

Through
THE
Looking
Glass

The NEW BERN

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When Marsha Somers, a New Bern High school freshman, decided to enter the United Daughters of the Confederacy contest here for the best composition by a student on a Civil War theme, she created a fictional diary, the "Diary of Laura Coley."

It won for her a cash award provided by Mrs. John R. Taylor as a tribute to her own father, who wore the gray of the Confederacy in what has been so aptly described as the Lost Cause. Printed below is Marsha's winning entry, and we might add that we feel it is a privilege to publish it.

DIARY OF LAURA COLEY

This is the diary kept by a young girl, Laura Coley, living in the blue-grass mountains of Kentucky during the Civil War.

April 14, 1861.

Dear Diary,

Today as I gazed across the golden fields of wheat, I dreamed of days to come and of tonight's party celebrating the victory over Fort Sumter. Papa says those Yankees are really cowards and won't give us much trouble. Mama looks worried but still proud of our victory. The party was a success. All the important people were here — the governor and his lady, and many more state people and their wives. I feel so tired that I must close for tonight. Goodnight.

Because of chores and fascinating events, Laura Coley had no time to write. The next entry was made two months later.

June 30, 1861.

Dear Diary,

Today as I write in you, my eyes greet a scene of suffering and ruin. The wheat fields now lie trodden and burned by passing troops. The Yankees have moved into the area around our plantation and our very being is in peril. Several of our primest Negroes have run off to seek freedom in Northern camps. Mama is beginning to show the strain and worry. Her hair grows gray too quickly, and eyes seem deep in thought and worry. Now her worry is greater, for Papa and Matthew have gone off to fight with the Confederates. I am overburdened with work, for with only ten Negroes, Mama and me, the work is a great burden.

At the first the neighbors helped, but with passing events they have turned to the North for support and refuse to help us. But oh, how much worse it must be on the battlefield with the scene of death and dying. Even as I write to you, I can hear the rumble of cannons and the whistle of flying bullets.

They seem so near — they are — only 53 miles away. All our neighbors cheer each Yankee victory but we only stand silent and wait for Southern victory. With tired eyes and heart, I close. Goodnight.

Several days later Laura and her mother received a letter from Papa telling the surroundings and sufferings of the fighting men.

July 5, 1861.

Dear Diary,

Yesterday we celebrated the Fourth of July with the cannons and bullets of the near fighting troops. From my window I see a land full of beautiful things. But upon closer inspection I see bleak, burned and trodden fields lying untended. Glancing back into my room, I see peeling walls, torn dresses, or rather a dress, for I have not had a new dress in almost a year.

Yesterday a group of drunken Yankee soldiers came to our house demanding supplies. Our danger is gathering as darkness when twilight approaches. Now at night instead of lullabies I fall asleep listening to the screams of dying men, of funeral prayers, and of firing cannons and guns. Mama is sick now because all the duties and responsibilities have worn her out.

Today we received a letter from
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SPREADING OUT—New Bern's growth toward the west in recent years is emphasized by this excellent aerial photograph. Instead of the usual view from Union Point, John R. Baxter went aloft and faced southeast from the far end

of the city to capture this scene on film. In the foreground, you'll recognize New Bern High school, and the stream at the top of the photo is Trent river. Now, identify other landmarks.



THEY'RE STARTING NOW—Ceramics classes for adults are getting under way at the New Bern Recreation Center, and it looks like another successful year. Pictured here, with a display of her own work, is Melba Collins of Cary,

who has been a big help to local followers of the fascinating hobby. She visits our town frequently. There are night classes Monday and Wednesday, and morning classes Tuesday and Thursday.—Photo by John R. Baxter.