

Captain Ida Bennett: “The martyr of Spokane”

BY FRANCES
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Captain Ida Bennett was one of the first corps officers in Vancouver, Wash. Born in El Dorado County, Calif. in 1863, she qualified as a teacher at San Jose Normal School. She taught in San Bernardino for a while, where she was active in the Presbyterian Church—she hoped to go to mission work in foreign lands. After applying, however, she met The Salvation Army and her plans were changed. She threw herself heart and soul into the war, never afterwards wavering.

The lieutenant’s godliness and zeal recommended her for promotion, and as captain she served in Washington State and Montana. After faithful fighting in Montana she returned to Washington and in 1893 was sent to be in charge of the flourishing corps in Spokane. Wherever she went, the captain, by her self-forgetfulness and goodness, proved as true as the religion she taught.

One of her greatest triumphs—the special line of her soul-saving work—was the conversion of morphine and opium-users. Many converts and soldiers attributed their conversion to her care and prayers in their behalf.

On the afternoon of May 5, 1893 she met with some comrades preparing to visit the county jail. A man named David Hoskins pushed his way to the back end of the hall, asking to see Captain Bennett.

When she came out of the back room to talk to him, he pulled a revolver and fired twice at her, hitting her twice in the heart. He then turned the gun upon himself, and fell beside her. He had been infatuated with her, and because she refused to encourage his suit, he killed both her and himself, seemingly in an act of insanity.

Although warned of his dangerous character, she had that “blessed conscience that knows no fear,” and therefore had made no attempt to ask the protection of the police.

The news of the murder went like a shock through the city. The faithfulness and hard labor of Capt. Bennett had made her numerous friends. When the Army held her funeral service in the Spokane Methodist Church, the immense throng so overcrowded the church that it settled several inches and caused a near panic.

Even in death her influence was equal to that of her life. For years many corps in Eastern Washington and Montana hung a framed sketch of Capt. Bennett over the platform, sometimes with a scroll bearing the legend, “Absent, but not forgotten.”