

**SOPHIA BAYLOR
BARLING
KANNADY
1826-1908**



**HEROINE
OF
FORT
SMITH**

Aunt Sophy, the crowned queen of personal service, often told how the women cared for the aged and sick, whose menfolk were in the field. Her “open house” was simple: their table always free to those who called.

Sophia Baylor Barling was born in August 1826 in Fort Gibson, Cherokee Nation while her father Aaron was in the U. S. Army. When she was two, he was garrisoned to Fort Smith, founded by John Rogers in 1822. Soon after, he left his military post to buy a farm in an area called Spring Hill.

Since there were no public schools and few private schools in Arkansas, Sophia’s parents sent her to St. Louis in 1839 to a school for young ladies for eighteen months. After returning home, she lived with her parents until she married Jerre Kannady in May 1847.

Jeremiah Kannady was born in February 1817 in Beaver, PA. After his father died, the family moved to Fort Smith in March 1836 at the invitation of his mother’s brother John Rogers. Jerre worked in Captain Rogers’ store until he established a mercantile store and other businesses for himself. They had no children of their own, but everyone affectionately called them "Aunt Sophy" and "Uncle Jerre".

He opened a blacksmith and wagon shop, and added a grist mill and sawmill. Before the war, he was a sutler, who sold provisions to the soldiers. At the start of the Civil War, he was commissioned a Colonel, in charge of all the shops – blacksmith, paint, saddle and harness.

Meanwhile, Sophia worked night and day for the comfort of the Confederate soldier – caring for the sick and aged, destitute women and children whose men were on the battlefield, and witnessing immense suffering. She organized sewing societies to make soldiers clothing. At night they would knit socks and make tents and wagon sheets. In addition, they would also prepare food for the hospitals, often serving up to forty people a day, without charging for a meal.

Arkansas Unionists, with a deep-rooted hatred of slaveholders, took their hostilities out on their neighbors. In January 1863, as the Kannadys returned from Texas, they were captured by Captain Hart and his gang of Federal bushwhackers. In a rainy and cold night, they robbed the couple of their team and provisions. When Sophia realized they wanted to kill Jerre, she planned to shoot Hart and then herself with the revolver in her pocket.

After being placed in a house with several other captured Confederate soldiers, someone told Jerre to get away so they left the next morning. When they returned to Fort Smith, they heard Hart had been captured at Smedley’s mill and tried and hanged at Fort Smith. When the Federals came in September 1863, the Kannady went back to Texas. Jerre was hired to establish mills and blacksmith shops as well as erect public buildings. They stayed there until the end of the Civil War. Returning to Arkansas, Jerre resumed milling and manufacturing.

Jeremiah Kannady died in 1883 at age 66. His wife Sophia passed away in 1908 at age 82. Sophia’s “open house” policy during the Civil War allowed the women of Fort Smith to take an active role in supporting the Confederate way of life. Today Barling, Arkansas and the Kannady block in Fort Smith are remembrances of her work.