



President Grant, President McKinley and a Mystery Shawl

Shawls were one of the most widely worn items of clothing during the eighteenth century, and that popularity continued in the nineteenth century as well. During the 1860's it was the only practical wrap that could be worn over the voluminous, hoop supported, skirts. Besides paisley shawls, which were the ultimate in style, plaids were a very popular pattern. Queen Victoria had a particular liking for tartan, and she was considered a style-setter during her entire reign.

One of the artifacts in the textile collection at the Fenton History Center is a silk, twill weave shawl. Its red, ecru, and tan pattern spreads out to measure 72 inches x 54 inches and has a 5 inch fringe on two of its ends.

The Fenton came to acquire the shawl when it had been left after a meeting, as various veterans' groups used the building to congregate. Attached to the shawl there was a handwritten note with the following: *"This shawl was made in Italy and presented to Nellie Grant. Her father, President U. S. Grant, presented it to Major William McKinley [later President William McKinley] who later gave it to a friend Colonel Albert Price. In time, Mrs. Price gave it to Mrs. Nettie Moore Mosely. On September 7, 1919, Mrs. Mosely presented the shawl to James M. Brown Women's Relief Corps, #73, asking that it be preserved with their historical relics."*

The James M. Brown Women's Relief Corp #73 in Jamestown was the ladies auxiliary to the James M. Brown Post, G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic), veterans of the Union Army during the Civil War. Colonel James M. Brown was commander of the 100th Regiment of New York State Volunteers. He joined the army on May 28, 1861 at the age of 35, and was made a captain of the 72nd New York Infantry, Company B. The Company B was from Jamestown. He was promoted to Colonel of the 100th NY Infantry

on January 10, 1862 and was later killed in action at Seven Pines, Virginia on May 31, 1862. He also served in the Mexican War as an assistant surgeon. Jamestown's Fenton Mansion served as the last home of the national G.A.R. office. Jamestown's Civil War boot camp was named after Colonel James M. Brown, "Camp Brown". The regimental history relates "the regiment was located in barracks erected within the Agricultural Fairgrounds, about one mile south from the village of Jamestown." A plaque honoring Camp Brown and Colonel James M. Brown is located at the corner of Brown Ave. and Prospect St., near Fletcher Elementary School.

As referenced in the handwritten note attached to the shawl, Ulysses S. Grant was President from 1869 to 1877. His daughter Nellie (Ellen Wrenshall Grant) was born in Wish-ton-wish, Missouri on July 4, 1855. She married Algernon Sartoris on May 21, 1874 in the White House. After only sixteen years of marriage, her husband died and she later married Frank Hatch Jones in 1912. Nellie died in Chicago in 1922, and is buried in Springfield, Illinois in the same cemetery as Abraham Lincoln.

How did the shawl make its way to Jamestown? Research could not identify Albert Price or Mrs. Mosely and their connection to Jamestown. However, the national significance of the Jamestown G.A.R. office makes a good home for the mysterious shawl.