

GREENCASTLE JENNY (Cone / Zentz)

A poem by turn of the century poet Helen Cone put to music by Bob Zentz.

In the midst of the American Civil War, June 22, 1863 a young girl by the name of Dolly Harris waved the Union flag as General Pickett and his division marched by her home in Greencastle, PA on their way to the Battle of Gettysburg. Pickett saluted and his soldiers cheered her bravery. Bob Zentz is a master at finding wonderful poems and writing tunes that make them come to life.

Greencastle streets were a stream of steel
With the slanted muskets the soldiers bore
The raw earth trembled and shook to feel
The tramp and the rumble of Longstreet's corps.
Bands were blaring "The Bonny Blue Flag"
The banners borne were a motley many
And watching that grey column wind and drag
Was a slip of a girl, we'll call her Jenny.

A slip of a girl, what needs her name?
Her eyes aflame and her lips aquiver
As she stood and stared with a loyal shame
At the steady flow of that steely river.
Then the storm grew dark in her hazel eyes
That time had not tamed nor a lover sighed for
And she went and girded her, apron-wise
In the flag she loved that her brothers died for.

Out of the doorway they saw her start.
Pickett's Virginians were marching through.
The hot little foolish hero's heart
Armed with the stars and the sacred blue.
Clutching the folds of red and white
Stood she and bearded those ranks of theirs
Yelling shrilly with all her might,
"Come on and take it, the man who dares!"

Pickett's Virginians were marching through
Supple as steel and brown as leather.
Dusty and musty of hat and shoe,
Wanted to hunger and war and weather.
Peerless, fearless, an army's flower

Sterner soldiers the world never saw
Marching grimly that summer's hour
To death and failure and fame forever.

Then there rose from the rippling ranks a cheer
Pickett saluted with bold eyes beaming
Sweeping his hat like a Cavalier
His tawny locks in the warm sun streaming.
And fierce little Jenny, her courage fell
As those grey lines flickered with friendly laughter.
And Greencastle's streets gave back the yell
That Gettysburg's slopes gave back soon after.

So they cheered for the flag they fought
With the generous glow of a stubborn fighter
Loving the brave as brave men ought
And never a finger was raised to fright her
On they marched, though they knew it not
Through that warm, green June to the shock
infernally
To the sound of the shell and the musket shot
To the charge that has won them a name eternal.

And she knew at last as she hid her face
What had lain at the root of her childish daring;
A trust in the men of her own brave race,
A secret of faith in the foe's forbearing.
And she wept 'til the roll of the rumbling guns
And the steady tramp of the marching men
Were a memory only, and day was done
And the stars in the fold of the blue again.

From Judy Cook's CD "Far From The Lowlands"

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