

## Hattie's War Synopsis

Nineteen years to the day, Hattie Howell stands on the hallowed ground where her father was killed in the most famous battle of the American Civil War: Gettysburg. Born five months after her father volunteered with his two brothers to fight in the Union Army, Hattie has been on a relentless quest to learn about the father she never knew. Finally, her prayers are answered in an emotional and moving scene when she meets the last man to see her father alive, a former Confederate soldier.

*Hattie's War* is the tale of a young girl raised by a widowed mother living in a farming community in the Finger Lakes region of New York State. Smart, a touch precocious, and artistically inclined, Hattie doesn't quite fit the mold of a young girl living in the confines of the Victorian Era of the late 19th century. Restless and ambitious, she wants more for herself than the options open to her: becoming a farmer's wife and raising children. More than anything, Hattie wants to be an artist like her late father. Plagued by debilitating "melancholy," what we now call depression, she gives it a name—Raven.

Why would a man leave his wife and five children to fight in a war that, after four years, left 820,000 men dead and over 200,000 women widowed? How did he die? Was his death a "good death"? Where does his body lay? These are the questions that haunt her. She wants answers, needs answers. But from whom?

Only one of the three brothers, Byron, survives the war. Hattie begins a correspondence with her uncle, and through their back-and-forth exchanges, she learns about the father she never knew and the war. Byron supports and encourages his niece to follow her dreams. Remarkably, their correspondence heals not only Hattie's broken heart but also his post-war suffering.

In real life, Hattie is writer Peter Serko's great-great-grandmother, Harriet Howell Phelps. Hattie's father, Hannibal, is his great-great-great-grandfather. The book spins a timeless tale of coming of age that young and old readers will find entertaining, informative, and inspiring. The richly illustrated book merges family history with the fascinating yet terrible truth of real lives impacted by America's most devastating war.