

Kentucky's Civil War: Lexington's Frances Peter



*Historical Marker #1480 in Lexington notes the life of Dr. Robert Peter, whose daughter, Frances, was a unique chronicler of Civil War Lexington. Her diary, *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky*, was published by the University Press of Kentucky.*

A teenager who lived near Transylvania University and Confederate raider John Hunt Morgan's mother, Frances's diary describes life on the Kentucky home front and records military news and politics with a compelling perspective.

An avowed Unionist, Peter excoriated secessionists and delighted in writing about Morgan. When Morgan's raiders once rode into town, she wrote that "A nasty, dirty looking set they were; wore no uniform but were dressed in grey & butternut jeans or anything else they could pick up . . ."

Frances's diary describes Union military policy, arrests, invasions, raids, and guerrilla actions. As the editors note, her writings "not only include routine stories of rumor, gossip, and military affairs, but also provide a clear view of a community severely divided by internecine war."

Frances's writing ended in 1864 when she died from an epileptic seizure. Had she survived, she surely would have offered a captivating portrait of Kentucky during Reconstruction.

Photo: John Hunt Morgan, from the collections of the Kentucky Historical Society