



4-25-2016

Story of Long-lost Adopted Hero Lives On

John M. Rudy
Gettysburg College

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Rudy, John M. "Story of Long-lost Adopted Hero Lives On." Gettysburg Times (April 25, 2016).

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Abstract

Buried somewhere inside of what we now call the "Schultz House" is a relic of a long-lost adopted hero of Adams County. The house, which stands on the corner of West Confederate Avenue and the Fairfield Road in Gettysburg, started its life as the pet project of Herman Haupt. When he lived here Haupt was a simple, unassuming engineer. He taught at Pennsylvania College. He ran a girls' seminary atop Oak Ridge. He did contract work for local railroads designing bridges and causeways. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Schultz House, Herman Haupt, Anna Cecilia Haupt, scarlet fever

Disciplines

History | United States History

Comments

This article appeared in the *Gettysburg Times* on April 25, 2016 as part of the [Adams County Historical Society's](#) monthly local history column, *Historically Speaking*.

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Story of long-lost adopted hero lives on

Buried somewhere inside of what we now call the "Schultz House" is a relic of a long-lost adopted hero of Adams County. The house, which stands on the corner of West Confederate Avenue and the Fairfield Road in Gettysburg, started its life as the pet project of Herman Haupt. When he lived here Haupt was a simple, unassuming engineer. He taught at Pennsylvania College. He ran a girls' seminary atop Oak Ridge. He did contract work for local railroads designing bridges and causeways.

Haupt's prowess as an engineer brought him to Gettysburg, but love made him stay. He married a pastor's daughter, Anna Cecilia Keller, and settled into a polite domestic life. The couple went to church. They picnicked. They raised children, both their biological children and their students, in the Italianate house just up the crest of the ridge from Gettysburg.

Haupt designed his house to be in vogue. Italianate architecture was all the rage and Gettysburg was starting to see it crop up everywhere. The trend he imported was mimicked in building after building around town including the Gatehouse of Evergreen Cemetery, the railroad station along Carlisle Street and the President's House on Pennsylvania (Gettysburg) College's campus. Though later additions have hidden the original walls of Haupt's creation, making it look more like a gingerbread house than a quaint Tuscan villa, you can still see his echoes all around the borough and county.

The Haupt's lives were colored by tragedy. In the late spring of 1843, Anna Cecilia fell severely ill. And she passed the sickness on to her only son Johnny.

HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

John M. Rudy



The two writhed in bed in agony suffering from Scarlet Fever. The child was delirious. But modern medicine, as it was, could not save him. "Knowing that the Lord would do what was best," Anna wrote in her diary, "I therefore committed myself and my dear child into his hands." The mother fell asleep beside her 3-year-old's crib.

When she awoke, she noticed her husband had thrown a white sheet over the crib. "Herman raised his head," she wrote, "and told me that our dear child was now numbered with the dead and that his gentle spirit passed through the dark valley and shadow without a struggle about 2 o'clock."

The lightning bolt struck the family hard. When their son's coffin was placed on her lap, Anna Cecilia thought how often her son had sat there before. "But never as he did now," she remarked, "how different his cold emaciated frame that could no longer lisp, or ask for instruction as he used to do. No! His icy lips foretold the vital spark within had from his body stole."

Herman was likewise shattered. In a poetic elegy to his son, Haupt captured his grief. "Each toy and play-thing that beguiled, His childish hours away, Each

object upon which he smiled, While happy in his play," the scientist and engineer poured out on the page, "All will remind us that our son, Our little John is dead; His earthly race was quickly run, The grave now forms his bed."

That grave was only the first of countless Herman Haupt would see in Gettysburg. Though he and his wife left the Oakridge Select Academy and the home they built together, fate brought Herman Haupt back to Adams County. As two armies tore at each other's entrails in 1863 and made nearly 10,000 new dead bodies, Haupt was repairing railroad tracks and bridges as the commander of the Bureau of Military Railroad. He and his work crews completed the herculean task of rebuilding the entire rail network into Gettysburg by July 5th, just two days after fighting subsided and in time to evacuate some of the most severely wounded to general hospitals in Baltimore and Washington City.

Though illness took his own son, Herman Haupt could at least do his part to help save other sons of other mothers and fathers. Herman and Anna Cecilia Haupt's words and grief still live on in the research files of the Adams County Historical Society. You can read the lover-turned-father-turned-general's poetry in our vertical files; you can scroll through Anna Cecilia's diary entries on our microfilm reader. You can still help them process their grief and give them a comforting shoulder by making their story part of yours.

John M. Rudy is a volunteer researcher at the Adams County Historical Society in Gettysburg. More information can be found at achs-pa.org.