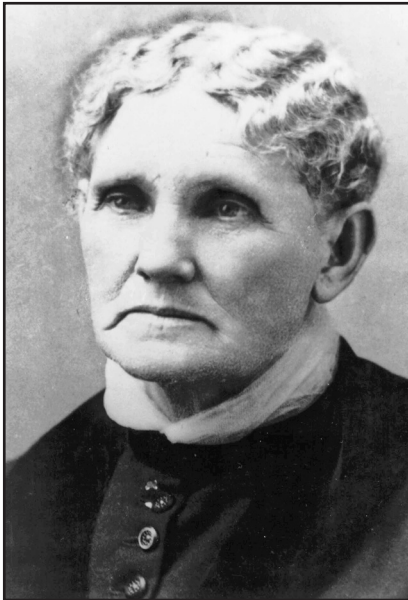


Mary Ann Bickerdyke

Mary Ann Ball was born July 19, 1817 to Hiram and Annie Ball in Knox County, Ohio. The family lived along the Kokosing River in an area then known as Owl Creek. Mary Ann's mother died when she was one year old. She spent the rest of her childhood on her grandparent's farm in Richland County.



Mary Ann Bickerdyke

Courtesy of the Mount Vernon News

In 1837, at the age of 20, Mary Ann moved to Cincinnati. While she was there, she studied homeopathic medicine. In 1847, she married Robert Bickerdyke and had two sons. The Bickerdyke family moved to Galesburg, Illinois in 1856. Robert Bickerdyke died in 1859.

During the spring of 1861, Mary Ann volunteered for the Union Army as a nurse in Cairo, Illinois.

When she arrived in Cairo, Dr. Benjamin Woodward met Mary Ann. He thought she would stay just for the day. She began her job by ordering the men to take baths and put on clean clothes while she went to work cleaning floors and bed linens. As Mary Ann was leaving for the night she made it known that she would return the next day.

It was then that one of the soldiers said, "Goodnight, Mother." These parting words led to the nickname Mother Bickerdyke- a name that the entire military used when talking to her or about her.

Mother Bickerdyke eventually joined a field hospital at Fort Donelson, Tennessee and worked on the first hospital boat. During the war she became Chief of Nursing under the command of General Ulysses S. Grant, and served at the Battle of Vicksburg. By the end of the war, with the help of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, Mother Bickerdyke had built 300 hospitals and aided the wounded on 19 battlefields.

In 1874, she joined her now grown sons in Kansas where they had a farm. Mary Ann Bickerdyke died November 8, 1901, in Bunker Hill, Kansas.

