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THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME LECTURE FINDING AID & TRANSCRIPT

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Video Description

Inspired by a series of *Harper's Weekly* prints by Winslow Homer, Mary McCarl presents a narrative of life among soldiers and women during the American Civil War, from the perspective of the North. The lecture includes references to songs of that period, which are performed by a trio of local musicians - Pat Conlon, David de la Barre and Linda Shield Swicker. Some of the prints illustrate these

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songs, but other topics referenced include the practical support given by women during the war, health and sanitary issues, scenes of camp life and fund raising activities organized by women for the war effort. The lecture highlights the 8th Regiment, Company G, of Gloucester and the so-called “sanitary fairs,” the most common fund-raising events of the time. McCarl also spends some time discussing a book called *Hard Tack and Coffee*, by John Billings - primarily a complaint about army food.

Subject list

Winslow Homer	<i>Harper's Weekly</i>
Pat Conlon	American Civil War
Linda Shields Swicker	8th Regiment Massachusetts Infantry
David de la Barre	U. S. Sanitary Commission
Mary Rhineland McCarl	Gloucester 8 th Regiment, Company G
Sanitary Fairs	General Ben Butler
John Greenleaf Whittier	Abby W. May
Ira N. Gray	Captain David Low
Florence Nightingale	Clara Barton
Alfred Waud	U.S.S. Constitution
Edward Lane	Denmark Prompter
Fitz Henry Lane	Patrick Gilmore a.k.a Louis Lambert
Gloucester Telegraph	Mrs. Partington

Transcript

00:20 Courtney Richardson

Welcome. My name is Courtney Richardson, Director of Education and Public Programs here at the Cape Ann Museum. I want to thank you all for coming today. I want to thank some other people too. So we'll start this off with Bob Quinn behind the camera back there, who always films our programs. I see Fred Buck back there. A program like this begins in our archives, and Stephanie and Fred stay away in there, and they do a marvelous job in there. And I just wanted to acknowledge them.

01:00

Thanks to our presenter and our performers today, but I'd also like to thank our members for all their support, and encourage all of you who are not members to join and help support programs like this. Today, we welcome Mary McCarl, Mary Rhineland McCarl back to the podium. She has done numerous presentations for us. She's been volunteering in the archives here since 1988, and has a passionate interest in history. And also art, she is an artist. I'm just going to talk about the process a little bit, which she might not agree with, but it appears that downstairs, when she is in the archives, she'll find something. And I think this time around, it might have been a Harper's Weekly wood cut print that made her head down this other path through millions of newspapers, through other documents, through just, until a presentation like this is born. So we're just happy to have her in the archives, finding all this interesting material to bring and share with us. And we're very happy to also that she invited Pat and Linda and David to be here with us for a little musical accompaniment. So briefly, Pat Conlon of West Gloucester plays mandolin and harmonica and has been a performer on the Cape Ann music scene for over 30 years, Linda is a Cape Ann native and plays guitar, tenor banjo and octave mandolin. She enjoys a variety of folk music and can be seen at Irish music sessions and concerts in the area. David plays tin whistle as well as concertina and bass. He has a wonderful voice and is an excellent lead and harmony singer. Pat gave me that, David so...

03:00

The three got to know each other when Pat would listen to Linda and David playing Irish traditional music at local sessions with their band, Roaring Mary. This is their first collaboration as a trio. Please join me in welcoming Mary, Pat, Linda and David.

03:30 Mary Rhineland McCarl

Can you hear me? Good, okay.

03:37

For me this all began because I used to travel around with Henry to gun shows in Colorado. I thought they were the pits but they sold paper ephemera of the Civil War. And they did not like the Yankee stuff much and so I quietly acquired a good many original Harper's Weeklies for \$20 for a single page Winslow Homer, \$30 for a double. And over there on the easel you can get a good idea of what you would have gotten if you had subscribed to the Harpers Weekly in November 23, 1861. It's the second on the screen there, Songs of the War.

And this is where we begin.

04:38

I've entitled the talk "The Girl I Left Behind Me", and you'll see her in the picture.

Okay, will you play a tune for us?

(music)

06:13

One of the many versions of it has the words, "I seek for one as fair and gay, but find none to remind me how sweet the hours I passed away with the girl I left behind me." I want to talk a little bit about the different songs that are illustrated in this one piece. Up on the top is the "Brave Drummer Boy". Second is "Hail to the Chief" which is used now pretty much exclusively for the president of the United States. But that's General McClellan who didn't make it. This one's called "It's Free and Easy" and the men are all drinking themselves blind with an officer obviously rushing up to stop it. This one is the "Rogues' March". And they will play it. The only words I can find were British ones with the British Army. And basically the man takes the king's shilling, gets very drunk, sells his red coat and they catch him.

07:25

The rogues' march: they would cut off their buttons and all insignia and then they will literally drum them out of camp. It was a terrible disgrace. You remember when I was a child that movie about Captain Dreyfus and they cut off his epaulets. That one makes me think of that, but the tune is surprisingly cheery.

07:52

Then "Glory Hallelujah". In November of 1861, they were still singing "John Brown's Body". They didn't have the polite words of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" yet. That was to come to know out late in February of 1862. But it was all over the Massachusetts regiment. I found it in July of 1861. "Dixie": I want to talk about after they play it. We see it because Winslow Homer changed his depiction from his original drawing. And there she is, the girl, remember her with her little hat and the puffy sleeves. Next slide please. There she is with the flag.

08:41

Okay, so next one.

08:44

There's the daughter. But let's play now the "Rogues' March" and the original "Dixie". It's surprisingly cheerful.

09:02 Pat Conlon

It is surprisingly cheerful considering that life was ruined. (Music)

10:37 Mary

As you see in the middle of the screen there are slaves carrying heavy, heavy burdens on their backs and an overseer on his horse. But if you remember the (Is it possible to go a few slides back?) He is sitting on a round barrel labeled "contraband" and thanks to General Ben Butler, who everybody around here knows and admires because he had that wonderful house in Bayview; General Ben was in charge of the defenses down around Norfolk, that part of Virginia. And one night three slaves got in a rowboat, rowed over and gave themselves in, turned themselves in to the Union forces. Then General Butler, who was probably one of the shrewdest lawyers in the service said, "Well, if their masters will come and swear allegiance to

the Union, then they are their property. However, if their masters will not come and swear allegiance to the Union, I declare them contraband and they're free. So they put them right to work on the fortifications, it wasn't that they didn't do that. But it's a nice piece and we will find some songs about the contraband. Anyway, it is said that "Dixie" was Abraham Lincoln's favorite song and they played it often in the White House. It was not particularly a mark of deep defiant Southernness.

It was a different era, 150 years ago. But let's have "Dixie".

12:27 Pat

I just want to make mention of the fact that Linda's playing the banjo here and the banjo is the only original American instrument, which is tragic but very true. (Music)

15:30 Mary

I'm going to read you some of the words from a song called 'Song of the Negro Boatman' written by, of all people, John Greenleaf Whittier of "Snowbound" fame; in dialect which I can't read very well but anyway you get the idea,

Oh Praise an' tanks, de Lord he come to set de people free,
An' Massa tink it day of doom, an' we a jubilee.
De Lord dat heaps de Red Sea waves he just as 'trong as den;
He says de word: we last night slaves, today de Lord's freemen.
Oh Massa on he's travels gone he leave the land behind,
De Lord's breath blow Him funder on, like in de corn shucks in the wind.
We own de hoe, we own de plough, we own de hands that hold;
We sell the pig, we sell the cow, but nebber child be sold.

Called the "Song of the Negro Boatman".

So now I'd like the slide called 'Women and the War.' I think it's about three down. The Sisters of Charity; God's seagulls. They were wonderful. She's writing for the sick soldier, the wounded soldier. Up here, I think, it's a little hard to tell, but I think she's sewing on a sewing machine, which is perfectly plausible. But these ladies are doing handwork, and I'll give you some of the statistics from the Gloucester ladies later on. And this one is doing the washing. As you can see, the soldier standing there with his sword doing nothing at all.

17:31

I found one photograph in all the photos of the Civil War, of a woman, front too, doing exactly that, with some children around from the Wisconsin regiment. She looks to me like a big strong Swedish girl and she obviously said, "Wow, do your socks stink!"

But here we go, now I'm gonna read the words of a sad song which sold at least 500,000 copies during the war in the North and was popular in the South as well, called the "Vacant Chair."

We shall meet but we shall miss him, there will be one vacant chair,
We shall linger to caress him while we breathe our evening prayer.
When a year ago we gathered joy was in his mild blue eye,
Now the golden chord is severed and our hopes in ruin lie.

We shall meet but we will miss him, there will be one vacant chair,
We shall linger to caress him when we breathe our evening prayer.

And it goes on like that.

18:43

Now we get to Gloucester. The language is a little awkward in modern terms, but the enormous effort for the women at home was called the “sanitary commission”. Florence Nightingale had put the term together and it sounds nowadays like plumbing. But sanitary was health as well as cleanliness and the Sanitary Commission, which was run by clergymen, by men, depended on the enormous network of women in every town in the Union, knitting and sewing and doing all this sort of thing. And this is a letter in 1862 to the Gloucester branch of the New England Auxiliary of the association that belonged to the Sanitary Commission. The New England branch was run by Abby W. May who was a cousin of Louisa May Alcott.

Madam,

It gives me much pleasure to acknowledge the receipt of three boxes of hospital supplies from the ladies of Gloucester. The need of supplies is too well known for me to tell it over again. But every donation is forwarded as soon as we receive to give its share of aid and comfort. Please assure the ladies of our thanks for their long continued efforts.

Very respectfully,

Ira N. Gray

“We will remind our friends we will remit another box this week,” (this is the local ladies talking) “...with their assistance, which we feel will be cheerfully rendered. We need shirts, sheets, towels, handkerchiefs, dressing gowns, edibles, chiefly selaginellaceous [?] materials, condensed milk, stimulants, pickles, cocoa, Roma, condensed leaf tea, raspberry and other various, jellies, crackers and are very greatly needed. Indeed, nothing which we well know would be needed in a synchronous [?] home would be unacceptable in this time, be the offering ever so small.” And there were charming little bits about children, little girls making and rolling bandages, in Gloucester.

21:19

And this is the report from 1863, the year ending in 1863, in Gloucester again. “During the year we spent \$359.85...” This was a time when a middle-grade, well established mechanical Carpenter was making about \$450 a year, so this is mostly in buying material for garments. “We have sent the sanitary rooms in Boston 47 woolen shirts, 70 pairs women’s drawers, 113 cotton shirts, 127 pairs cotton drawers, 104 pairs socks, 33 pairs of slippers, 166 new towels, 35 partly worn towels, 62 handkerchiefs, 37 quilts, and so forth. Also, condensed milk, honey, a box of dominoes. But now, let’s move on. As I say, you could see the four ladies knitting. I remember my mother as a child during boarding school in Toronto during WWI knitted socks and then World War II knitted socks. And here you can see right at the top there’s a sock.

The next one, slide, please, Courtney, is “News Of the War”. And the otherwise wounded; but given the fact that there were no antibiotics and they simply amputated limbs, it’s amazing how many died of course.

23:25

These are sailors. This is the combat artist Alfred Waud drawing.

23:34

A couple of soldiers from Maine that are six foot seven. He’s blowing a trumpet, the news. Here they are getting newspapers in bundles off the trains from New York. And this is a slight puzzle, it’s labeled “On to Richmond” but I expect it’s New Orleans, but anyways; but I want you to see particularly the wounded. Now, we’re going to do, “The Battle Cry of Freedom’ (music)

Needless to say there’s a southern version and the chorus there went, “Our Dixie brethren never at a loss. Down with the eagle and up with the cross. We’ll rally round the bonny flag; we’ll rally once again. Shout! Shout! The battle cry of freedom!”

28:08

Next slide please, Courtney.

This just turned up recently in the collection here. Roger Davis bought it I think on EBay. It turns out it’s extremely rare and extremely interesting; very hard to read but a story. It seems to be the keepsake for Company G of the Eighth Massachusetts Militia. And I will read the words to you it says, gee I can’t read it now, but it’s Camp Stanton in Boxford, “Company G and Captain David Low of the glorious 8th”.

The bottom left they’re all marching down to Low's pond in Boxford and the equivalent of a [?] to go swimming and over here there’s a whole row of cook houses and in the middle, can we have the enlargement, next one please, Courtney.

29:20

There they are, it is just as domestic as it could possibly be. It's just as reassuring as it could possibly be. There are socks drying on tops of the tents. There are shirts drying. The ladies; everyone is in full costume. The drummer is lying there, reclining there. Everybody looks as happy and as unwarlike as possible.

29:54

The 8th Regiment was interesting, at least Company G, the Gloucester Company. She was made up of men, a great many were also in the volunteer fire companies. And they were very unmilitary and they just wanted to be our military. They were unmilitary: they specialized in very good parties, sleigh rides. Though they would turn up, as I'm sure you all know, in the old houses, if you weren't a member of the Fire Company, and if you didn't turn up with your bucket, you were heavily fined. And Company G was the old families of Gloucester. And in 1861, immediately as Fort Sumter got in trouble, immediately Governor Andrew had called for militia regiments, and the 8th was one of those that responded. The first blood of the war was

shed was when General Butler, Ben Butler again, marched the 6th, through Baltimore and the mob attacked them. The 8th imprudently, commandeered a ferryboat and took them from Perryville to Annapolis by sea where their most glorious exploit was saving the USS Constitution from falling into rebel hands, and they got her towed to New York. This picture is of the second effort for the 8th Regiment. The first effort was only 90 days; that was all that militia companies were allowed to serve out of state. But this one, there was something up for, I think three years, at least two years. And it was harder in the sense to recruit. But because it was so tied to the establishment in Gloucester this was a nice little piece of propaganda to try to get them to recruit. It's all very easy. The trains ran from Gloucester to Ipswich to Boxford to Boston then they get on a ferryboat. And they went down to New Bern, North Carolina. Probably about the same time that John Greenleaf Wittier wrote that poem, "For the masters it's doom, for us it's jubilee."

And I want to read you a banner from the Gloucester Telegraph, "Sending Them Off." This is September 13, 1862, they're going off to camp in Boston. "Captain Lowe", that's David Low, "...had rather fight than make a speech, but will return thanks for all the kindness of the citizens toward the company and called all the boys with three cheers, which were given with a will and a rousing "tiger".

And this was long before football. "The company then fell in to the tap of the drum escorted by the band, the clergy, a delegation of the war committee and other citizens, proceeded through Washington, Front, Spring, Prospect and High Streets to the depot where the immense crowd assembled to see them off. The band with drummer, Edward Lane, and fifer, Denmark Procter, accompanied them on the train. So for the second time with scarcely less enthusiasm, departed Company G of the old 8th for the defense of the Constitution and the flag."

33:59

Now everybody gets a chance to sing along. This would be 'When Johnny comes Marching Home'.

(music)

That was written by Patrick Gilmore a famous Boston boy. All sorts of some stories about it, but he was definitely the one who put together. Why he called himself Louis Lambert to do it, nobody knows.

Next slide please, Courtney.

That's a grim one. It's hard to make out but on the top those are women filling shells in the Watertown Arsenal. This was war work in the Civil War; no getting around it. They went on strike, by the way, and actually got pay. That was 1862. And then if you wouldn't mind playing, "Hardtack Come Again No More."

(music)

41:50

That tune [?] was written by a soldier of the 1st Iowa but it really went right through the Union Army. Everybody knew it. Hardtack was about the same thing as ship's biscuit and was basically flour and water baked very stiff but nourishing enough.

There's a wonderful book for, the best book that I know about the ordinary life of the Union soldier written by a man named John Billings from Massachusetts who served in, oh boy, might have been the 25th Massachusetts. It was Worcester. Called "Hardtack and Coffee" published in the 1880's and very well illustrated. In later life he was always known as Colonel Billings but he never made it above Private 1st Class; wonderful description, and I don't have time to show you some of the other drawings that turned up in Harper's Weekly of life in camp, but you can get a feeling from a song like that. The boy Union soldiers were covered in pious tracts from home about the evils of drink, but it's obvious they weren't too much concerned about it. Now Courtney can we have the next one.

The ladies did their best and what they were best in doing was raising money. This is the great Sanitary Fair in Brooklyn. They had one in Chicago. At these great fairs, easily they made \$100,000, a huge sum in those days. Today you multiply it by at least 15 but probably more than that. This is Homer again but enormous, enormous buildings sort of like the Crystal Palace. And, the next one please, "Buying Flowers at the Sanitary Fair."

44:14

The next one

That's labeled 'Mail, is there any mail for me?' And I don't know if it was set up as a mail post office so the girls were selling kisses or something like that but, obviously, they were very pretty and it was very popular so I'm not sure. Should we keep that one on for a while because Gloucester had its own Sanitary Fair, around Christmas time in 1863. This, again from the Telegraph, "The Cape Ann Fair for the Sanitary Commission at the Pavilion" (the Pavilion Hotel is roughly where The Tavern is now) "...will open Tuesday, December 22 at 2pm and will continue Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Special attraction and each evening will be duly announced. Mrs. Partington has accepted the invitation to be present every evening with her nephew, Ike, and friend, Miss Battledash." That was very famous and funny play at the time that I'm still trying to track down, but it was obviously the highest sense of humor in 1863. "A grand farmer's dinner will be served on Wednesday from 12 to 2, tickets 25 cents. Refreshments of every description can be purchased at all times during the fair...", and so forth. And then there's a great big write up on it in the December 26 paper, which I won't read you the whole thing but,

Entering the building the passage walks into the spacious outer hall. The first sight that greets our eyes is the stars and stripes of American flags draped around the walls reminding us of the noble cause we are here to aid. In another part of the hall hangs a fine picture, the generous gift of our own artist, Mr. Lane. The subject is Coffin's beach, as seen from the wharf. This is the most costly article on sale in the rooms and is valued at \$100. It will be disposed of by tickets, \$1 each.

And darn, it doesn't say who won. It would be fun to know.

One of the sideshows that promises to be a center of attraction is the curiosity or art room. Here many be found many relics and trophies of the war, among which we notice the battle flags of the 23rd Massachusetts Regiment, which have been through many campaigns, and bear marks of the faithfulness of their brave standard bearers, and also the three rebel flags captured by the 23rd and 24th at the Battle of Roanoke Island. In this curiosity room is also on exhibition a rebel torpedo that was found by our troops in Fort Wagner during the siege of Charleston and sent north by Miss Barton, the Florence Nightingale of America (Clara Barton). Among the curiosities, we find a Whitworth shell, showing how England has fortified her boast to the crown of neutrality, which she assumed in the breaking of the rebellion, a pair of silver spurs worn by Washington, an original copy of the Louisiana Declaration of Independence, beside beautiful pictures and statuary among the curious and choice relics of the room.

And there were also wonderful things for children. They had an obviously quite clever business of a room decorated to look like a pool of water, and the kids were given fishing poles with hooks on them, and they could hook presents out of the pool of water. I expect they paid a quarter or something for the privilege.

48:48

Anyway, a great success;

It was a happy thought that the opening affair and auxiliary entertainment, on behalf of the branch to the Sanitary Commission in this town. The result has been most satisfactory, exceeding by far the sanguine expectations of its originators, resulting in a fund for society of \$4,131.13. Proceeds of the fair \$3,600, Mrs. Wollins' concert \$69, theatricals \$233, and the old folks concert \$220. This amount could not have been secured without a vast amount of labor and those who interested themselves in the movement.

\$4000, if you multiply by 15 would be about \$60,000. The New York ponces were said were pulling in a million but still, from Gloucester, this was not, not a bad sum.

50:00

And, let's see. And we're going to end with our last sad slide. Slide please, Courtney. Remember the girl, there she is in August of 1865, I swear wearing the same costume four years later, it's called 'Our Watering Places, Newport, the Empty Sleeve.' And he looks dying to me. He is not a well man. Of course, as I said, there were no hungry artists; they were working for years [?].

50:48

So, this is how we end. (lots of chatter before music)