprietor who established Salem City and the first Quaker colony in North America.³⁸ The family built a log cabin, which served as their primary residence until 1734, with the completion of a large patterned brick home, currently known as the Hancock House. With the completion of their new brick structure, the family owned and operated a farm, as well as a general store. They rented out a section of their home as a tavern, and two generations of Hancock men worked as local judges. They were a wealthy and prominent Quaker family who actively attended meeting and donated the land for the local meeting house in 1756.³⁹

During the colonial period, Salem County was a predominantly rural area with several ports established along the creeks running from the Delaware River. These ports allowed for easy access and the ability for local production to thrive. The rural production and accessibility of the area drew the attention of British troops during the Revolutionary War in 1777. After the British had run out of supplies during their stay in Philadelphia, they were sent on a foraging expedition to Salem County given its agricultural resources and accessibility. While the political position of the Hancock family during the Revolution is unknown due to their Quaker affiliation, their home became a strategic target for the British troops due to its location at the base of the local bridge. During the Revolution, the Hancock family facilitated several business ventures including the

³⁸ Robert Gibbon Johnson, *An Historical Account of the First Settlement of Salem in West Jersey, By John Fenwick, ESQ. Chief Proprietor of the Same; With Many of the Important Events That Have Occurred, Down to the Present Generation, Embracing a period of One Hundred and Fifty Years*, (Philadelphia: Orrin Rogers, 1839).

³⁹ Salem Quarterly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, "History of Lower Alloways Creek Meeting", *Salem Quarterly Meeting: Were the Quaker's*, <http://www.salemquarter.net/lower-alloways-creek-meetinghouse/history-of-the-lower-alloways-creek-meetinghouse/>, (accessed November 20th, 2019).

operation of a general store and the renting out of a section of their home as a tavern.

When the British reached Salem County in March of 1778, they used St. John's Episcopal Church, as well as the Salem Friends Meeting house as their barracks.

On March 21st, 1778 the Hancock House was attacked by the Queens Rangers, led by Major John Graves Simcoe of England. The Queen's Rangers were a loyalist group recruited primarily out of Connecticut and Staten Island. Simcoe was appointed as the new and final commander of the rangers by October 16, 1777 and received the provincial rank of major.⁴⁰ Major Simcoe was only twenty-six at the time of his promotion and came from a military background. His father had served as the Captain of the Royal Navy, and his godfather was commander of the British naval forces in America at the outbreak of the Revolution.⁴¹ Simcoe would lead the Queen's Rangers for the remainder of the war through their emigration and successful integration into Canada. While Major Simcoe and the Queen's Rangers led a largely successful campaign throughout the American Revolution, the attack on the Hancock House has stood out as a blot on Major Simcoe's reputation. The attack was executed as part of the foraging expeditions carried out by British troops, after they had exhausted their supplies in Philadelphia over the previous winter. Major Simcoe himself kept a record of his planning and experiences in a

⁴⁰ Donald Gara, *The Queen's American Rangers*, (Pennsylvania: Westholme Publishing, 2015), 88.

⁴¹ Ibid.

military journal.⁴² This journal, along with pension records from the soldiers involved in the attack, offer historians a detailed account of the attack from a first-hand perspective.⁴³

Lieutenant Colonel Charles Mawhood, known for his leadership at the Battle of Princeton, instructed Simcoe to lead a foraging expedition in Salem County, and to first take over one of the local bridges crossing the Alloway's Creek.⁴⁴ Colonel Mawhood gave the "strictest charge against plundering" and Simcoe, having taken horses from the local inhabitants assured that they would be returned, or paid for, if they did not return within a few days.⁴⁵ After independence was declared in 1776, the British began to struggle. Those sent to forage in Salem County had spent a considerable amount of time in Philadelphia without sufficient food and supplies and were in no position to engage in a struggle with the local colonists. Mawhood also assured the locals that only officers would enter their homes, and that they would not be harmed.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, a letter sent from Colonel Mawhood to leaders of the local militia indicating their peaceful intentions was not received until weeks after the British had arrived in Salem County. Upon British arrival, local militia prepared for conflict and upon seeing large forces of local militia the British also prepared for conflict. Simcoe and his men attempted first to take over Quinton's Bridge, where they lured a force of patriot militia across the bridge and attempted an ambush. With access to a local bridge, British troops would be able to

⁴² John Graves Simcoe, *Simcoe's Military Journal: A History of the Operations of a Partisan Corps, Called the Queen's Rangers, Commanded by Lieut. Col. J. G. Simcoe, During the War of the American Revolution; Illustrated by Ten Engraved Plans of Actions, &c.* Reprint Edition, (New Hampshire: Ayer Company Publishers, Inc., 2000).

⁴³ Virgil D. White, *Revolutionary War Pension Applications, 1775-1783*, David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA.

⁴⁴ Simcoe, 46.

⁴⁵ Simcoe, 46-47.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

gather supplies from one side and carry them back over the creek to their stations in Salem. The Queen's Ranger's goal was to hold the local militia on the Salem side of the bridge, prevent them from retreating back across the bridge to Quinton, and eventually cross the bridge into Quinton themselves. However, a force of local patriot militia led by Colonel Elijah Hand successfully defended the bridge, and Simcoe and his men were unable to cross.⁴⁷ After fleeing Quinton's Bridge, Simcoe climbed a tree on the opposite side of the creek to make a map of Hancock's Bridge, and prepared to take control of the local bridge there. Upon creating this map, Simcoe recorded having seen about three hundred to four hundred patriot militia, in and about the area. Expecting to be outnumbered, and realizing there would be an armed resistance, Simcoe divided his men and delegated tasks.⁴⁸ Several men embarked on flat-bottomed boats into the Delaware River and down the Alloway's Creek in the early morning hours of March 21st from Salem City towards Hancock's Bridge. Colonel Mitchel was sent on foot to approach the opposite side of the bridge. Captain Saunders was detached to ambush the dyke leading to Quinton's Bridge, while Captain Stevenson and Captain Dunlop were sent to the front and back of the house.⁴⁹ Other detachments were allotted to enter other houses throughout the town expected to be quartering local militiamen.⁵⁰ For a visual representation of the plan of attack, see Figure 1., a copy of the map Simcoe drew prior to the attack. Simcoe described in his journal that while his overall force of men amounted

⁴⁷ Simcoe, 49.

⁴⁸ A letter from colonel Mawhood was sent to the leaders of the local Patriot militia regarding their peaceful intentions to forage the area. Unfortunately, this letter had not been received until after the Queen's Rangers had arrived in Salem County. Having not received the letter until after the skirmish at Quinton's Bridge and the attack on Hancock's Bridge, the local militiamen were unaware of the Queen's Ranger's peaceful intentions and engaged in resistance.

⁴⁹ Simcoe, 51.

⁵⁰ Simcoe, 52.

to roughly two hundred, the whole force was divided into several detachments, delegated to specific areas and tasks.⁵¹ Only two detachments were delegated to attack the Hancock House, indicating that only a portion of Simcoe's men attacked and entered the house.

⁵¹ Ibid.

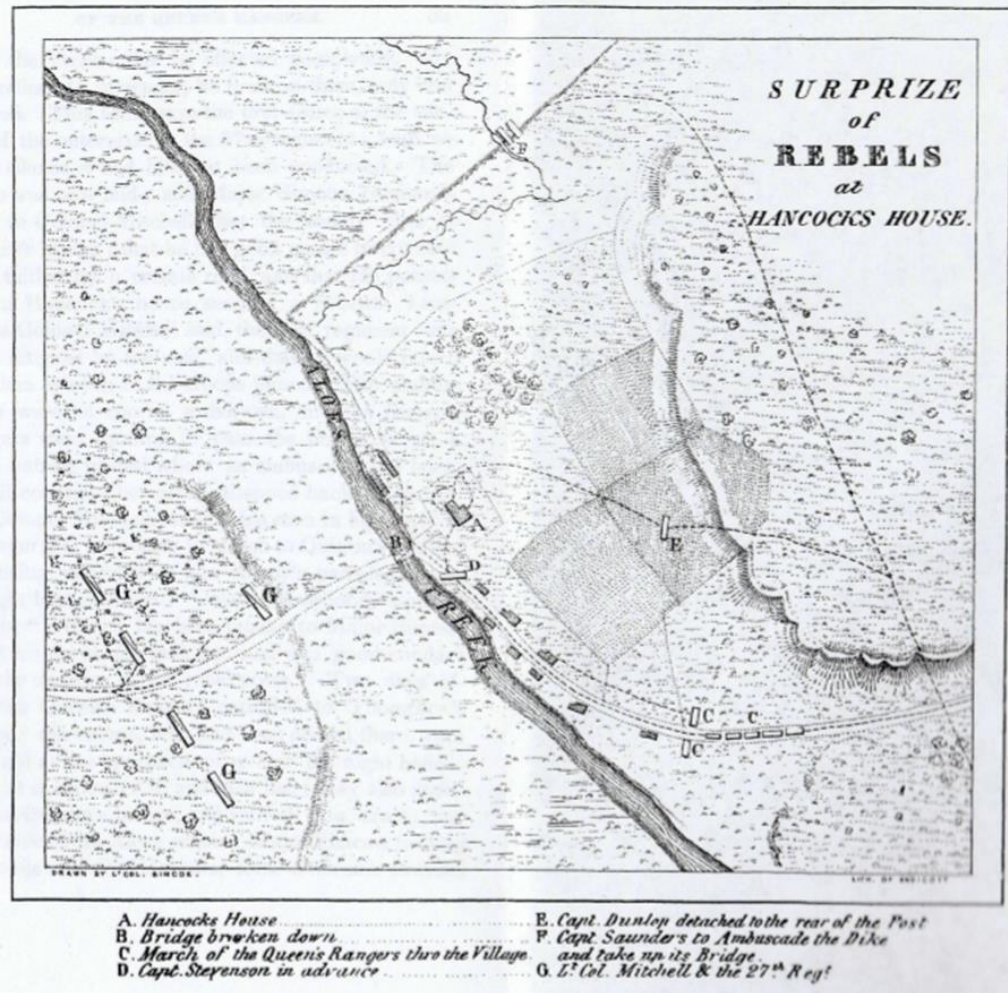


Figure 1. “Major Simcoe’s Map” - Major Simcoe’s plan of attack on Hancock’s Bridge New Jersey

Simcoe had expected to arrive along the banks at Hancock’s Bridge at approximately two o’clock in the morning, however, he remarked that his naval officer failed to estimate the strength of the tides correctly. The tides were moving so slowly in their direction that Simcoe and his men marched through the marsh of the creek in order to arrive in Hancock’s Bridge before daylight. Simcoe and his men arrived at approximately five o’clock in the morning, several hours behind schedule, entered the

house through the front and back doors and nearly attacked each other as it was still dark. They then dispersed throughout the house, and according to Simcoe “all were killed.”⁵² The attack was over within minutes, given there was only one small company of twenty to thirty men located in Hancock’s Bridge. The rest of the local militia that Simcoe had witnessed the prior day had left town the before Simcoe and his man had arrived.⁵³ While Simcoe stated that “all were killed,” several pension records reveal that roughly ten to fifteen men were either wounded or captured and taken prisoner.⁵⁴ This leaves the other half of the men involved in the attack unaccounted for and presumed to have been killed. It is important to note that Simcoe apologized for the events that had taken place, returned the horses that had been taken from local residents, and paid for any supplies that had been taken.⁵⁵ Simcoe had expected to be outnumbered two to one given the large force he had observed in Hancock’s Bridge the day prior to his attack, and was unaware of the large departure that had taken place in the early morning hours of March 21st. He was also expecting to meet a heavy resistance given the skirmish that took place at Quinton’s Bridge several days earlier. Simcoe indicates remorse in his journal stating, “events like these are the real miseries of war.”⁵⁶ The series of events that took place in Hancock’s Bridge were in large part due to miscommunications and poor planning. Had certain letters been received and had plans gone more smoothly, the attack could have resulted much differently.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ White.

⁵⁵ Simcoe, 52.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

The history of this particular attack has largely defined historical interpretation at the Hancock House, beginning in 1931 when the New Jersey State Park service purchased the property.⁵⁷ In 1947, the State of New Jersey hired Mary Hewitt, a local, young woman, as the live-in caretaker of the property.⁵⁸ At the time, the State of New Jersey was purchasing a variety of historic properties for preservation. They hired live-in caretakers to occupy and maintain these houses, and being that this type of work was seen as domestic, many young women were hired for these positions. Patricia West discusses this trend in her book, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums*.⁵⁹ West argues that the "preservation of historic 'shrines' was appealing" to a variety of women because "it was consistent with the women's private, domestic role and because it was part of a wider pattern of...social reform."⁶⁰ While Hewitt was hired for the purpose of tending to the general maintenance needs of the home, she began interpreting the history of the site in the early stages of her employment, and paid particular attention to the Revolutionary War attack on the home. Hewitt offered guided tours of the home to local families and school groups, while also speaking to local reporters for newspaper articles regarding the history of the house and its opening to the public. Hewitt engaged the public for 44 years until her retirement in 1991, giving her version of the events that took place at the Hancock House on March 21, 1778. Unfortunately, Hewitt's interpretation of the attack lacked accuracy and included several

⁵⁷ Phil Correll, "Hancock House Chronology 1930-1995", (State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Division of Parks and Forestry State Park Service, New Jersey, May 2, 1995).

⁵⁸ Correll, 1.

⁵⁹ Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums*, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press), 1999.

⁶⁰ West, 2.

dramatized accounts of the attack, resulting in years of misinformation and misunderstanding of the site's history.

Mary Hewitt's only formal and written interpretation of the attack, "History of the Hancock House: Thumbnail Sketch," was filed with the State of New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry in 1951.⁶¹ Her interpretation of the attack unfortunately includes several factual errors and dramatized details. According to Hewitt, "approximately 30 men from the locality were gathered together and stationed [at Hancock's Bridge] to guard the bridge. They were the type of men we would have called the home guard, for they were either too old, or too ill to do any actual fighting. No fighting was expected here as this community... [was]...Quaker."⁶² She also stated that patriot general, Anthony Wayne sought and was granted cattle from the local population. It is for this reason that Hewitt claims the Queen's Rangers carried out an attack on Hancock's Bridge.⁶³ She refers to the attack as a "reprisal act against these folk who would not fight, yet dared to give a chosen side."⁶⁴ She claims that 300 men, under the command of Major Simcoe, embarked to Salem on flat-bottomed boats by way of the Alloway's Creek, and upon their arrival "split rank – half taking the rear door and half taking the front door...[attacking]...the 30 men, practically unarmed, [who] were asleep in the house."⁶⁵ Richard Johnson's, *An Historical Account of the First Settlement of Salem in West Jersey*, was published in 1839, and appears to be the source for a select few of Hewitt's details.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Mary T. Hewitt, "History of: Hancock House, Thumbnail Sketch", (NJ Department of Environmental Protection Division of Parks and Forestry, New Jersey, 1951).

⁶² Hewitt.

⁶³ Hewitt.

⁶⁴ Hewitt.

⁶⁵ Hewitt.

⁶⁶ Johnson, 148.

Johnson's account gives an emotional and rather dramatic account of the attack.⁶⁷

Johnson emphasizes the retaliatory intentions of the attack, the supposed defenselessness of the local militia, and the heavy Quaker influence throughout the area.⁶⁸ However, many of the details included in Hewitt's narrative are unique to her own interpretation.

When compared with Major Simcoe's personal military journal, which details the reasons for, planning, and execution of the attack, it is clear that Hewitt's interpretation of the events holds several factual inconsistencies, slightly inflated numbers, and dramatized details. Her idea that the attack was motivated by revenge upon the local Quakers for aiding Anthony Wayne is not supported by any of the first-hand accounts or primary source material regarding the attack. While some British troops were sent to follow and harass Anthony Wayne, the intentions for the attack's in Salem County were strictly for foraging purposes, rather than revenge. Hewitt also disregards the skirmish that took place at Quinton's Bridge just days prior, where a force of local patriot militia engaged in conflict with the Rangers and successfully drove them off, causing several casualties.⁶⁹ The skirmish at Quinton's Bridge and the attack on the Queen's Ranger's by the local militia demonstrates that the guerrilla tactics, often criticized by Hewitt, were used first by the local militia against the Queen's Ranger's before Simcoe and his men used them against the local militia at Hancock's Bridge. Hewitt's interpretation promotes the idea that the Queen's rangers were particularly violent, unprovoked, and unnecessarily brutal. She also portrays the local militia stationed in Hancock's Bridge as defenseless. While it is true that most of the men were sleeping, her statement that they

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Simcoe, 50.

were “too old or too ill to do any actual fighting” is unfounded. Pension records reveal that least one man involved in the skirmish at Quinton’s Bridge was present and wounded during the attack at the Hancock House.⁷⁰ However, the rest of the men referenced in pension records lived a considerable time after the attack, and their ages ranged from twenty to forty.⁷¹

While several of Hewitt’s logistical details concerning the attack and its motivations are unfounded or exaggerated, one specific detail served as the pinnacle of Hewitt’s daily interpretation and tour. Hewitt said,

The 300 split rank – half taking the rear door and half taking the front. They attacked simultaneously, chased the men into the attic and bayoneted them all to death there. No gunshots were fired. The black bloodstains of the massacre are still visible in the floorboards of the attic, under the eaves and against the chimneys, where the unarmed men were pushed at bayonet point.⁷²

Hewitt’s guided tours of the house, for much of her early career, featured the attic room where she claimed the “massacre” had taken place. In the attic, Hewitt featured supposed bloodstains on the floorboards left by wounded soldiers during the attack. Several newspaper articles feature photos of Hewitt pointing to the supposed blood stains on the floor.⁷³ Figure 2 features a photograph of Hewitt pointing to the supposed bloodstains in the attic during the early years of her employment.⁷⁴ Figure 3 features

⁷⁰ White.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Hewitt.

⁷³ The Sunday Bulletin, *Floor Shows Evidence of Attic Massacre, 1963. The Salem County Sunday Bulletin*, May 12th, 1963.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

another photograph of Hewitt, pointing again in 1963 to the apparent bloodstains in the attic entitled, “Floor Shows Evidence of Attic Massacre.”⁷⁵ The description of the photograph reads that the bloodstains “are the result of British troops massacring Quakers.”⁷⁶ Given Quaker ideals of pacifism, none of the local militia stationed in and around the Hancock House would have been Quaker. Judge Hancock himself, however, was present during the attack. Simcoe referred to Hancock as “a friend of the government”, and inquired as to where Hancock was staying during the British occupation of Salem.⁷⁷ Simcoe was told that he was staying with his wife’s family, and would not be home at the time of the attack.⁷⁸ Unfortunately, Simcoe’s men assumed that Hancock was a member of the local militia and killed him along with several other inhabitants. This mistake is referenced in Simcoe’s apology and contributed to much discontent among Simcoe’s men regarding his leadership. Many of the militia stationed within the home were likely sleeping in the section being rented as a tavern, while Hancock was likely sleeping in the privately-owned section of his home. This again shows Hewitt’s dedication to perpetuating a sensationalized idea of the attack, portraying Simcoe and his men as excessively brutal and violent for attacking men, who had engaged in the same behavior just a few days prior. Hewitt was repeatedly interviewed for newspaper articles throughout her employment, giving these types of statements, perpetuating the historical myth.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Simcoe, 52. While Simcoe assumed that Hancock was a loyalist, his specific political beliefs during the Revolution are unknown. Hancock had a royal commission from the King of England, as well as a commission from the Governor Livingston to practice law. These were each document that could have been presented to someone at any given time to prove a certain loyalty. Being that he was a judge, Simcoe likely assumed he was a loyalist, as most had been commissioned by the King. In actuality Hancock had more business than political loyalties.

⁷⁸ Simcoe, 52.



Figure 2. “Mary Hewitt’s Early Years” - Mary Hewitt pointing to supposed bloodstains on the floor of the Hancock House attic during her early years of employment.



Figure 3. “Mary Hewitt’s Later Years” - Mary Hewitt pointing to the same supposed bloodstains on the floor of the Hancock House attic during the later years of her employment.

Throughout Hewitt's employment, many newspaper articles were published on the Hancock House using dramatized and sensational language, such as "slaughtered" and "butchered" to describe the attack and the death of the local patriot militia killed or injured. One article in particular, published in 1964 entitled, "Hancock House Scene of Bloody Massacre: Bayoneting Retaliation For Wayne Cattle Drive" reads:

In the attacking force were local Tories and their victims recognized their murderers. The British swarmed into the house and bayoneted everyone without mercy. Sleeping men were slashed to death. A young boy pleaded for mercy before a bayonet went through his face. Another was pinned to the floor with a knife and left to bleed to death. Blood ran from the attic down the rafters and before the force left, the place resembled a butcher shop with many of the victims slashed beyond recognition. It was the bloodiest massacre – and the most needless – of the entire Revolution.⁷⁹

Articles such as this have perpetuated the sensationalized and dramatized idea of the violence that took place at the Hancock House during the Revolution. Throughout her employment, with the help of local news reporters, Hewitt disseminated the historical myth that bloodstains marked the floor of the Hancock House. Hewitt's idea that the attack took place in the attic is not confirmed by any of the original accounts of the attack. Neither Johnson's nor Stewarts histories reference the attic. Simcoe's military journal describes in great detail the planning and execution of the attack, but fails to mention the attic in any context. While it is possible that Simcoe could have downplayed

⁷⁹ William McMahon, "Hancock House Scene of Bloody Massacre: Bayoneting [sic]. Retaliation For Wayne Cattle Drive", *Sunbeam Newspaper*, 1964.

his actions throughout his journal, there appears to be no motivation for Simcoe to omit or alter such a detail regarding the attic. The collection of pension records from soldiers who survived the attack also provide several descriptions of the events that took place and not one mentions the attic of the house.⁸⁰ Several soldiers specify that they were either inside the Hancock House, or located somewhere on the property.⁸¹ None, mention the attic of the house. The only account of the attack that specifies a location within the house is referenced in a correspondence between the Salem County Historical Society and a Mrs. Mark D. Ewing.⁸² In this letter, the librarian of the historical society at the time, Josephine Jaquette, provides Mrs. Mark D. Ewing with information concerning the tavern at the Hancock House.⁸³ John Warner Barber and Henry Howes' *Historical Collections of the State of New Jersey* published in 1846 refers to the attack as having occurred at "Baker's Tavern" (the name of the tavern that functioned in the smaller addition on the left of the home).⁸⁴ See Figure 4 for a sketch of the house included in Barber and Howes' book. Joseph Sickler's, *History of Salem County, New Jersey* also mentions the tavern's involvement in the attack, referencing an unknown author as saying "As the Loyalists poured into the main room of the tavern..."⁸⁵ The idea that the local militiamen were quartered in the tavern section of the house is extremely likely. The Hancock family rented the smaller section of their home to a tavern keeper, who ran the tavern. The Hancock's themselves lived in the larger 1734 section of the home. The

⁸⁰ White.

⁸¹ White.

⁸² Josephine Jaquette, Letter to Mrs. Mark D. Ewing, Salem County Historical Society, February 25, 1963.

⁸³ Jaquette.

⁸⁴ John Warner Barber and Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of the State of New Jersey*, (United States: S. Tuttle, 1846) 426.

⁸⁵ Joseph S. Sickler, *The History of Salem County, New Jersey; Being the Story of John Fenwick's Colony, the Oldest English Speaking Settlement on the Delaware River*, (Salem, N.J: Sunbeam Publishing Company, 1937).

Hancock family, being Quaker, did not physically run the tavern or serve the alcohol. In addition, they were not public with their political beliefs, providing no motive for them to have housed the local militia in their private home. Given that tavern's functioned as public places of lodging, coupled with the fact that the Hancock's rented their tavern to a tavern keeper, it is very likely that the local patriot militia were sleeping in the tavern section of the home the morning of the attack.



Figure 4. “Sketch of Hancock House Historic Site” - Depicts the smaller tavern section of the home alongside the larger private section of the home as it stood at the time of the attack.

While there is no historical record supporting the existence of bloodstains on the attic floor of the Hancock House, there also seems to be no physical evidence of blood staining the floors. The original floorboards in the attic remain unstained and untreated. Therefore, any stain left on the attic floors would be much more visible, and more easily detectable. While no formal forensic testing has been done on the floors of the house, current employees have examined the floors with a black light, and found no indication

of bloodstains. Many locals have reported that Hewitt created the bloodstains herself, using chicken blood.⁸⁶

While early histories including Johnson, Stewart, and Sickler may be politically charged and may not fully support the primary sources regarding the attack, Hewitt's interpretation was very much her own. Hewitt may have derived her take on the political nature of the attack from these early accounts, but several details including the bloodstains in the attic of the home are unique to Hewitt's narrative. All of this begs several questions. Why did Mary Hewitt provide a false and dramatized account of the attack? Why is it that she failed to include several, rather accurate publications of the attack in her interpretation? Why did she choose to center her interpretation on the false perception of bloodstains on the attic floors, and how did her false interpretation become the standard for so long? Most importantly, why was the public so captivated by the idea of blood-stained floor boards?

Mary Hewitt was hired at the Hancock House in 1947 and retired in 1991. She lived in and interpreted the history of the house for a total of 44 years. For 44 years, Hewitt was able to disseminate her interpretation of the attack to the local population for generations. Many of the tours Hewitt gave were to local school children visiting the site on field trips. Many of these children, being very impressionable, have carried Hewitt's grim story of the attic with them, and passed it on to later generations of their families. The local population, many of whom can trace their lineage to several men involved in the attack on the Hancock House, have personally identified with Hewitt's version of the

⁸⁶ Employees at the Hancock House have referenced several conversations with local visitors regarding the assumption that Hewitt supposedly used chicken's blood to create the look of bloodstains on the attic floorboards.

attack. They have attached their local identity to those who suffered at the hands of the Queen's Rangers, and in turn identify with Hewitt's version of the violence and victimization that occurred.

The idea that bloodstains marked the attic floorboards was perpetuated by other employees for some time after Hewitt's employment. Hewitt's mythology of unfettered violence resonated with the locals, and quickly became the historical standard at the Hancock House. The dedication to the preservation of tradition, coupled with the strong sense of local pride in Revolutionary history, created the perfect recipe for Hewitt's mythology to become the historical standard. Given the impressionable nature of the many children who attended her tours, the visuals of whatever stains marked the floor at the time provided visitors with a form of tangible proof of the type of violence and death that Hewitt claimed occurred. Throughout the many newspaper articles published quoting Hewitt, she references anywhere from thirty to ninety militia men killed during the attack, which is a gross exaggeration of the numbers inferred from pension records.

Museums and historic sites allow for visitors to interact with history on a variety of levels. Historical objects and material culture provide tangible links to understanding and interacting with the past. Mary Hewitt's fabrication of bloodstains resonated with the local population because, from their perspective, it allowed them to interact with the distant human past of their ancestors. An original corner cabinet in the parlor of the house, and an original dining table in the keeping room allow visitors to imagine and connect with the still relevant and relatable daily activities that the family may have engaged in. However, the idea of the original bloodstains on the attic floor allowed visitors to interact and connect with the actual life, or the loss of life, that occurred during

the revolution. They serve as a tangible link to a human past, rather than a tangible link to a material past. While a piece of furniture or an object may allow a visitor to connect with past in a material way, the blood stains at the Hancock House have allowed for visitors to connect with the life of an individual that lived and died before the observer came into existence. The fascination with bloodstains speaks to the collective public memory of the Revolution, and the ideals inherent in what many consider the meaning of calling oneself an American.

Michael A. McDonnell's article "War and Nationhood: Founding Myths and Historical Realities" discusses the formation of a national identity through the event of the Revolution.⁸⁷ The Revolution was one of the longest and bloodiest wars in American history, with the per capita casualties equaling close to three million Americans.⁸⁸ This type of death and violence has been characterized as a result of the "might of the British forces...brought to bear on the hapless colonists."⁸⁹ With a surge in historical study on memory regarding the Revolution, it has become clear that the duration and severity of the Revolution was drawn out due to the many divisions among colonists over "whether to fight, what to fight for, and who would do the fighting."⁹⁰ The Revolution was very much the first American Civil War, in which colonists engaged in and committed equal levels of violence against one another over opposing political views.

⁸⁷ Michael A. McDonnell et al., *Remembering the Revolution: Memory, History, and Nation Making from Independence to the Civil War*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013).

⁸⁸ McDonnell et. al, 21.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

At the beginning of the war, many political leaders used terminology such as “sacred”, “providential”, and “glorious” to describe the cause of the Continental Army.⁹¹ Eventually the usage of these words subsided, given the heavy casualties and destruction to the landscape. However, these words were later implemented again in historical interpretations venerating the loss of life during the Revolution. Mary Hewitt herself, falsely interpreted bloodstains in the attic of the house, using similar language.

Hewitt promoted the idea of bloodstains on the attic floorboards of the Hancock House and used this to her “mnemonic advantage.”⁹² As a new employee, in a newly created position, Hewitt captured the attention of visitors and garnered a great deal of visitation with her interpretation and focus on bloodstains. The stains served to “authenticate” Hewitt’s grim narrative of death and sacrifice. While the basis of Hewitt’s method for garnering public interest was effective, she sacrificed historical accuracy along the way. Thus, the significance of the Hancock house became tied to the bloodstains in the attic, Hewitt’s main attraction.

While Hewitt created the relic of bloodstains in the attic, she put her approach into words saying, “[The house] was turned into a shrine in 1932 as a memorial to the men who gave their lives here.”⁹³ Edward Linenthal in his *Sacred Spaces: American’s and Their Battlefields*, discusses the veneration, defilement, and redefinition of America’s battlefields.⁹⁴ In the same way that battlefields such as Gettysburg have

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Bruggeman, 115.

⁹³ Hewitt.

⁹⁴ Edward Linenthal, *Sacred Spaces: American and Their Battlefields*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 1993.

functioned as sacred spaces, so have historic house museums like the Hancock House. Hewitt transformed the Hancock House into a “ceremonial center” where veneration reflected the idea that the “lessons” reflected in the attack were relevant to the “continued life of the nation.”⁹⁵

Hewitt’s interpretation of the bloodstains in the attic made such a lasting impression on the local community and the historical narrative of the house that it still lingers today. After her retirement in 1991 the house was closed for a period of time while the New Jersey State Park Service sought a new employee. In 1998 the house reopened, and during the opening ceremony, many were questioning the accuracy of Hewitt’s interpretation, as well as the authenticity of the supposed bloodstains in the attic. Richard Deneger, a staff writer for *The Press*, in Atlantic City, attended the opening ceremony on March 22nd, 1998. His article, “Revolutionary War Killings in Salem County Still a Mystery,” features the comments of several people in attendance.⁹⁶ Doris Tice, the wife of a Hancock descendant and a member of the volunteer group, Friends of the Hancock House, was interviewed concerning her research into the number of men killed during the attack. It was her opinion at the time that the Hewitt’s numbers had been overstated, and thanks to her early research, the pension records regarding the soldiers involved have been brought to light.⁹⁷ Deneger also seems to be the first to question the use of the term *massacre*, in reference to the overstated numbers used by Hewitt.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Linenthal, 1.

⁹⁶ Richard Deneger, “Revolutionary War Killings in Salem County Still a Mystery”, *The Press*, Atlantic City, New Jersey, Sunday, March 22nd, 1998.

⁹⁷ Deneger.

⁹⁸ While there is no objective definition of a massacre in reference to number of deaths, it typically refers to a killing of a large group of people, perpetrated by political actors against a rather defenseless group of people.

Deneger also referenced another visitor in attendance saying that they would like to see the attic of the house reopen. When questioned about the bloodstains in the attic, Scott Mauger, the superintendent of Fort Mott State Park at the time replied saying, “It’s a good story.”⁹⁹

Whether a good story or not, the current historian of the Hancock House William Michel (hired in 2016) initially struggled to get an accurate historical narrative of the attack to hold. Since the start of his employment he has worked to create a new historical narrative for the site, as well as several new programs to engage the public. The negative effects of Hewitt’s disregard for historical accuracy, and her fabrication of historic materials have obscured historical accuracy at the site. For years, Hewitt was able to perpetuate a sensationalized idea of the attack, through the resident dedication to local tradition. The accurate historical narrative regarding the attack is full of sarcastic correspondences between military leaders, poorly planned attacks, suspense, and surprise. After several years of research, reinterpreting the history, and bringing the house back to life, Hewitt’s fabrication of bloodstains in the attic of the home has become a part of the new historical interpretation at the house. Visitors are taken into the attic of the home, where a photo of Hewitt is displayed (Figure 2.), and after hearing about the attack from the perspective of Simcoe’s journal and several other original documents and publications, they are given a small portion of Mary Hewitt’s version. Visitors often find Hewitt’s interpretation amusing, but including it in the current interpretation allows

⁹⁹ Deneger.

visitors to understand the importance of historical accuracy and the ways in which historical myth can become the standard.

Chapter 4

The Jennie Wade House Museum

The Jennie Wade House, located on Baltimore Street in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania is a small historic house museum that interprets the death of Jennie Wade. Jennie Wade is considered to be the only civilian casualty of the Battle of Gettysburg, having been killed by a stray bullet that traveled through the door on the north side of her sister's home the morning of July 3rd, 1863.¹⁰⁰ Jennie is said to have been preparing bread for the Union soldiers at the time of her death, and for this reason has been venerated as a hero.¹⁰¹ While the museum lacks a precise mission statement, their website, pamphlets, and brochures all state that the house is a "shrine to Jennie and a glimpse into life during the American Civil War."¹⁰² The circumstances of Jennie Wade's death are central to the interpretation, and with a walk through the gift shop, it is evident that the museum aims to serve as a shrine to Jennie. One can purchase "Jennie Jam," or stamp a "Jennie Penny." One can also purchase Christmas ornaments, mugs, and coffee, all named after Jennie or brandished with her face. The historical narrative given at the Jennie Wade house matches the spirit of the gift shop, venerating Jennie and placing her death at the center of their interpretation.¹⁰³ The museum and its current interpretation draw heavily upon the

¹⁰⁰ Starr Steiner Fagerstrom, "The Jennie Wade House Museum" (tour given at the Jennie Wade House in Gettysburg, PA, November 16, 2019). The Jennie Wade House, *The Jennie Wade House*, (Pennsylvania: Gettysburg, 2019).

¹⁰¹ Fagerstrom.

¹⁰² "The Jennie Wade House", *Gettysburg Battlefield Tours Inc.*

<https://www.gettysburgbattlefieldtours.com/jennie-wade-house/>, (accessed January 25, 2020).

¹⁰³ Fagerstrom.

lore, mythology, sensationalism, and commercialization that has come to characterize the town of Gettysburg.

Beginning in 1901, a local entrepreneur named Robert Miller opened the house to the public, making the Jennie Wade House one the oldest commercial enterprises in Gettysburg.¹⁰⁴ The site is now owned and operated by the Gettysburg Tour Center; a private company not affiliated with the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum. The same year a monument of was erected in Evergreen Cemetery in Gettysburg and a perpetual flag flies next to her grave.¹⁰⁵ The house remains a private, for-profit institution, upholding the traditional story of patriotic bread making and venerating Jennie as a heroine. Throughout the subsequent years several myths and superstitions have developed, including the story that if an unmarried woman places her finger through the bullet hole in the north facing door, she will receive a marriage proposal within a year.¹⁰⁶ This lore was reinforced in a letter received by the Jennie Wade House from a woman who had placed her finger through the bullet hole and received a proposal the same year.¹⁰⁷ In more recent years, paranormal investigations of the home have been conducted and featured on popular television channels. While the true story of Jennie Wade's death may be buried deep within the oral histories and testimonies of Gettysburg citizens who have since passed, the myths, superstitions, and paranormal investigations further undermine the legitimacy of the Jennie Wade House as a serious historical

¹⁰⁴ Jennifer M. Murray, "The Jennie Wade House Museum", *Journal of American History* 99, no.3, (December 2012): 846-851, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.rowan.edu/ehost/>, (accessed January 25, 2020).

¹⁰⁵ A perpetual flag flies continuously, with being lowered to half-mast. The only other women to have a perpetual flag at her grave site is Betsy Ross.

¹⁰⁶ Fagerstrom.

¹⁰⁷ Murray "The Jennie Wade House Museum", 849.

institution. Instead, they reinforce the commercialized nature of the site as a for-profit institution.

Jennie is revered as a heroine, while her death had no impact on the outcome or course of the battle. While the museum has interpreted Jennie's death consistently for many years, speculation as to her role and the validity of the museum's narrative came into question in the early twentieth century. In many ways, the evolution of the Jennie Wade story is similar to that of the attack on Hancock's Bridge, New Jersey. While an accurate understanding of the attack on Hancock's Bridge has been achieved, an objective historical account of Jennie Wade's death may not be attainable. It is, however, evident through several newspaper articles that the widely accepted story of her death has been sensationalized and commercialized, complicating the accuracy of the present historical narrative and the role that Jennie's death played in the Battle of Gettysburg. These articles suggest that Jennie was not baking bread for the Union soldiers, that she lacked patriotic support for the Union, and that she was not the only civilian killed during the battle. However, the current narrative is intrinsically tied to the commercialized nature of the surrounding town and is rooted in Gettysburg lore. Several pieces of material culture within the Jennie Wade House museum, prove central to perpetuating Jennie's story within the realm of Gettysburg lore. These artifacts and objects of material culture include several bullet holes in the side of the home, Jennie's original dough tray, and a floorboard stained with Jennie Wade's blood. While the blood stained floor board in the Jennie Wade house is not central to the interpretation, it serves to legitimize and venerate Jennie's death in the same way the stained floorboards of the Hancock House did the deaths of Revolutionary War soldiers.

The story of Jennie Wade's death during the battle of Gettysburg has been recorded and written only a selection of times. The first comprehensive account of Jennie Wade's death comes in *The True Story of "Jennie" Wade A Gettysburg Maid*, written in 1917 by John White Johnston.¹⁰⁸ Johnston was a wealthy "musical composer, author, publisher, lecturer, inventor, and manufacturer."¹⁰⁹ Johnston owned two properties associated with Jennie Wade, the location of which are unknown, collected Jennie Wade "memorabilia", and endowed the burial plot where Jennie was buried.¹¹⁰ It is unclear how or when Johnston became acquainted with the Wade family, or when he purchased the properties associated with her. Johnston also attended the 50th Anniversary of Gettysburg in 1913, during the time when rumors regarding the accuracy of the Jennie Wade story were circulating. Johnston's account of Jennie Wade's life and death was supposedly given "the endorsement and approval of Georgia Wade McClellan," Jennie Wade's sister.¹¹¹ Georgia Wade McClellan is also listed in the acknowledgments of the book, indicating that she was most likely interviewed or had some part in the formation of Johnston's written account.¹¹² Johnston also presented his writing at a memorial service for Jennie on June 11th, 1917 at St. James Lutheran Church, with Georgia McClellan in attendance.¹¹³ Johnston's narrative perpetuates the patriotic story of Jennie Wade having died as a martyr to the Union cause while baking bread for the Union soldiers.

¹⁰⁸ John White Johnston, *The True Story of "Jennie" Wade A Gettysburg Maid*, (Rochester, N.Y.: J.W. Johnston, 1917).

¹⁰⁹ Gregory D. Carter, "An Inventory of the John White Johnston Material in the Library of the Rochester Museum and Science", *Rochester Museum and Science Center*, 1993.

¹¹⁰ Carter, 5.

¹¹¹ Johnston, 7.

¹¹² Johnston, 2.

¹¹³ Johnston, 36.

The most recent comprehensive account of Jennie Wades' life and death is provided by journalist Cindy L. Small in *The Jennie Wade Story: A True and Complete Account of the Only Civilian Killed during the Battle of Gettysburg*.¹¹⁴ Small's account serves as the standard for the current historical interpretation at the site and takes personal creative liberties in telling the story of Jennie Wade's life. Small devotes particular attention to the supposed relationship between Jennie Wade and Johnston Skelly, a Union soldier and childhood friend. Neither survived the end of the war, and the pair was supposedly engaged to be married. This relationship is referenced as support for Jennies Union patriotism. According to tour guides at the Jennie Wade House, Small's account is derived from a written narrative given by Jennie's sister Georgia. Unfortunately, only a few copies of her narrative were published, and the locations of these copies are unknown. Small was fortunate enough to obtain a copy of Georgia's narrative for the purpose of writing her book, however, the original narrative was never reprinted or republished for further public or private use.¹¹⁵ Small's narrative coincides with Johnston's, keeping with the traditional account of Jennie Wade's death.

Jennie's story has been referenced and written in a small collection of several other articles and pamphlets, but Johnston and Smalls works serve as the two most prominent comprehensive accounts of Jennie's life and death. Although these accounts are both layered with creative and sensational detail, they have been regarded as the standard for historical interpretations at the site. According to Small and Johnston's narratives, Mary Virginia "Jennie" Wade was born on May 21st, 1843 in Gettysburg

¹¹⁴ Cindy L. Small, *The Jennie Wade Story: A True and Complete Account of the Only Civilian Killed During the Battle of Gettysburg*, (Gettysburg: Thomas Publications, 1991).

¹¹⁵ Fagerstrom.

Pennsylvania. As a young girl, Mary Virginia Wade was called “Gin” or “Ginnie” by her classmates (in reference to her middle name) and was later incorrectly referred to as “Jennie” in a newspaper article.¹¹⁶ Subsequently, the name “Jennie” Wade took hold and has since been used in all historical narratives and reports.

The current, popular story of Jennie Wade’s life and death is derived from both Johnston and Small’s accounts. Jennie’s father had fallen ill later in life so Jennie and her mother Mary worked as seamstresses in order to maintain their home on Breckinridge Street during the war.¹¹⁷ The house known today as the “Jennie Wade House” was not actually Jennie Wade’s house, but was owned by her sister Georgia and her husband John McClellan.¹¹⁸ At the time of the battle, the home was a duplex, with the McClellan family living in the north half and the McLean family residing in the south half.¹¹⁹ By July 1st most families had either left town or sought refuge from the fighting in their basements and cellars.¹²⁰ At the time, Jennie and her mother were watching over a six-year-old boy by the name of Isaac Brinkerhoff, who was crippled and whose mother was out of town for work.¹²¹ The same morning Jennie headed to her sister’s house on Baltimore Street with Isaac and her youngest brother Harry.¹²² Jennie’s mother had been staying at Georgia’s home, helping her take care of her newborn baby. Throughout the day Jennie baked bread and served it to the Union soldiers along with water from the well on the

¹¹⁶ Johnston, 5.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Johnston 13.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Johnston, 15.

McClellan property.¹²³ Come evening, the battle had surrounded the McClellan property with the Union Army on the south side of the house, and the Confederate Army on the northern side of the property. Sharpshooters were set up at the Rupp Tannery down the road from the McClellan's. (See Figure 5 for a detailed drawing of Baltimore Street.¹²⁴) Meanwhile, in a heroic display of patriotism, Jennie continued to serve the Union Army bread and fresh water. By the afternoon of July 2nd, the firing had increased, and a 10 lb. Parrot Shrapnel shell passed through the second story of the home and traveled through a wall dividing the McClellan and the McLean residence.¹²⁵ (See Figure 6 for a detailed drawing of the trajectory of the Parrot shell.¹²⁶) Luckily, the McLean family had left town, and no one was residing in the southern portion of the home.¹²⁷ Having heard the shell pass through the upper portion of the home, Jennie fainted but was back to making bread later that evening.¹²⁸

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Johnston, 14.

¹²⁵ Johnston, 19.

¹²⁶ Johnston, 18.

¹²⁷ Fagerstrom.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

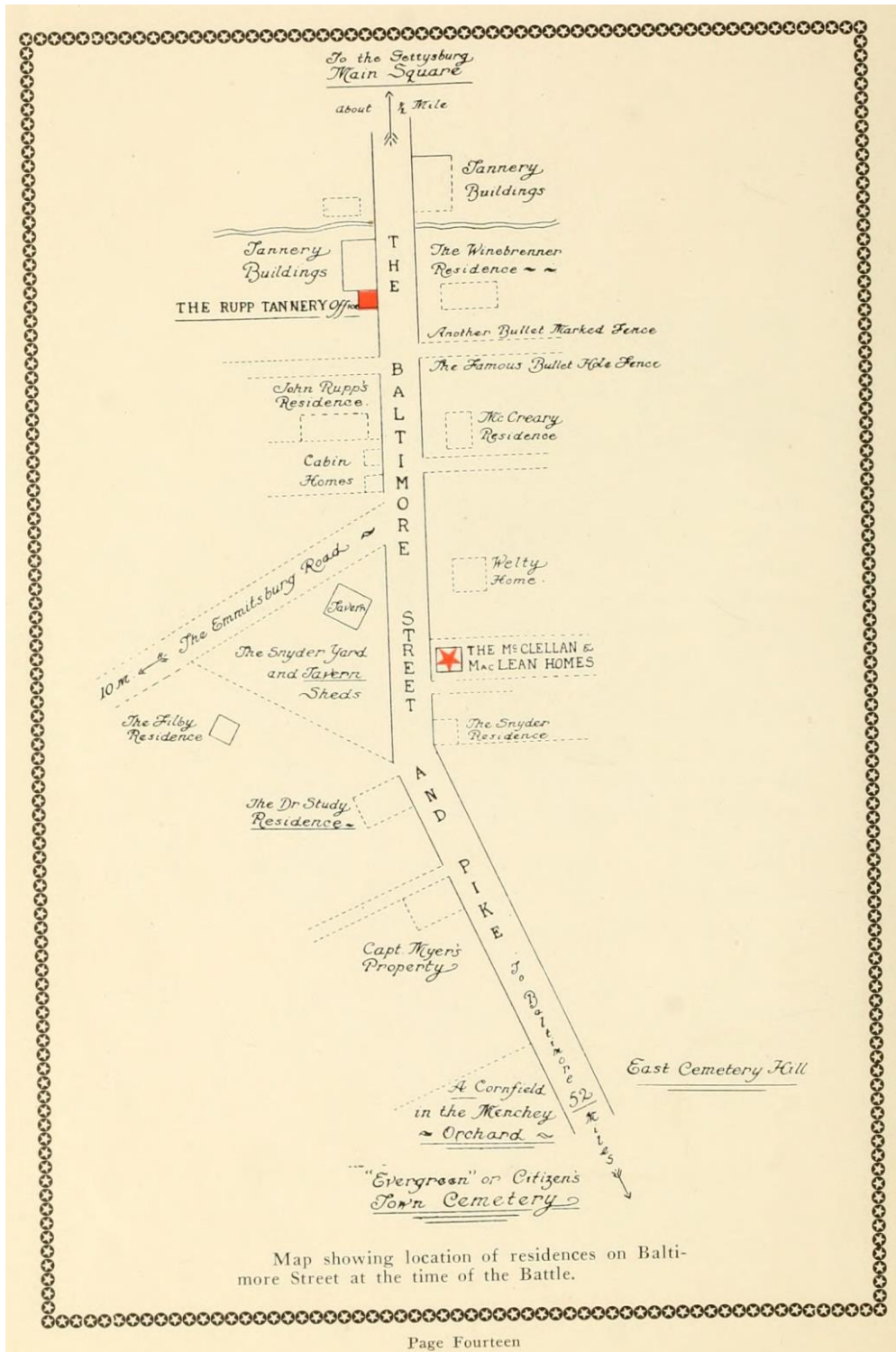


Figure 5. "Sketch of Baltimore Street" - Map detailing Baltimore Street, the McClellan home, and the Rupp Tannery Office.

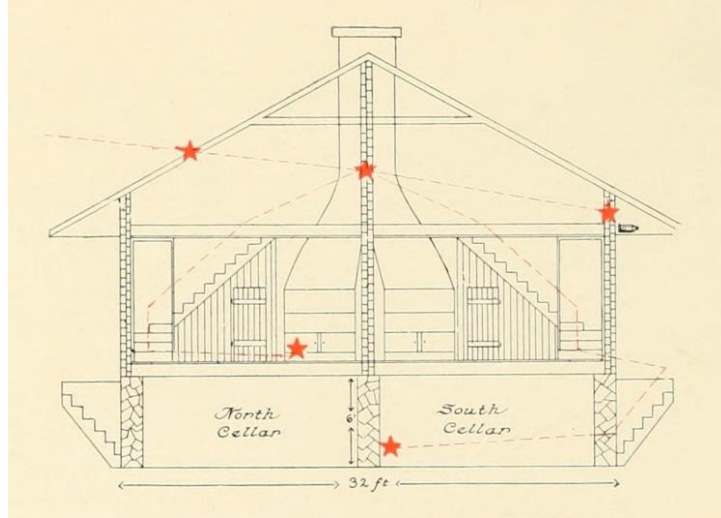


Figure 6. “Sketch of Shrapnel Shell Trajectory” - Drawing indicating the trajectory of the Parrot shrapnel shell, through the McClellan home.

At four o’clock in the morning on July 3rd, Jennie and her brother fetched wood from the yard to fuel the oven so that more bread could be made. About a half hour later, a Union soldier came knocking on the door of the McClellan house, asking for bread. The soldier was promised a biscuit if he were to come back later that day.¹²⁹ After breakfast Jennie began to pray, and her sister pleaded with her not to “intensify the situation.”¹³⁰ The last words Georgia McClellan heard her sister say were, “If there is anyone in the house that is to be killed today, I hope that it is me, as George has that little baby.”¹³¹ Around seven o’clock the shooting began to intensify once again, and a bullet entered the parlor room of the house, striking the bed post where Georgia and her newborn baby were laying.¹³² Later, at about eight o’clock, Jennie again began making the bread which

¹²⁹ Johnston, 21.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid. George was Jennie’s nickname for her sister Georgia.

¹³² Johnston, 23.

had been promised to the Union soldier. While leaning over a dough tray kneading dough, a Confederate bullet “presumably from a sharpshooter’s rifle at the Rupp Tannery office, penetrated the outer door on the north side, [as well as] the door which stood ajar between the parlor and the kitchen.” This bullet struck Jennie in the back just below her left shoulder blade, penetrating her heart and embedding itself in the front of her corset.¹³³ Jennie supposedly fell to the floor, “without a groan.” Her time of death was recorded at eight thirty the morning of July 3rd, 1863.¹³⁴

After hearing Georgia scream, Union soldiers entered the home and ordered the women to take refuge in the cellar of the home on the opposite side of the building. The only way to reach the cellar on the south side of the home, was to exit from the side receiving fire from the Confederate Army. However, after inspecting the hole made by the 10lb Parrot shrapnel shell, the soldiers were able to widen the opening and guide the family, along with Jennie’s body, through the opening into the McLean residence and out the south side of the home into the cellar.¹³⁵ The family remained in the cellar until one o’clock in the morning on July 4th.

Before Johnston’s account was published, discussion regarding the authenticity and accuracy of the Jennie Wade story began circulating. Several newspaper articles and a book published around the time of the 50th Anniversary challenge the traditional narrative of Jennie as a patriotic bread maker, supporting the Union cause. Clifton Johnson’s *Highways and Byways from the St. Lawrence to Virginia*, written in 1913,

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Johnston, 25.

features interviews with Gettysburg citizens.¹³⁶ According to one citizen, Jennie was “the only outspoken rebel in the town of Gettysburg...because her father was a Virginian and she sided with his state.”¹³⁷ Even Tillie Pierce, a young girl at the time of the battle well known for her eye-witness journal entries regarding the conflict, suggests that Jennie’s “sympathies were not as much for the Union as they should have been.”¹³⁸ It was noted by several other citizens that for this reason Jennie Wade would refuse to go out into the streets and sing with other girls when Union soldiers would pass through town.¹³⁹

The Pittsburgh Gazette Times published the most assertive, and lengthy article in 1914. The article entitled, “Baking Bread at Gettysburg While the Battle Raged: Jennie Wade, Who Didn’t Bake Any, Gets Monument – Josephine Miller, Who Did, Has None. Who Confounded Their Stories?” was written by George T. Fleming.¹⁴⁰ Fleming challenged the popular ideas of the Jennie Wade story, asserting several facts obtained from an interview with Jennie’s sister Georgia. Fleming claimed that Jennie sympathized with the Confederacy, that she was not engaged to Johnston Skelly, and that she was not baking bread for the Union soldiers, but for her family at the time of her death.¹⁴¹ Fleming claims that a young woman by the name of Josephine Miller was in fact making bread for the Union soldiers, but that her name had since been forgotten due to “the fact

¹³⁶ Clifton Johnson, *Highways and Byways from the St. Lawrence to Virginia*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1913).

¹³⁷ Johnson, 160.

¹³⁸ Jarrad A. Fuoss, "Contested Narratives: The Influence of Local Remembrance on National Narratives of Gettysburg during the 19th Century," (Master’s Thesis, West Virginia University, 2018), <http://ezproxy.rowan.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.rowan.edu/docview/2102131168?accountid=13605>.

¹³⁹ Johnson, 160.

¹⁴⁰ George T. Fleming, “Baking Bread at Gettysburg While the Battle Raged: Jennie Wade, Who Didn’t Bake Any, Gets Monument – Josephine Miller, Who Did, Has None”, *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, July 5, 1914.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

that the god of battles had ordained that Josephine was not to be killed.”¹⁴² The stories of Josephine Miller, having stayed in town, baking several loaves of bread for the Union soldiers, eventually became conflated with the story of Jennie’s death. Fleming argues that while Jennie was not making bread for the Union soldiers Josephine was, and that her story of baking bread, somehow became associated with the story of Jennie’s death.

Fleming asked Georgia McClellan several direct questions concerning Jennie’s bread making and she indicated that Jennie had made no bread for the Union soldiers, but had promised a soldier who came knocking on the door the morning of her death that if he returned the same evening she would give him a biscuit if there were any leftover.¹⁴³ The soldier did come back for the bread, and Jennie’s mother supposedly served the bread to the Union soldiers and accepted payment for it.¹⁴⁴ He also indicated that Jennie was not engaged to Johnston Skelly, but that a letter received after her death indicated his intentions to marry her.¹⁴⁵ Unfortunately, Skelly died shortly after Jennie, but it became part of the Jennie Wade story that the two were arranged to be married before the war.

Johnston’s narrative published in 1917 serves as a direct response to the those who challenged the traditional Jennie Wade story, such as Johnson and Fleming. He reiterates that his is the *true* account of Jennie Wades death, that Jennie was a “Union girl”, the only civilian killed during the battle, and that she was in fact making bread for

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Johnston’s account repeatedly emphasized that Jennie, nor her mother, ever charged or accepted payment for the bread that they handed out to the Union soldiers. The further pushes Johnston’s agenda of emphasizing Jennie’s patriotism.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

the Union soldiers.¹⁴⁶ The introduction of his book reads, “There is romance and tragedy in the life of this Gettysburg girl. However, the romance here presented is the romance of truth, rather than of fiction.”¹⁴⁷ Jennie was described by Johnston as a “good looking, hardworking, young woman who’s daily service assisting her mother in maintaining a home for themselves and the boys will always remain an honor and credit to American womanhood.”¹⁴⁸ Consistently, throughout the rest of his narrative, Johnston emphasizes Jennie’s loyalty to the Union Army, suggesting that her engagement to a Union soldier by the name of Johnston Hastings Skelly serves as a testament to her “beautiful character and patriotism.”¹⁴⁹ Johnston found it particularly important to emphasize that Jennie “was not baking but mixing the ingredients for the biscuits, which she had promised, when overtaken by death” and that “the biscuits were never finished.”¹⁵⁰ This detail was emphasized by Johnston in order to disprove a supposed “contention” that Jennie “was not baking bread for the household when she fell.”¹⁵¹

A particular point of contention regarding the monument erected in Jennies honor referenced in Johnson’s newspaper article, was also challenged by Johnston in his book. The monument in Evergreen Cemetery where Jennie is buried, presents a sculpture of Jennie with canteens draped over her shoulders and a water pitcher in her hand.¹⁵² This monument was dedicated by the Iowa Women’s Relief Corps in 1901, shortly after

¹⁴⁶ Johnston, 7.

¹⁴⁷ Johnston, 3.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Johnston, 25.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Johnston, 30.

Georgia McClellan took on a leadership role within the organization.¹⁵³ This organization was under the impression, most likely given by Georgia McClellan, that Jennie had gone onto the battlefield and served water and bread to the soldiers, and was later killed while making additional bread for the troops.¹⁵⁴ Many states involved in the Battle of Gettysburg began erecting monuments after the war, but interestingly there were no Iowa troops that had fought at Gettysburg.¹⁵⁵ Johnston's account claims that funding for the monument was secured by the solicitation of the women in the Iowa Relief Corps, including Georgia McClellan.¹⁵⁶ Johnston states that a portion of the money that funded the monument came from a Walter Graham of Scotland, and that the rest of the funding came from a variety of donations.¹⁵⁷ Johnston fails to mention his own personal involvement in that he endowed the burial lot.¹⁵⁸ Being that Johnston was also from Scotland, he most likely knew Walter Graham and helped in the solicitation of the funding. Again, it is unclear how exactly both Georgia McClellan and Johnston knew each other, however, they were both clearly concerned with the veneration of Jennie as a patriotic martyr.

¹⁵³ Johnson, 160.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Johnston, 29

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Carter, 5.

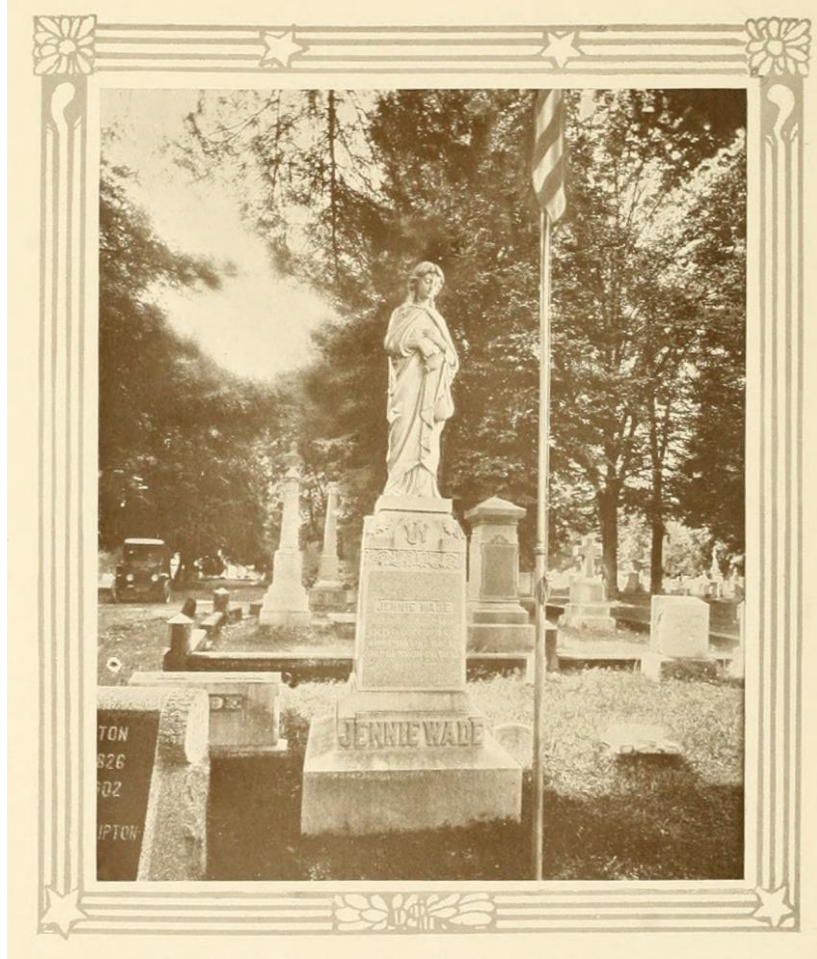


Figure 7. “Jennie Wade Monument” - Jennie Wade’s monument in Evergreen Cemetery.

As late as 1985, an issue of the Minneapolis Star and Tribune promoting Gettysburg as a tourist destination wrote that “Jennie...was not the only civilian killed in the battle; an unidentified woman was found dead on Chambersburg street...but Jennie, who was struck by a bullet while baking bread, made better copy.”¹⁵⁹ Another article in the Philadelphia Inquirer published a year later wrote exactly the same, but referenced

¹⁵⁹ Hank Burchard, “If you go/Hospitality Wins at Gettysburg”, *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, November 24, 1985.

this information as coming from “Jacob M. Sheads, dean of Gettysburg historians.”¹⁶⁰ Sheads was a local historian, graduate of Gettysburg college, and teacher in the Gettysburg area. He also worked as a ranger at Gettysburg National Military Park for several years.

Many of the articles and interviews from the early twentieth century indicate that most Gettysburg citizens were reluctant to answer questions from journalists and researchers concerning the Jennie Wade story, but those willing to talk gave a consistently different version of the story than what was then being told at the commercialized Jennie Wade House.¹⁶¹ The objections to the traditional Jennie Wade story began circulating after her monument was erected, and it is likely that given its size and scope, many citizens had objections but were afraid to voice them. These articles were published from roughly 1913 to 1916 and all emphasize that Jennie was not the only civilian killed during the battle, that Jennie lacked Union patriotism, and that she was not baking any bread for the Union soldiers, nor was she actually engaged to Johnston Skelly. Shortly after these challenges to the popular historic narrative began circulating, John White Johnston’s book was published in 1917 with the help of Georgie McClellan. Johnston repeatedly references the many challenges to the popular narrative, and insists upon Jennie’s patriotic bread making, using Georgia McClellan’s “endorsement” as proof that his narrative is in fact the *true* story of Jennie Wade’s death.¹⁶² Georgia and Johnston, given their involvement in the establishment of the monument, would not have wanted the notion that that it was predicated on a false story circulating.

¹⁶⁰ Hank Burchard, “Gettysburg Feels it Has a Mission”, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 11, 1986.

¹⁶¹ This reluctance is referenced in Johnson book and Flemings newspaper article.

¹⁶² Johnston, 7.

After Johnston's publication of the *true* story of Jennie Wade, the articles and publications challenging this narrative died down. Johnston's 1917 narrative paved the way for Cindy Small's narrative, and both have established the current historical interpretations at the Jennie Wade House museum. A current tour of the Jennie Wade House utilizes the patriotic narrative and venerates Jennie as a heroine. The tour begins at the side entrance of the home, offering some brief demographic information concerning the town of Gettysburg in 1863, and then introduces the one hundred to one hundred and fifty bullet holes marking the side of the home.¹⁶³ The tour then moves inside the parlor of the home, where Jennie's sister gave birth to her son on June 26th, 1863. To interpret Jennie's nephew's birth, a bed remains in the parlor. While the bed is not original to the home, or the period, a bullet hole on one of the bed posts has been reproduced in order to convey just how close each of Jennie's family members also were to being killed. The tour then moves into the kitchen of the home, where Jennie was killed. Here the tour devotes particular attention to the original bullet holes through the exterior and interior kitchen doors. At this point Jennie the docent referred to Jennie as a "martyr" and "heroine."¹⁶⁴ The guide also emphasized that Jennie had been shot through the heart, was instantly killed, and experienced "no suffering."¹⁶⁵ The tour then moves to the second floor, where the Parrot shell traveled through the upper portion of the home and created a hole between the two sections of the building. Then, heading back down to the first floor of the south side of the home, an original clock, set at eight thirty to commemorate Jennie's death, sits on a mantel. Inside of a curio cabinet in the same room sits a floorboard,

¹⁶³ Fagerstrom.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

supposedly stained with Jennie's blood, along with the Parrot shell that had lodged itself inside the wall of the southern portion of the home. The tour then ends in the cellar of the home, where Mrs. Wade, Georgia McClellan, Isaac, and Harry waited until the next morning with Jennie's body. In the basement the tour briefly touched upon the love story between Johnston "Jack" Skelly and Jennie.¹⁶⁶ A human-like form, lying on a bench covered in a sheet serves to represent Jennie's body in the cellar of the home.

Given the many disputes and contradicting evidence regarding Jennie Wade's death, it remains difficult to determine the exact circumstance and events that occurred at the McClellan household during the battle. The entire Jennie Wade story has been predicated on testimonies and the memory of individuals like Georgia McClellan, and other citizens throughout the town of Gettysburg. The location and accessibility of the original written testimonies given by Georgia and other family members remain obscured. Meanwhile, written accounts supporting the traditional and popular narrative of Jennie's death, as well as those that challenge them, all claim that their writings are endorsed or approved of by Georgia McClellan, an eyewitness to Jennie's death. The many versions of the Jennie Wade story, based on oral history and local memory, strongly represent the power that local memory can have in shaping larger historical narratives. While the true story of Jennie Wade may be beyond recovery, the evolution of the current sensationalized narrative and its relationship to commercialization speaks to the power of memory. All of this begs the question: How did the traditional narrative take hold, over the opposing narrative presented by the challenges made by local reporters?

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

The interviews presented by local reporters provide some compelling evidence suggesting that Jennie was not the patriotic Union girl that the popular narrative claims her to be. Many local Gettysburg citizens referred to Jennie as a Confederate sympathizer, including Tillie Pierce. Jennie's father James Wade, a reportedly proud Virginian, was convicted of larceny in November of 1850 and spent two years in Eastern State Penitentiary.¹⁶⁷ He was then declared "very insane" and moved to the Adams County Alms House where he remained until his death.¹⁶⁸ These details challenge the Union patriotism championed in the original historic narrative and suggest that Jennie's family would not have met the standard of middle-class respectability. Jennie's mother also received a pension for Jennie's death in 1882, in the form of a recurring payment.¹⁶⁹ After Jennie's sister Georgia became the head of the Iowa Women's Relief Organization, the story of Jennie Wade having died making bread and serving water to the Union Soldiers began circulating, resulting in the erection of her monument in 1900. Roughly 10-15 years after Jennie Wade's monument was erected, with the questionable involvement of her sister Georgia, conflicting accounts and information emerged. Jennie's patriotism, the justification for her pension and her one thousand two-hundred-dollar monument, was attacked and needed to be defended and Johnston's 1917 narrative did just that.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Jay Bellamy, "Brother V. Friend against Friend: A Story of Family, Friendship, Love, and War", *Prologue* 45, no.1, Spring 2013, <https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.rowan.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=31h&AN=89128365&site=ehost-live>.

¹⁶⁸ Bellamy, 20.

¹⁶⁹ "Jennie Wade's Pension", *St. Louis Post – Dispatch*, July 13, 1882, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://ezproxy.rowan.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.rowan.edu/docview/578591593?accountid=13605>

¹⁷⁰ Johnston, 29.

Johnston challenged the suggestion that Jennie was not making bread by citing the endorsement of Georgia's eye-witness testimony.¹⁷¹ He diverted attention from the political leanings and mental health struggles of Jennie's father by saying that his "health [had] broken down," but his whereabouts during the battle were not mentioned.¹⁷² He also specifically defended Jennie by saying that the reason she did not go out into the street and sing for the homecoming Union soldiers, was because she was overwhelmed with the responsibilities of helping her mother take care of the home and young Isaac, not because she was a confederate sympathizer.¹⁷³ Johnston's primary goal, of upholding Jennie's reputation as a patriotic Union girl is most clear in the final words of his narrative. He says, "A photograph of Corporal Skelly was found in the pocket of [Jennie] Wade's gown with the key of the house she had left on Breckinridge Street. Is there any further evidence necessary to prove she was a Union girl? Furthermore, Union veterans attest that her attitude toward them was cordial."¹⁷⁴ Consequently, Johnston's narrative took hold and became the standard for historical interpretations, overriding the skepticism and challenges posed by many.

But what was it about Johnston's narrative that quieted the dissenters? It may not have been anything in Johnston's narrative or even the endorsement of Georgia McClellan., but the cultural power of death. Regardless of the circumstances, Jennie died during the battle, and that was enough for many of the locals not to challenge the accuracy of the historical narrative being told. The patriotic story of Jennie's death

¹⁷¹ Johnston, 7.

¹⁷² Johnston, 5.

¹⁷³ Johnston, 11.

¹⁷⁴ Johnston, 33.

became prominent during the Victorian period, when much of society engaged in a culture of mourning and held a heightened sense of respect for the dead.¹⁷⁵ In addition, Jennie's monument served as a powerful tool in commemorating Jennie and reinforcing her patriotic role and need for veneration. The objects on display in the museum, such as the original dough tray that Jennie was supposedly using at the time of her death comes complete with a certificate of authenticity.¹⁷⁶ The bullet holes in the doors and side of the house, the bloodstained floor board, the 10 pound Parrot Shrapnel shell, and the original clock set to 8:30 AM, all paired with the commemorative and sensational narrative provides visitors with tangible links to and reinforcement of the popular historical narrative of Jennie Wade. They guide the interpretation given at the site and are used in support of guides who champion the traditional narrative of Jennie, the patriotic and faithful Union girl who died baking bread for the Union soldiers. All of this when paired with the for-profit commercialization of the site creates a deeply rooted and one-dimensional historical narrative of Jennie Wade's death.

¹⁷⁵ Kenneth Ames, *Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture*, (Pennsylvania: Temple University Press), 1995.

¹⁷⁶ Fagerstrom.

Chapter 5

Shriver House Museum

The Shriver House Museum, located on Baltimore Street in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, was originally built in 1860 by the Shriver family.¹⁷⁷ George Shriver married Henrietta “Hettie” Weikert on January 23rd, 1885.¹⁷⁸ Both were 18 years of age, and had grown up on farms less than two miles away from each other. Given the close proximity of the Shriver and Weikert farms, it is likely that George and Hettie knew each other for most of their young lives. The couple welcomed their first daughter Sarah “Sadie” on November 21, 1855.¹⁷⁹ Roughly two years later the couple welcomed their second daughter Mary “Mollie” on August 13, 1857.¹⁸⁰ George and Hettie welcomed their third child Jacob on June 4, 1859.¹⁸¹ Unfortunately, Jacob passed away less than three months later due to health complications. In September of 1859 George sold approximately six acres of his family farm, which he had inherited from his father, and purchased “a-lot-of land” just 6 miles north on Baltimore Street in Gettysburg.¹⁸² The lot would be located just a few miles from the Jennie Wade House.

At the time, Gettysburg was a growing town with commercial potential. By 1858 the railroad, as well as telegraph services, had been implemented. This brought more traffic to Gettysburg, and allowed for the local tanneries, law offices, and other business

¹⁷⁷ Nancie W. Gudmestad, “The Shriver’s Story: Eyewitnesses to the Battle of Gettysburg”, (Pennsylvania: Shriver House Museum), 2008.

¹⁷⁸ Gudmestad, 9.

¹⁷⁹ Gudmestad, 12.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

to flourish. Located near the border of Pennsylvania and Maryland State lines, the Shriver's planned to take advantage of this commercial opportunity. George had grand plans for his new lot and set out to build "Shriver's House Saloon and Ten-Pin Alley."¹⁸³ The family had plans to live in their home while the cellar would function as a saloon and an area in the back of the property would be used as a ten-pin (modern day bowling). By 1860 construction on the Shriver house had finished and the family began moving into their new home.¹⁸⁴ The same year, talk of a war between northern and southern states over the issue of slavery began circulating. In April of 1861 Abraham Lincoln called for the mobilization of 75,000 Union troops after Confederate forces attacked Fort Sumter.¹⁸⁵ At the time, George and Hettie's saloon and ten-pin alley were not yet complete. While George wanted to immediately join the Union Army, the couple came to the agreement that he would not join until the successful completion of their business.¹⁸⁶

In August, construction on Shriver's Saloon and Ten-Pin Alley was completed. George joined the Union Army on August 7th, 1861 and was mustered into Cole's Cavalry, Company C in Frederick, Maryland.¹⁸⁷ George and Hettie agreed that the saloon and ten-pin alley would not open until George returned from war. The Shriver's optimistically expected the war would be over by the end of the year, but the war would not be over for several years.

Unfortunately, the Shriver's Saloon and Ten-Pin Alley would never open. On July 1, 1863 fighting erupted between Union and Confederate soldiers, and fearing the worst,

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Gudmestad, 21.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Gudmestad, 24.

Hettie did her best to maintain her normal daily routine with her daughters. Later that day as the fighting intensified and moved closer to their home, Hettie made the decision to leave town for her parent's farm three miles away. Hettie, Sadie, Mollie, and their next door neighbor Tillie Pierce left for the Weikert farm around one o'clock in the afternoon.¹⁸⁸ While at the Weikert farm, Hettie, her daughters, and Tillie made use of their time by making biscuits, beef tea, and serving water to groups of soldiers that passed by the farm on their way to Gettysburg.¹⁸⁹

By Friday July 3, the fighting had surrounded the Weikert farm and ravaged the landscape. Several rooms in the house were being used to treat wounded soldiers, while Hettie, her daughters, and Tillie continued to provide support to Union soldiers as best they could.¹⁹⁰ This went on for several days until the fighting finally stopped. By July 7, Hettie decided that it was time for everyone to return home and assess the damage.¹⁹¹ While the Shriver family was gone, a neighboring family, the Garlach's, hid in the Shriver's cellar because their own home was flooded with more than a foot of water.¹⁹² Mr. Pierce, Tillie's father, as well as members of the Garlach family, later recalled that Confederate sharpshooters had taken over the Shriver's attic, removed brick from the south facing wall, and used the holes to fire upon Union forces.¹⁹³ Confederate troops had ravaged the Shriver household, as well as many other homes on Baltimore Street. After they, the Shriver house was used as a makeshift hospital for wounded Union soldiers.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁸ Gudmestad, 36.

¹⁸⁹ Gudmestad, 40.

¹⁹⁰ Gudmestad, 48.

¹⁹¹ Gudmestad, 58.

¹⁹² Gudmestad, 69.

¹⁹³ Gudmestad, 71.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

The Shriver family faced the formidable task of returning their home to normalcy without the help of the family patriarch.

George's company engaged in many skirmishes throughout Maryland and Virginia. While it is unknown whether he was present at Gettysburg, he was able to make it home on December 26, 1863 to spend a four-day furlough with his family.¹⁹⁵ After returning for duty, George was captured and taken prisoner by Confederate troops in Middleburg, Virginia.¹⁹⁶ George quickly became ill, and spent the rest of his life in Confederate prisons. He was reported dead on December 13, 1864 and was buried in grave number 6816 of the National Cemetery in Andersonville, Georgia.¹⁹⁷ The Andersonville Prison, where George ultimately lost his life, was the largest prison for Union soldiers. It is known for its poor conditions, including a lack of adequate food and water and overcrowding. These conditions contributed to the rampant spread of disease, which ultimately led to George's death. The "Shriver's Saloon and Ten-Pin Alley" would never open for business. While the Shriver's were relatively financially stable, Hettie was in no position to maintain their new home and business. In April of 1866 Hettie sold the property on Baltimore Street, and married Daniel Pittenturf in July of the same year.¹⁹⁸ Pittenturf was a stone-mason, blacksmith, and widower from Heidlersburg, Pennsylvania.¹⁹⁹ The two lived the remainder of their lives in Annapolis, Maryland and Hettie gave birth to two more children, only one of whom survived to adulthood.²⁰⁰ Both

¹⁹⁵ Gudmestad, 80.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Gudmestad, 85.

¹⁹⁸ Gudmestad, 90.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

Sadie and Mollie married, but unfortunately died young before having any children of their own.²⁰¹ While the Shriver family's story is indeed rather grim, it holds a great deal of historical significance. Their story represents what many civilians experienced during the war, and how the war changed the course of their lives. Fortunately, the Shriver House now functions as a historic museum, tastefully and expertly interpreting the Battle of Gettysburg from the civilian perspective.

Efforts to commemorate the Battle of Gettysburg began with the burial of the soldiers who lost their lives. The Soldiers' National Cemetery was established in 1863 and burials began in the fall that same year.²⁰² The Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association was created in 1864 for the purposes of preserving the battlefield.²⁰³ These preserved lands were transferred to the federal government in 1895 and were designated as a National Military Park.²⁰⁴ In 1933 the park was then transferred to the Department of the Interior, National Park Service and remains currently remains under their management.²⁰⁵ While Gettysburg was becoming increasingly commercialized just before the battle took place, this progress inhibited by the war. The creation of Gettysburg National Military Park brought about some new commercial progress, however, it was not until the post-World War II period that Gettysburg experienced a surge in tourism and commercial progress.²⁰⁶ To connect with the "triumphant national

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Gettysburg National Military Park, "History and Culture", National Park Service, November 27, 2019, <https://www.nps.gov/gett/learn/historyculture/index.htm>, (accessed May 9, 2020).

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Jennifer M. Murray, *The Making, Management, and Memory of Gettysburg National Military Park, 1933-2013*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press), 2014.

narrative“ of the postwar period, Americans flocked to many national historic sites.²⁰⁷ During the first full year after World War II, the Gettysburg National Military park reported visitation at 508,641.²⁰⁸ This marked the initial surge in tourism and commercialization the continues to characterize Gettysburg today.

In 1984, Nancie and Del Gudmestad became tired of their careers in the computer industry and opened a bed and breakfast in Gettysburg, utilizing the increased commercial potential of Gettysburg. After deciding they wanted to open their own museum and interpret the civilian experience during the battle, the couple began searching for properties. Without the least bit of knowledge concerning the history of the property, the couple purchased 309 Baltimore Street and began renovating it in 1996. While the house was undergoing extensive renovations, the couple began intensive research.²⁰⁹

A household inventory from the year that Hettie sold the property provided the Gudmestad’s with an idea of how the home was furnished.²¹⁰ Although the home fell into disrepair and needed a great deal of restoration, the original integrity of the home remained. They salvaged original plaster work, flooring, doorways, and windows. Modern bathrooms were never installed in the original portion of the home, therefore, the internal layout of the house is very similar to the original design. Objects recovered during restoration such as bullets, cartridges, medical supplies, and a young child’s shoe

²⁰⁷ Murray, *The Making, Management, and Memory of Gettysburg National Military Park*, 62.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Gudmestad, 92.

²¹⁰ Ibid

have been preserved and displayed in the museum gift shop.²¹¹ The shoe most likely belonged to either Sadie or Mollie, and was placed within the walls during construction of the home as a token of good luck.²¹² See Figure 8 for an image of the shoe. The Gudmestads are committed to incorporating the restoration process of the property into their interpretation. When taking a tour, you are not just presented with the Civil War history of the home. You are given a full history of the evolution of the property from 1860 when Hettie and George purchased the property, through the present day. Incorporating the history of the museum itself into the interpretation gives the public an opportunity to learn about historic preservation and the educational importance of museums. The many objects on display in the museum show that the Gudmestads were able to draw historical information and piece together past events using the household inventory and items found within walls and underneath floorboards. This type of transparency adds to the credibility of the site as a historical institution.

²¹¹ Gudmestad, 93.

²¹² Shriver House Museum, "Shriver House: Gettysburg, Pennsylvania", *Shriver House Museum*, <http://www.shriverhouse.org/index.html>, (accessed March 30th, 2020).



Figure 8. “Shriver House Shoe” - This shoe was found within the walls of the Shriver House. It likely belonged to Sadie or Mollie, and was found inside the walls of the home during renovations.²¹³

With an admission price of nine dollars and fifty cents for an adult and seven dollars and fifty cents for children, a tour of the museum begins in the gift shop with an introduction of the Shriver family. The tour then heads into the main section of the home where a guide presents the formal parlor room, and explains what daily life would have looked like for the Shriver family. The dining and kitchen areas of the home are staged to interpret the destruction that took place in 1863 when Confederate forces took over the home. The attention to detail in the staging of each room is represented in a rubber ink spill on the floor, torn papers, and open drawers. The dining room is staged to represent

²¹³ Shriver House Museum

the wounded Union soldiers that were taken care of after the Confederates had left.

Broken furniture next to the wood stove represents the lack of firewood for cooking, and a collection of torn and bloody rags, medicine bottles, and makeshift cots represent the suffering that took place during and after the battle.



Figure 9. “Shriver House Dining Room” - This photo of the Shriver House dining room is displayed to represent the function of the home as a makeshift hospital after the Confederate forces who had previously occupied the home had left.²¹⁴

²¹⁴ Shriver House Museum

Each of the rooms have a square roped off entrance that prohibits visitors from fully entering. While there has been a professional movement away from this type of presentation in historic house museums, the usage of ropes for designated space is appropriate for the Shriver House.²¹⁵ The restricted access to specific rooms helps to protect the detailed displays in each room, but does not inhibit the visitor experience. The tour then travels to the second floor, where visitors view several bedrooms, and a room that would have served as an office. Hettie and George's bedroom is staged with a suitcase and dresser drawers open to represent Hettie packing to leave Gettysburg for the Weikert farm.

²¹⁵ Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E. Ryan, *Anarchists Guide to Historic House Museums*, (New York: Routledge, 2016).



Figure 10. “Shriver House Bedroom” - Hettie and George’s bedroom is staged to represent Hettie packing to leave Gettysburg for the Weikert farm.²¹⁶

The tour then heads into the attic of the home where a guide discusses how Confederate sharpshooters had overtaken the attic and used it as a vantage point in their attack. Sounds of gunshots play from a hidden speaker, while the guide explains how the sharpshooters had removed bricks from the south-facing side of the home in order to shoot towards the Union forces. These holes made by the Confederate troops had been closed up and bricked over before the Gudmestads purchased the property. However, based off of a photograph of Abraham Lincoln traveling down Baltimore Street, the

²¹⁶ Shriver House Museum.

couple was able to identify where the original holes had been. The holes in the south facing wall were reopened and a plate of glass remains in the holes. Cartridges line the floors, with rifles and bloody rags set up at the base of the chimney, much like it would have been in 1863 when the Confederates occupied the attic.

A tour of the attic also includes discussion of the Confederate bloodstains that mark the floorboards under the glass plated holes. These stains have been scientifically authenticated by the forensic team of the Niagara Falls Police Department. In 2006 the NFPD was challenged by a judge to determine the scientific accuracy of photoluminescence testing on aged bloodstains.²¹⁷ In order to determine this accuracy, the NFPD reached out to several historic sites in Gettysburg, claiming to have blood stained floorboards. The Shriver House Museum agreed to allow them to conduct testing on their attic floor. Experts conducted testing with “BLUESTAR® FORENSIC, a blood reagent” in order to detect the presence of blood directly under the holes that had been knocked into the south-side wall of the attic.²¹⁸ When applied to the stains, a green luminescence indicated the presence of blood on the floorboards.²¹⁹ This scientific testing confirmed the firsthand accounts given by the Shriver’s neighbor, Tillie’s father.

²¹⁷ Shriver House Museum

²¹⁸ Nicholas Paonessa, “Bloodstains of Gettysburg: The Use of Chemiluminescent Blood Reagents to Visualize Bloodstains of Historical Significance”, *Journal of Bloodstain Pattern Analysis*, 24 (2008): 4-14.

²¹⁹ Paonessa, 6.



Figure 11. “Shriver House Attic” - In this photograph, you can see the holes in the brick used by Confederate sharpshooters.²²⁰

²²⁰ Shriver House Museum.



Figure 12. “Shriver House Attic Bloodstains” - Niagara Falls Police Department tests the stains in the Shriver House attic to determine their authenticity.

This testing has added to the credibility and of the Shriver House narrative, as well as the professionalism of the institution. In contrast, the bloodstains promoted by Mary Hewitt in the attic of the Hancock House, had not been tested in any way in order to confirm or support her narrative. While these stains have yet to be scientifically or professionally tested, there remains little to no physical evidence of any stains marking the attic floor. In addition to the lack of visible stains, there remains no historical indication of the attack having taken place in the attic. Given the lack of historical evidence to support much of Hewitt’s narrative, the current historian William Michel has since moved away from interpreting the stains in the attic. The Jennie Wade House also has no scientific evidence confirming their claim to Jennie Wade’s blood-stained floorboard. Past interpretations at the Hancock House, as well as current interpretations at

the Jennie Wade House, promote a dramatized narrative of death and violence predicated on unstable presumptions like that of blood-stained floorboards.

Conversely, the Shriver House has relied on historical accounts as well as scientific and material evidence to interpret the civilian experience of the Civil War. The Gudmestads have been committed to recreating an accurate narrative of the civilian experience. In an interview Nancie Gudmastad said, “When people walk in here, we want them to feel as though they are stepping back in time...If we are going to stand on the same floorboards that the Shriver family stood on, if we are going to put our hands on the same stair rail that not only the Shriver family used, but also the Confederates that went upstairs to the attic, it is important that we hear *their* story.”²²¹

While the Shriver house focuses on the civilian experience of the battle, they remain committed to interpreting the death and suffering that occurred in a tasteful way. Their narrative is void of sensational and dramatic elements. Through expert research, the Gudmestads have recovered the history of several families living on Baltimore Street during the Battle of Gettysburg. The Shriver, Pierce, and Garlach families were each affected by the destruction that occurred during the July of 1863, and each of their stories are interconnected. Gudmestad’s book, *The Shriver’s Story: Eye Witnesses to the Battle of Gettysburg*, presents the careful research conducted in restoring the Shriver House. In their research the Gudmestad’s consulted “the National Archives, Library of Congress, Adams County Historical Society, Emmittsburg Historical Society, Andersonville National Historic Site, birth records, marriage records, real-estate records, tax records,

²²¹ Shriver House Museum

census records, obituaries, wills, newspapers, letters, personal interviews, tombstones and army records.”²²² While the Gudmestad’s background is in business, their research efforts have been more like that of the trained historian. Their museum tastefully and expertly interprets the civilian experience with death, suffering, and destruction.

When comparing the sensationalized interpretation of Mary Hewitt at the Hancock House and the commercialized nature of the Jennie Wade House, with the interpretation of the Shriver House Museum, the Shriver House narrative stands out as thoroughly researched and well interpreted. The historic narrative of the Shriver House Museum includes the its journey to becoming a museum. The Gudmestad’s have included the story of their journey to coming to own the property, as well as their restoration of the building. Through their presentation of artifacts found within the walls and floorboards of the home, they have created a transparent narrative that not only gives an accurate history of the site and Shriver family, but also gives an accurate presentation of the buildings journey to becoming a museum. This transparency not only adds to their credibility, but also engages the general public with the work of public historians and public historical institutions. The Shriver House, in and of itself, represents the processes of public history. Thorough research, meticulous restoration, and transparent interpretation make a visit to the Shriver House Museum an educational and engaging experience.

²²² Gudmestad, 108.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

In 2003 Seth Bruggeman was tasked with settling a dispute between National Park Rangers and historians over the interpretation style and mission of the George Washington Birthplace National Monument in Westmoreland County, Virginia.²²³ Settling this dispute was to come in the development of an administrative history for Washington's birthplace, and answer the question: Why is Washington's birthplace important?²²⁴ In developing this administrative history, Bruggeman was tasked with focusing on the significance of George Washington the "man", or the commemorative legacy of the park.²²⁵ The park's most prominent feature, a house representative of the one Washington was born in, was commemoratively built in the 1930s.²²⁶ In addition, it is known that George Washington was born in Westmoreland County, Virginia, however, there is no indication of an exact location.²²⁷ The idea that Washington may not have been born at the location of the National Monument, brought into question its historic narrative predicated on Washington and the significance of his birth.

Through the development of his administrative history, Bruggeman asked the question: What if [Washington] wasn't born here?²²⁸ This question challenged the significance, justification, and existence of the park. In the same way, this research challenges the previous foundation for which the Hancock House stood upon, and the

²²³ Bruggeman, 4.

²²⁴ Bruggeman, 5.

²²⁵ Bruggeman, 6.

²²⁶ Bruggeman, 5.

²²⁷ Bruggeman, 200.

²²⁸ Bruggeman, 199.

current foundation upon which the Jennie Wade House stands. In regard to the Hancock House it raises questions such as: What if the stains in the attic of the Hancock House are not real? What if the attack did not take place in the attic? These questions and the revised historical narrative at the site have left many unsettled, questioning their local identity and history. In the same sense, this research challenges the very historical foundation upon which the Jennie Wade House stands, and asks the questions: What if Jennie was not baking bread for the Union soldiers? What if Jennie Wade was not the only civilian killed during the battle, and what if she was not a steadfast supporter of the Union? This research suggests that Jennie was none of these things, and the current narrative presented at the site is a product of family intervention, longstanding commemoration, tradition, and commercialization.

This is not to say that the Jennie Wade House loses significance, if it loses its current narrative. The Hancock House has shifted their interpretation to present an accurate historical narrative that incorporates the commemorative legacy of Mary Hewitt's bloodstained floorboards and evolution of the house as an institution of public history. In the same way, the Jennie Wade House has the ability to represent the commemorative legacy of Jennie Wade's death and the processes through which the house became a tourist attraction in the commercialized district of Gettysburg.

For the Hancock House, the Jennie Wade House, and the Shriver House, what remains significant is not the innate story of what occurred at each site, nor the presence of bloodstained floorboards and other artifacts. The attack on Hancock's Bridge and the death of continental militia, the death of Jennie Wade, and the grim legacy of the Shriver family are each historically important in their own right. However, the commemorative

legacy of each story, the interpretation styles of each institution, and the evolution of each narrative over time is what remains significant. The legacy of each story and the development of each site reveals a great deal about the overall commemorative legacy of the United States. They represent trends in American memory and the power of material culture in reinforcing and upholding public memory.

The sensationalized and politicized narratives of the Hancock House and Jennie Wade House gained significant traction in the post-World War II period of history. These sites served to reinforce commemoration, patriotism, and a unifying sense of American identity. The Hancock House championed the Revolutionary victory, characterized the British as an exceptionally violent and foreign enemy, and reinforced this sense of barbarity through the presentation of fabricated bloodstained attic floorboards. The commemoration of Jennie Wade and the sensationalized nature of her death began shortly after the Civil War. However, the Jennie Wade story full of myth and legend gained traction in the post-World War II period of tourism and patriotic commemoration. It represented the triumphant Union victory of the Civil War and provided an interesting tourist attraction. The Shriver House Museum was developed during the period of the professionalization of public history. Although its owners are not trained historians, the site is indicative of the historical trends of the time, focusing on lesser known histories, and provided Gettysburg with an alternative perspective on the battle.

Overall, these commemorative legacies and their use of material culture in order to achieve desired narratives, have contributed to local and national trends in public memory. They represent the power and significance of public history, as well as its evolution as a professional field that is very much still growing.

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