

Emeline Pigott, Confederate Spy
Introduction

Have your students read the following story about Emeline Pigott.

Or have them read an article found at:

<http://www.civilwarwomenblog.com/2006/09/emeline-piggot.html>

Emeline Pigott was born and raised in Harlowe Township of Carteret County, North Carolina. When she was 25, she moved with her parents to a farm at Crab Point on the North Carolina coast, just across the creek from where soldiers of the 26th North Carolina were stationed to defend



the coast. The sensitive and compassionate young woman took it upon herself to help the troops in many ways. She tended to the sick and wounded soldiers, even bringing some to her home to nurse. Working throughout three counties, Pigott collected mail along with food, clothing, medicine, and other needed items, and left the goods in designated hollow trees and logs for the Confederates to collect.

Pigott also was brave enough to gather intelligence for the Confederates. By entertaining Union soldiers she gleaned some information, and while she was distracting the enemy, her brother-in-law Rufus Bell dispensed food from her pantry to hungry Rebel soldiers. Local loyal fishermen also gathered information about Union boats' cargoes and destinations as they sold the Yankees fish. They then reported to Pigott, who carried the valuable information hidden in big pockets under her hoop skirt. With mail and other items combined, Pigott sometimes carried as much as 30



pounds of hidden goods. The 26th North Carolina left for Virginia, and Pigott tended to wounded in New Bern, North Carolina. In 1862 she left on the last train out with wounded before the Yankees occupied the town. She fled to Kinston and then to Concord with wounded before returning home.

With the Northerners occupying the area, Pigott came under suspicion in early 1865. One day, while she and Bell were on their rounds, they were arrested and sent to jail. While officials were looking for someone to search the lady, Pigott ate some incriminating information and shredded some of the mail, but many other items were found beneath her skirt, and she was imprisoned in a New Bern residence. Though she faced the death penalty, she was inexplicably released. She was, however, watched and harassed until the end of the war.

The colorful Miss Pigott loved to recount her Civil War adventures, but to the day she died in 1916 she would never reveal how she came to be released from prison.

Photo from NC ECHO

<http://www.inst.ncecho.org/Thumbnail.aspx?searchterm=00407>

This trunk includes a hoop skirt and an assortment of items like the ones Emeline hid in her skirt. The students are challenged to hide the objects in the skirt – not as easy as it sounds!! There are also lessons about other female Civil War spies and directions for making a ciper that can be used for your own “secret messages”!