

Sarah Holtz

(- 16 Mar 1902)

Holtz. Suddenly on Sunday, March 16, 1902, at 7:13 p.m., Sarah A. Holtz, beloved mother of Annie W. Johnson, George G., Robert T., James H. and Joseph B. Holtz, in her 32rd year. Funeral from the residence of her son-in-law, Dr. A.E. Johnson, 117 B street southeast, Wednesday, March 19, at 3 o'clock p.m.

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Death of Mrs. Holtz

Woman Who Loved the Flag and Gave Five Sons to Its Defense

The sudden death of Mrs. Sarah A. Holtz Sunday evening removed from life a woman who in a quiet way left deep impress upon the church and charitable circles in which she mingled, but she is even more widely known for the patriotic zeal she displayed forty years ago in Baltimore.

Mrs. Holtz, who was the mother of Mrs. Annie W. Johnson of this city, was nearly 83 years old at the date of her death. She was as active as most women of fifty. She went and came unattended, did her own shopping, did exquisitely fine needlework and embroidery which she donated to charitable and patriotic organizations, and took her place at her daughter's side at social functions, where her smiling face framed in soft puffs of snow white hair was always welcomed.

Mrs. Holtz was a native of Baltimore. Her grandfather, Robert Thompson, a native of Belfast, Ireland, had the contract for constructing the first wharves made in Baltimore. On the other side of her family her grandfather did signal service in the war for independence. She was a great-great-grandniece of Abigail Smith Adams, wife of the second President of the United States, and was, of course, related to John Quincy Adams.

Captain Benjamin Bettis Smith, her father, owned several sailing vessels, and during the war of 1812 fitted up one at his own expense, put it in commission and as its captain fought it in that war without cost to the government. The Smiths belonged to the landed gentry of Maryland, but they freed their slaves and were always loyal to the flag. When the war of the rebellion broke out Mrs. Holtz, then a widow, gave her five sons to the country, the oldest, Benjamin Holtz, entering the navy, as his grandfather had done before him. All five of the sons were badly wounded, and have been sufferers from those wounds ever since. Mrs. Holtz actively interested herself in the relief work of war days and held that interest in the veterans to the end of her life.

An incident of the early turbulent days in Baltimore is related by a veteran fireman. Above Mrs. Holtz's house in Baltimore hung a magnificent silk flag, presented to the local fire company, and given into the care of her son Benjamin, who was a member of it. After the 500 Pennsylvania soldiers called by Congress the "First Defenders" passed through Baltimore Mrs. Holtz was ordered by the city authorities to take the flag down, as it annoyed some of her neighbors.

"Oh, certainly," replied Mrs. Holtz, sweetly. "It is in danger up there."

So down the silk flag came; but, lo! It was flung out of the upstairs window, its folds almost touching the heads of those who passed under it. Up came the officers with orders to take in the flag.

"No." said Mrs. Holtz, whose language was the plain yea and nay of Quaker simplicity; "the flag is out of harm's way."

"It is not," said the angry city official. "Take it down or I'll take it down for you."

"I shall not take it down, and you shall not touch it," replied Mrs. Holtz, calmly.

The city official went away expostulating and Mrs. Holtz got her Bible, then had fire laid in the stove of the upstairs room, where a tea kettle was soon merrily steaming. While she sat reading her Bible at the window out of which the flag was unfurled a squad of armed confederates drew up before her door and hammered upon it.

She looked from the window and asked their errand.

"We want that flag and are ordered to take it," was the reply. "Let us in."

"You can't come in, and you will get hurt if you try to take my flag," she said. They tried to parley, but Mrs. Holtz declined to listen, so they decided to pull down the flag. Just as they had their plans arranged Mrs. Holtz said:

"You are about to suffer for your own misdeeds. Mary, bring me that tea kettle of hot water." And Mary, the colored servant, who yesterday arrayed her old mistress for her last sleep, brought the boiling water to the window. Very quietly Mrs. Holtz turned the scalding stream upon the men below, who, yelling with pain, retreated.

Three times on different days attempts were made to get the flag, but all failed, the scalding water proving a good "battery," and Mrs. Holtz held it, alone and unaided, till a few weeks later, when the fire company presented the flag to a New York regiment, which carried it to the front.

Mrs. Holtz was a member of the Methodist Church, but always wore Quaker attire. Heart failure, ending in painless and sudden death, brought her eventful life to its close. The funeral will take place at 3 o'clock tomorrow from the residence of her son-in-law, Dr. A.E. Johnson.

The Evening Star, March 20, 1902, p. 5

Funeral of Mrs. Holtz

Representatives of Four Generations of Her Family Honor Memory

Funeral services over the remains of Mrs. Sarah A. Holtz were held at 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon at the residence of her son-in-law, Dr. A.E. Johnson, at 211 A street southeast. Rev. Samuel M. Hartsock of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Rev. Geo. E. Maydwell of Waugh Chapel M.E. Church, and Rev. Edward Warren of Faith Chapel officiated. About the casket were gathered four generations of the Holtz family, and thirty-nine of the immediate descendants of the gentle woman so sincerely mourned.

The floral tributes were unusually numerous and beautiful, many of them coming from Philadelphia and Baltimore friends. Among the fragrant remembrances those of Green Clay Smith Command, U.V.U.; Lincoln Post and Lincoln Relief Corps were conspicuous tributes to the memory of Mrs. Holtz, who had so often busied her hands with making little gifts in aid of these patriotic organizations.

Rev. Dr. Hartsock, who had known Mrs. Holtz for forty years, and who was her pastor in Baltimore twenty years ago, paid high tribute to her virtues, saying she had been an active Christian for sixty-five years. He referred to her as "one of the Barbara Freitchies in her devotion to the flag and the principles it represented."

Gathered at the funeral ceremonies were all her surviving children--her daughter, Mrs. Annie W. Johnson, and her three sons, Mr. G.G. Holtz of Baltimore, Mr. Joseph E. Holtz and Mr. James Holtz of Philadelphia.

The friends and relatives from Philadelphia were Mr. and Mrs. James E. Holtz, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Holtz, Mrs. Lizzie Holtz and Master Franklin Pierce Holtz, a great grandson. From Baltimore were Mr. and Mrs. George Holtz, Mr. Albert Smith, Mr. Andrew J. Smith, Mrs. Olivia Waters, Mrs. Nellie Weaver, Miss Carrie Smith, Mrs. Annie Gawthrop, Mrs. Asa Smith and Mrs. Julia Smith. The interment was in Congressional cemetery.

The pallbearers were selected from among the Grand Army veterans. They were Capt. O.H. Oldroyd, Col. B.F. Chase, Capt. Dan Williams, Capt. Seymour, Capt. George W. Smith and Capt. J. Freeland.