



The Mitten

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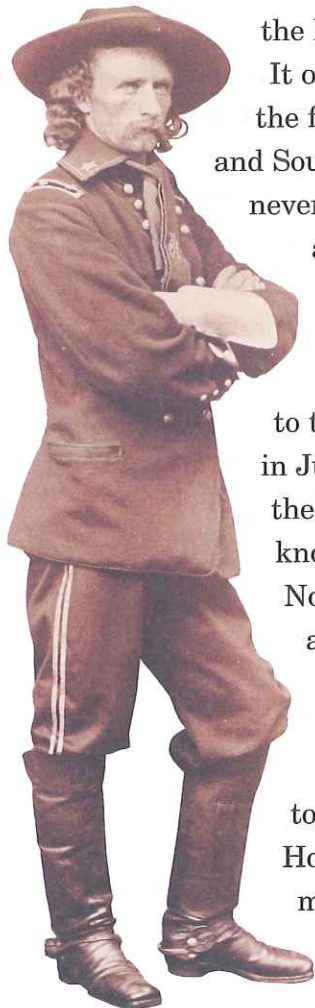
Michigan at GETTYSBURG

THE BATTLE of Gettysburg was the greatest battle of the Civil War. For three days in July 1863, tens of thousands of Americans fought in the streets and fields around Gettysburg, a small town in south-central Pennsylvania.

The Battle of Gettysburg was the high point of the Civil War. It occurred midway through the four-year war and Southern forces never fully recovered after losing the battle.

The campaign that led to the battle began in June 1863 when the Southern army, known as Rebels by Northerners, left Virginia and invaded Pennsylvania. The Northern army followed.

Neither side expected to fight at Gettysburg. However a small fight on the morning of July 1 **escalated** as both sides rushed



Color photos Roger L. Rosentreter



reinforcements to Gettysburg. By the end of the three-day battle, more than 51,000 Americans

were casualties (killed, wounded, missing or captured).

At least 4,000 Michigianians served in the Union army at Gettysburg. They included little-known soldiers like John and Alfred Ryder of Plymouth (see page 2), and famous General George Custer of Monroe (left).

When the battle ended, more than 1,110 Michigianians were listed as casualties. Many of the dead were buried in the Gettysburg National Cemetery (top).

THE TALE OF Two Brothers

Brothers John and Alfred Ryder of Plymouth, Michigan, were among the thousands of soldiers who fought at the Battle of Gettysburg.

Alfred Ryder, who was 20 years old, joined the Northern army shortly after the Civil War started. His younger brother, who was 19 years old, joined a year later.

We know much about their wartime experiences because the boys wrote many letters home.

Alfred was excited about joining the 1st Michigan Cavalry. After his unit arrived in Washington, DC, he wrote that Southerners viewed the Michigan cavalymen as “regular tigers.” However, after living in the mud, catching measles, being shot at and then being captured by the Rebels, he admitted that army life sometimes was not much fun. Once, after being without anything to eat for several days he wrote, “raw cats would have tasted well in such a time.”

Alfred urged his brother not to join the army. But in August 1862, John Ryder joined the 24th Michigan Infantry.

On the way to Washington, DC, John’s unit passed a place where a battle had been fought. He wrote that he saw sights that were “too horrible to explain.”

Alfred and John served in the same army, but they had not seen each other since Alfred had become a soldier. As the army marched towards Gettysburg in June 1863, John wrote that nothing was going to stop him from seeing Alfred.

On June 26, the boys saw each other, but only for a few minutes. John wrote that seeing his older brother gave him “new life.”

The next day, John received permission to visit Alfred’s camp, which was two miles away. John and Alfred talked late into the night. John returned to his camp, but the brothers hoped “to meet again some day.”

The brothers wrote their parents about their brief visit. Alfred wrote, “God blessed me today with a sight of my brother, Johnny.”

The brothers never saw each other again. On July 1, John was killed in fighting at Gettysburg. Two days later, Alfred was seriously wounded.

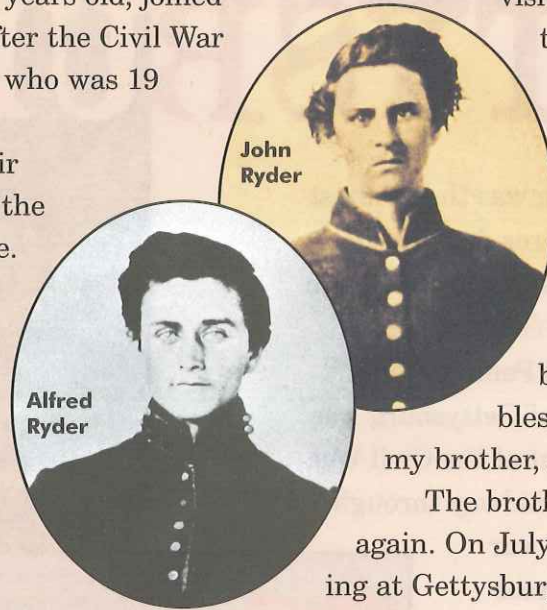
Resting in a Gettysburg hospital, Alfred wrote his parents that he thought he might recover. He also believed that John was in another hospital and “not badly wounded.”

Soon the chaplain of the 24th Michigan wrote Mr. and Mrs. Ryder telling them that John was dead. The Reverend William Way also feared that Alfred, who had been shot in the chest, was “in a dangerous condition.”

When the boys’ father heard that his sons were wounded, he left Plymouth for Gettysburg. George Ryder arrived at the battlefield to learn that John had died and that Alfred was not doing well.

On July 22, Alfred Ryder died.

The Ryder brothers were two of the nearly fifteen thousand Michiganians who died in the Civil War.

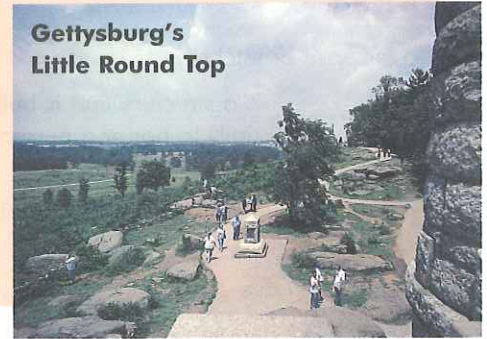


John Ryder

Alfred Ryder

Where to Take Your Family

Start your visit to **Gettysburg** by obtaining a visitor's guide from the Gettysburg Convention and Visitors Bureau at 35 Carlisle Street, Gettysburg, PA 17325, (717) 334-6274 or visit www.gettysburgcvb.org. The Gettysburg National Military Park is administered by the National Park Service, visit GETT_Superintendent@nps.gov or call (717) 334-1124.



Gettysburg's
Little Round Top

Years after the Civil War, veterans of the Battle of Gettysburg placed stone monuments at the site of the Civil War's biggest battle. Today, these **tributes** are among the more than 1,400 monuments, markers and cannon scattered over the Gettysburg National Military Park in Pennsylvania.

Remembering **THOSE WHO SERVED**

There are 10 monuments to the 4,000 Michigianians who fought at Gettysburg.

One monument honors the 26-year-old commander of the 4th Michigan Infantry (right). On the second day of battle, Colonel Harrison H. Jeffords of Dexter was mortally

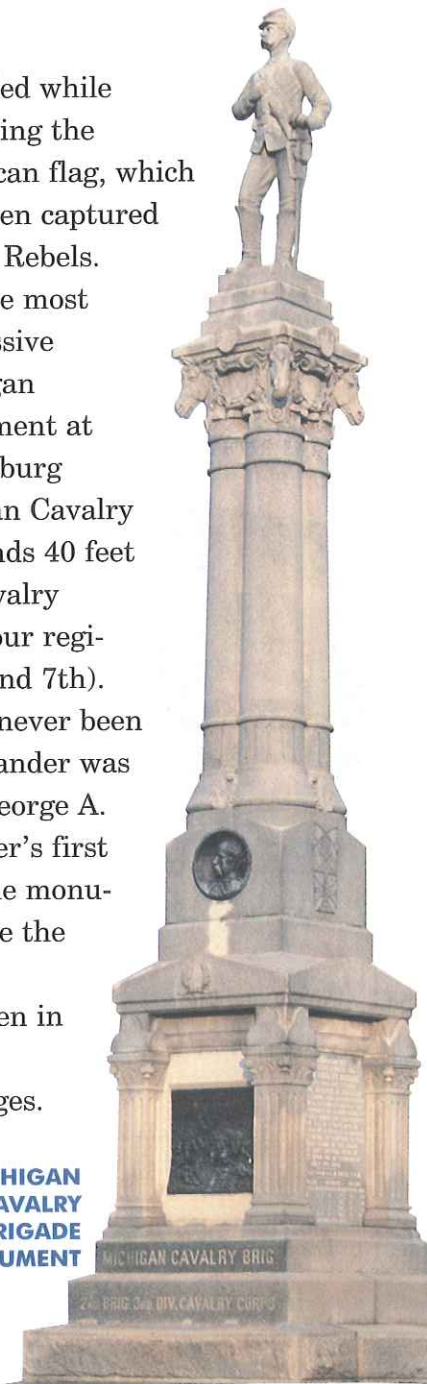
wounded while defending the American flag, which had been captured by the Rebels.

The most impressive Michigan monument at Gettysburg

belongs to the Michigan Cavalry Brigade (right). It stands 40 feet tall. The Michigan Cavalry Brigade consisted of four regiments (1st, 5th, 6th, and 7th). Many of the men had never been in battle. Their commander was 24-year-old General George A. Custer. This was Custer's first battle as a general. The monument was placed where the Michigan horsemen stopped Rebel horsemen in one of the war's most dramatic cavalry charges.



**4TH MICHIGAN
MONUMENT**



**MICHIGAN
CAVALRY
BRIGADE
MONUMENT**

What Did You Learn?

ACROSS

3. To increase or intensify
4. A _____ is a structure that is built as a memorial, usually to honor a person or group of people.
8. John and Alfred Ryder both fought in the Battle of _____.
9. People who have served in the military

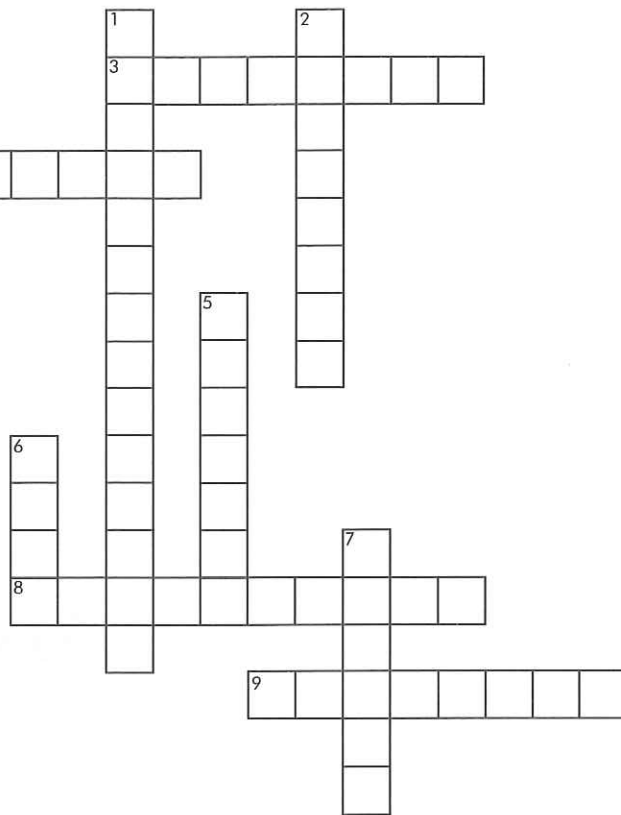
DOWN

1. Men sent to fight with others in battle
2. John and Alfred Ryder were from _____, Michigan.
5. Troops who ride on horseback
6. Colonel Harrison H. Jeffords was wounded while defending the American _____.
7. The Michigan Cavalry Brigade was led by General George A. _____.

Word List

(in random order)

VETERANS
GETTYSBURG
MONUMENT
ESCALATE
REINFORCEMENTS
CAVALRY
CUSTER
FLAG
PLYMOUTH



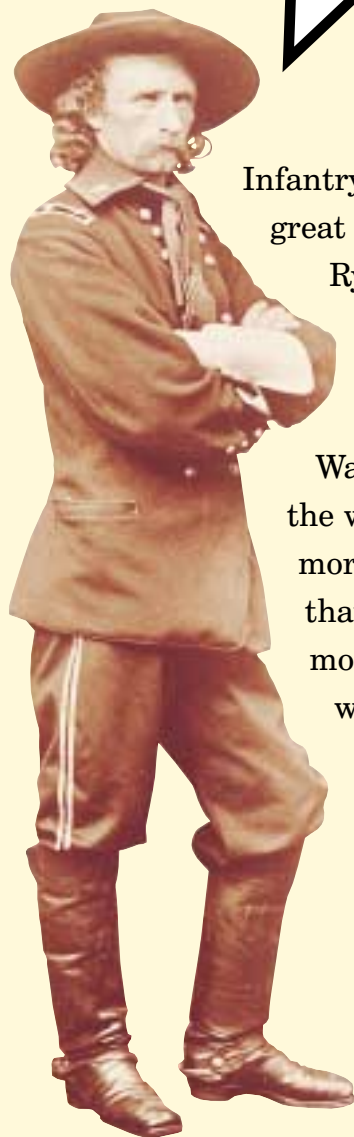
Vocabulary

Escalate: to increase, enlarge, or intensify

Reinforcements: men sent to fight with others in battle

Tribute: praise for an important achievement

“COME ON, YOU WOLVERINES!”



On the evening of June 30, 1863, John Ryder of Plymouth, a private in the Twenty-fourth Michigan

Infantry, wrote, “I expect we will have a great battle shortly.” The next day

Ryder’s **prediction** came true.

The Battle of Gettysburg took place in south-central Pennsylvania on July 1-3, 1863. It was the Civil

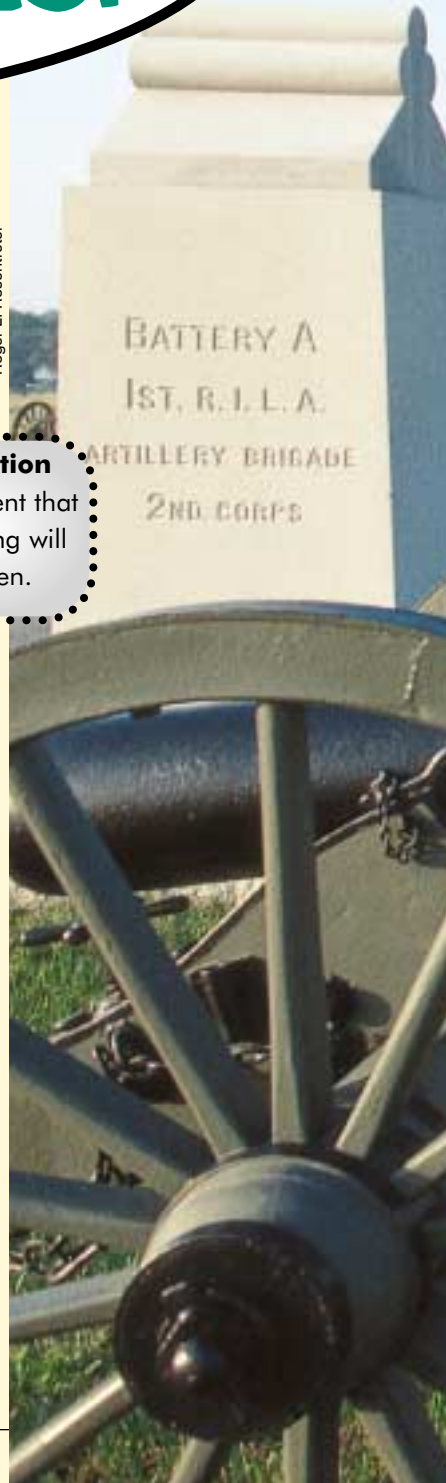
War’s biggest battle and a turning point in the war. The war continued for almost two more years, but after Gettysburg it was clear that the North would win. At Gettysburg, more than 1,100 of the 4,000 Michiganians who fought there became casualties. This included John Ryder, who was killed during the battle’s first day.

On July 3, 1863, the Seventh Michigan Infantry fought at this location during the Battle of Gettysburg. At left is General George Custer, who led Michigan cavalrymen at Gettysburg. During one of the charges Custer yelled, “Come on, you Wolverines.”

Roger L. Rosentreter

prediction

A statement that something will happen.





MICHIGAN AT GETTYSBURG

The battle started when the Confederate army, led by General Robert E. Lee, clashed with northern soldiers on the morning of July 1. Lee's army had left Virginia and invaded Pennsylvania in June. The northern army, led by General George Meade, followed.

July 1, 1863

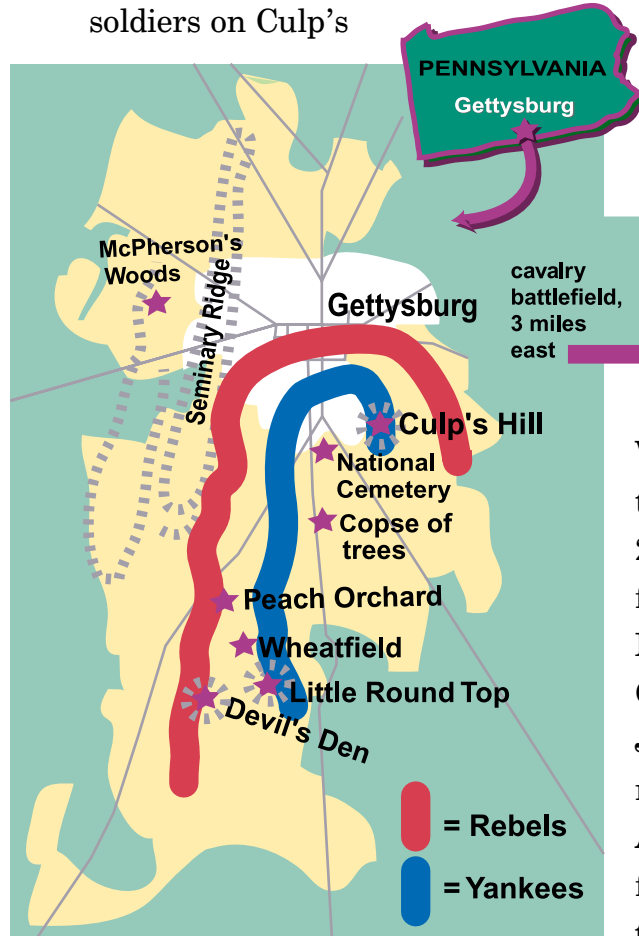
When Lee's army arrived at Gettysburg they pushed the outnumbered Yankees back through the town. At a place called McPherson's Woods, the men of the Twenty-fourth Michigan fought heroically as the Rebels attacked. Twenty-two of the regiment's twenty-five officers were killed or wounded. The dead included Lieutenant Gilbert Dickey, one of the first graduates of Michigan State University.

By the end of the first day the northern army

retreated to the high rocky ground southeast of the town. The Yankees lost that day's fighting, but they were positioned in strong places like Culp's Hill and Little Round Top.

July 2, 1863

On the second day of the battle, Lee's army attacked the left and right ends of Meade's army. The Union soldiers on Culp's



Hill were commanded by General Alpheus S. Williams of Detroit. The Yankees

repulsed the Rebels on this part of the battlefield thanks to Williams's leadership.



On the left side of the Union army, northerners and southerners fought in places that are now known as Devil's Den, Little Round Top and the Peach Orchard. Although the

Rebels had some success, the Yankees held the most important positions of the battlefield.

Some of the day's most brutal fighting took place in the Wheatfield. Late on the afternoon of July 2, Rebels took the flag of the Fourth Michigan Infantry. Colonel Harrison H. Jeffords of Dexter rushed to get the flag. As Jeffords grabbed for it, he was shot in the leg and "thrust

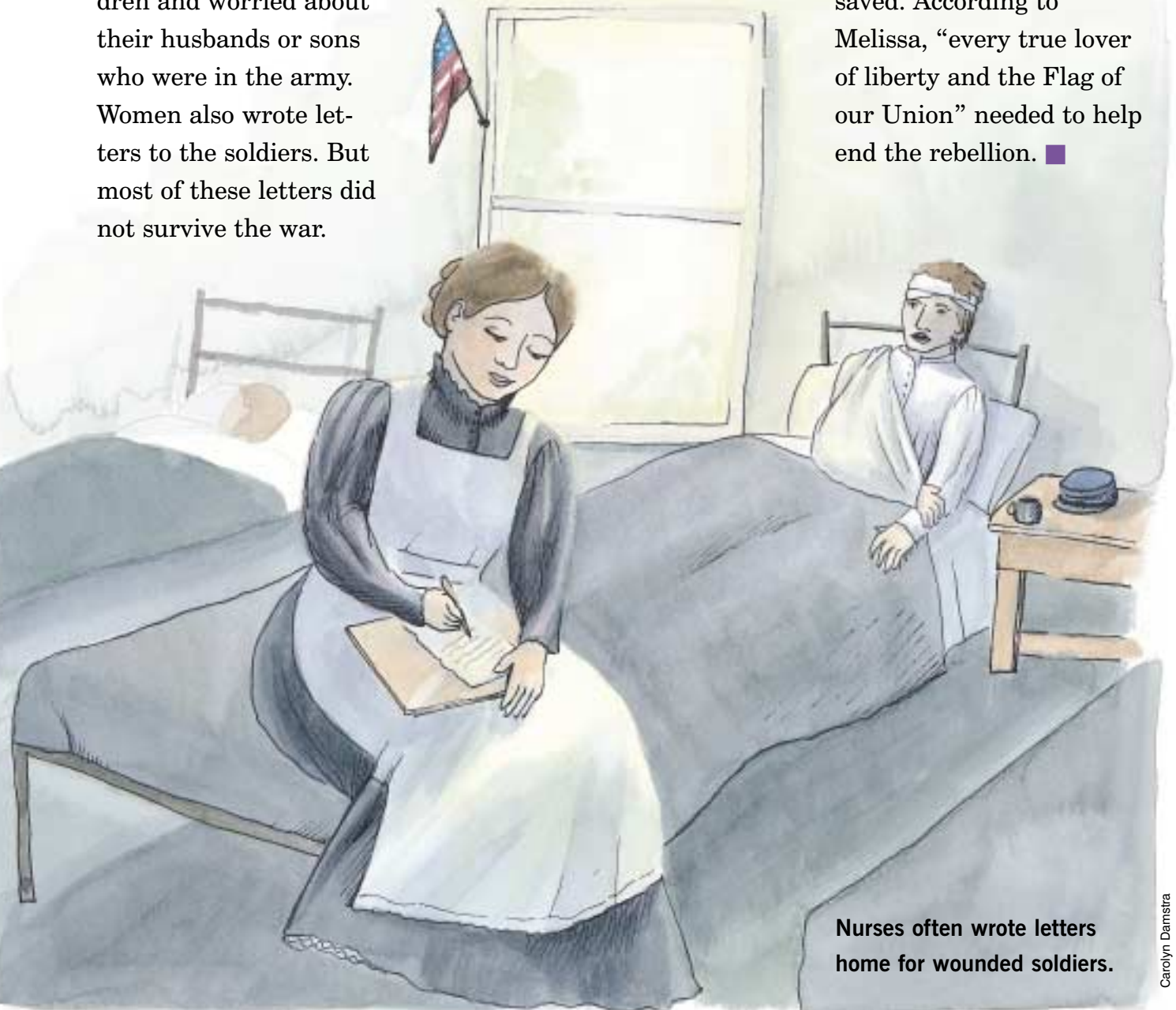
through with a bayonet." The flag was saved, but Jeffords died the next day.

Sometimes she acted as a spy. Her best disguise was that of a woman, yet no one knew she was a woman.

Most Michigan women stayed home during the Civil War. They ran the family farm, raised children and worried about their husbands or sons who were in the army. Women also wrote letters to the soldiers. But most of these letters did not survive the war.

One exception are the letters of Melissa Wells. She lived near Three Rivers. Her husband, Ben, joined the army in 1861. After he had been away for over two years, Melissa wrote to him, “I have spent many gloomy and unhappy

hours since you have been in the South. . . . Many times I have received a letter from you and would think that perhaps it was the last I would receive from you.” Although she worried about Ben, Melissa knew the Union had to be saved. According to Melissa, “every true lover of liberty and the Flag of our Union” needed to help end the rebellion. ■



Nurses often wrote letters home for wounded soldiers.

Carolyn Damstra