

Harriet Dame

On January 5th, 1815, Harriet Dame was born in Barnstead, NH. She was the youngest of six children and lived with her parents until they died in the 1850s. She converted her home in Concord into a boardinghouse. In April 1861, the civil war broke out and she offered her services as a nurse to the 2nd New Hampshire Regiment which was based in Concord. She didn't have any prior medical experience or training but that was typical at that point in time for middle-class women.

In December 1865, the 2nd Regiment was disbanded but she stayed close with the men whom she referred to as "her boys." Initially, she worked in the camp looking after the sick but with the First Bull Run in July 1861, she insisted on traveling to the front lines where she would be needed. She was captured twice by the Confederates. She was accused of being a spy and threatened by the Confederate soldiers but was released due to the intervention of Confederate General Stonewall Jackson.

New Hampshire Governor Nathaniel Berry denied her request to go to the front lines stating it wasn't the place for women. Dame went anyway providing medical care for the sick and wounded with a small team of doctors. Superintendent of Army Nurses Dorothea Dix originally objected to the idea of Dame remaining in the field rather than nursing in a hospital but later realized she was valuable. Governor Berry began relying on Dame to distribute supplies shipped from New Hampshire and report back to him on conditions among the regiment.

In 1864, she transferred her operations to a hospital taking charge of the nurses as matron at the 18th Corps Hospital in Virginia and remained there until the war ended. She remained in DC and succeeded Dix as president of the Army Nurses Association and campaigned for recognition of the contributions made by Civil War nurses. She remained active in veterans organizations providing care and donating large sums of her money to build centralized veterans homes.

She was awarded numerous awards and ribbons. In 1884, over 600 soldiers signed a petition requesting the U.S. Senate granted her a pension for her wartime efforts. The senate complied, impressed with the testimonies made on Dame's behalf. Even after her death she still receives tributes. In 1901, her portrait was placed in the New Hampshire State House making her the first woman to receive such an honor. In 2002, the American Nurses Association inducted her into the Nursing Hall of Fame. In 2015, New Hampshire Maggie Hassan proclaimed December 2015 Harriet Patience Dame Month, commemorating the 200th anniversary of Dame's birth.

I admire her strength, courage, selflessness, bravery, compassion, and determination to help others. When she was told she couldn't do certain things because she was a woman, she didn't let that stop her from helping others. She was determined and committed. Nothing was going to stop her from caring for the sick and injured. She didn't care what others thought about her and I really admire that. She had a job to do and she was going to get it done no matter what people thought about her appearance and gender. She accomplished so much and didn't ask for anything. She did it to save and care for soldiers. She has many admirers and left quite an impact on lives back then and

today. Her qualities have encouraged me to be the best, determined, and not let anyone say I can't do something. Learning about her life has inspired me to work harder and assured me that I can do whatever I set my mind to.