

# The Connector

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*Preserving the Past ... for the Future*

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## Glory Hancock Heroine of the Great War

War is hell! British Red Cross nurse, Madelon "Glory" Battle Hancock, wrote to her father and stepmother from the Belgian front in 1918: "I'm still on the front & such days & nights. We are having to be in every night and send as many off next day as possible. It's interesting but tiring & I'm sick to death of it. We have stretchers and beds in every corner ready for this Push. Lets hope we'll advance this time. It's rotten weather and the trenches must be ghastly. We've got lots of En-

glish in now—are surrounded by them and French. Have seen very few Americans. I haven't done much 'lorry hopping' lately— When



By permission of Mrs. Edward B. Lewis

I come off duty at 8 A.M. I'm all in and not fit for anything."

Glory Hancock entered the Great War, World War I, in 1914. An April 8, 1920 article in the *Tarboro Daily Southerner* described her service: "Mrs. Hancock ... went to Antwerp, in Belgium, August 13, 1914, ... with the first British field hospital, ... to enter that part of the war stricken country, in fact the first British hospital to take service in the front lines, in Belgium. She remained there until October 12 of the same year, when during the retreat by the Allies she brought in under fire many wounded Belgians and British, the latter of the Royal Naval Division.

"She was then attached to the

[SEE GLORY, PAGE 4]

## THE FINAL CHAPTER— LAURA PENDER, HOMEWARD BOUND [3rd in a Series on the Penders]

Laura Pender stepped carefully as she made her way onto the *Advantage* at St. George on the island of Bermuda. It was October 7, 1863 and she was returning to her family home, Oak Grove, in Edgecombe Co near Tarboro, NC. The voyage to Wilmington, NC, through the federal blockade, usually took about 3 days. She

and her husband, Josiah S. Pender, wanted their first child to be born at home. (Their son, Josiah Keon Pender, was born less than 2 weeks later, on Oct. 19, 1863.) Josiah would leave Bermuda to travel to England on the next available ship. His business there wouldn't wait.

Laura was an experienced sailor,



Photograph of Portrait  
by Charles Killebrew

but Josiah worried about her. Most ships made it safely through the blockade, but there was still an element of danger. Pender asked the ship's captain, Col. Thomas Croissan, to keep an eye out for Laura's welfare. There were only 6 passengers on board: James H.

Burton of GA and Rev. Moses Drury Hoge of Richmond, VA, who had traveled together from England and who kept journals in which they wrote about the voyage from Bermuda to Wilmington; Rev. Terry of NC; Mr. Regnault,

[SEE PENDER ON PAGE 14]

## Announcement

Braswell Memorial Library will offer 2 one-hour Heritage Quest workshops. Topics covered include what is available on this genealogical database and how to search it. Space is limited. Pre-registration is required. Workshop dates are Tue., Oct. 26 from 12 noon until 1 p.m. and Thur., Oct. 28 from 7 to 8 p.m.

### [GLORY, FROM PAGE 1]

hospital established in **Fermes**, in Belgium, and nursed there through the first battle of the **Yser**, when the hospital was shelled by the **Germans** and had to be evacuated, the patients being moved to **Hoogstadt**, where Mrs. Hancock was stationed during the first and second battles of **Ypres** and the second battle of the **Marne**.

"Until the last battle of the war, Mrs. Hancock was at the above named and other dressing stations close behind the Allied lines of battle until the last moment of the war; never being beyond the sound of the guns and frequently within the zone of fire. She was gassed, was repeatedly in the midst of shrapnel fire but always escaped without serious injury."

By September 1918, Glory Hancock was exhausted with the stress of battle. She wrote: "I am on Night Duty again and alone and we get 39 and 49 in a night all to be washed and their dressings done besides treatment for most of them and by morning I am like a ressurected [sic] corpse. I really never was so tired in my life. We all are. The Staff is so small and they keep filling up with wounded instead of keeping to a number we can cope with without killing ourselves. 4 years of this has about finished me in every way. I think every body feels the same. Worn out mentally and physically. We have lots of German wounded in, such nice mannered boys most of them. I was so surprised and our wounded are good to them, waiting on them and talking to them. Poor devils

they don't want to fight any more than our soldiers do.

She still managed to carry on a semblance of social life: "I gave a big dinner the other night before this Push started to thank the people who had been so nice to me. ... It was lots of fun & every body was in great form. It ended with a big air raid—too near to be amusing and we were kept busy with wounded coming in the rest of the night."

Glory expressed her home-sickness and weariness at having to keep up a strong front: "...I never was so homesick in my life. Boarding school wasn't a patch on the ache I've got to get back to you now and never leave.... honest to Gawd I'm so sick of having people depend on me that I could scream. At the last bombardment I would have given everything I possessed to hang on to somebody and be as big a baby as I wanted to instead of having to play the Hero of the **Johnstown Flood** and keep other men from being scared poor devils. I know it's hard enough when one is up and can look after ones self but to be in bed and feel the universe is apt to fall in on you must be the limit ... ."



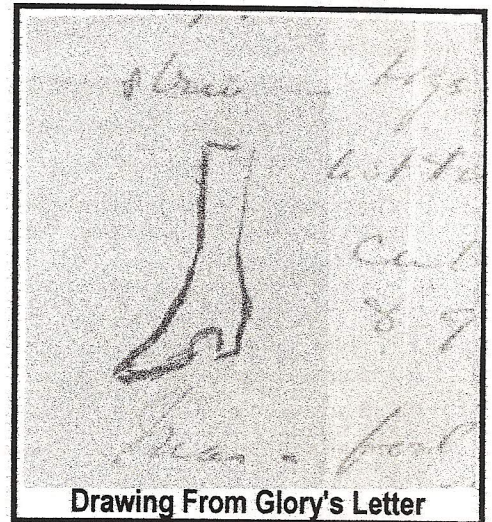
Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD)  
Recruitment Poster

There were times when she was ready to give up: "... truly—if the war doesn't end soon I'll have to chuck it. Isn't it awful of me. I've got a ward of bad cases—& am going hard all night & it interests me of course & I'm more than sorry for them & I just can't stand the suffering all round me as have all these years."

In spite of the horror around her, Glory still thought of more mundane things: "Do you think you could

### CONNECTOR

find me a pair of brown tan high shoes—brown suede or calf [illegible] size 4 1/2 C or 4C not too pointed toes, **Cuban** heel, & quite high—I



Drawing From Glory's Letter

was a fool not to get in a supply of shoes as I can't wear English ones & the shops in **England** that import American shoes aren't doing it now. [illegible] had a chance to go to St. [illegible] & only saw white ones with very pointed toes. **Stern Bros** on 42 St. [**New York, NY**] used to send me all my shoes but that was when I was 3 B and C. "

And food: "I'm dying for American cooking again. We can't get [illegible] fruit in the canteens up here now and I dream of waffles and fried chicken and Sundaes."

By Oct. 7, 1918, the battle was raging: "Ambulances for miles almost touching each other. A continual stream. Hundreds come in and are operated on & are sent on every hour. I've never seen such wounds & so many deaths. Dying on the stretchers before they can be attended to. The mud is so impossible. Food had to be gotten to the troops by airmen & some of the wounded lay out their [sic] 4 or 5 days before an ambulance could get to them. Sometimes the men get stuck waist deep in the mud & it is

[Glory, Cont. on Page 5]

### [Glory, Cont. from P. 4]

impossible to get them out. Food has to be taken to them for a day or two if they haven't died from exposure in the mean time & then sometimes they are shot to get them out of their misery. It seems incredible but this mud is almost like quicksand—it clings & sucks down so."

By Oct. 26, her unit had moved to the ancient and beautiful city of **Bruges, Belgium**: "Theres [sic] steam heat & gas... and I'm in a 7th heaven of delight. It was pitiful coming all through the trenches



**VAD, Patients in Dressing Station**

—such wasted country. All the trees skeletons, corpses & overturned guns & motors every where & miles & miles of inundated country with narrow duck boards to walk on. 1/2 foot to right or left, & you'd drown for certain. The roads on the German side are lots better than ours & Bruges is so gay. ... The Queen came on yesterday on horseback all in white of all things and all the children and pigeons in Bruges seemed to be clustered around their feet. It was a lovely sight."

In the last surviving letter to her father, written in late 1918, Glory was hoping for the war's end: "We are very busy & I'm on night duty & I'm just hanging on from day to day trying to hold out as long as the war does. Guess by Xmas if the war isn't finished Glory is. ... We all live scattered all over the town & come

to work at 6.30 in the morning like the workmen. Its harrowing these cold dark mornings and when Peace does come nothing will induce me to be uncomfortable or even take an early train again as long as I live."

### Most Decorated

By the end of the war, Madelon "Glory" Hancock had received 12 decorations and was the most decorated woman in the world. There were five from Great Britain: the Mons Star, Royal Red Cross, Allied Service Medal, British Victory Medal, and **King George V Medal**, given in person by the king. There were also five from Belgium: the Chevalier de l'Ordre de la Couronne, (crown), personally given by **King Albert** and carrying with it the title of countess; Cruz de Guerre, Order of the Yser, Order of **Queen Elizabeth**, and Civic Cross. Two medals from France completed her collection: Croix de Guerre and Medal a Reconnaissance pour les Etrangers.

In her letters to her father, Glory makes only one mention of her decorations: "Wish Gov. **Craig** would catch me the Congressional medal. I'd love to have something American though I haven't wished directly for them at all."

### Before the War

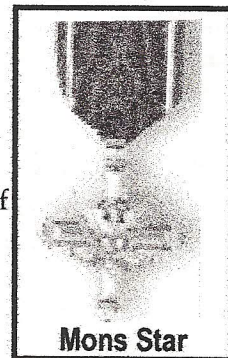
Madelon Battle was born in **Pensacola, FL** on Aug. 30, 1881. She attended **St. Mary's School in Raleigh, Wake Co., NC**.

Although her parents were in **Asheville, Buncombe Co., NC** Madelon apparently also considered **Tarboro, Edgecombe Co., NC** home. Her father had been born in **Nash Co.** and belonged to a family prominent in Nash and Edgecombe counties. The *Daily Southerner* article in 1920 carried the headline: "**Edgecombe Woman Is Most Decorated in All The World.**" In the article itself: "She is an

**Edgecombe county** woman and formerly lived in Tarboro," and "Mrs. Hancock is at present visiting the family of Mr. **Octave Battle** [her uncle] near Tarboro." Madelon herself, in one of her letters, longed for Tarboro: "I'd love to get to Tarboro for a minute after I've seen you & hugged Sylva."

Madelon Battle married **Mortimer Pawson "Don" Hancock** on July 2, 1904.

**Anne Lewis**, wife of **Edward B. Lewis**, of Tarboro told this story



of the Hancock's early marriage. "She showed up in Tarboro with orange spiky hair! It seems that Don was serving with the British Army in **India**. At that time, in the early 1900s,

women were not allowed to enter the hallowed rooms of the Officer's Club. Madelon, maverick that she was, was not happy with that rule. One night, the entertainment at the club was to be dancing girls. Madelon dyed her skin, donned a costume and joined the dancing girls at the club. She would have gotten away with it, too, if her husband had not recognized (**GASP**) her ankle! Angry, as you might imagine, he snatched her up, threw her over his shoulder and stormed out of the club, complaining loudly of his humiliation. Well, Madelon had a temper too! Once home, she locked herself in the bathroom with every chemical she could find and dumped it all on her hair. Then she applied the scissors! She had given herself an orange and spiky look that wouldn't wash out!"

The war put a strain on the Hancock marriage. Glory wrote: "I couldn't or wouldn't want to try to

**[Glory, Cont. on Page 6]**

