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Bystanders to War

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Several weeks ago, a friend from church handed me a favorite book of his after learning of my interest in the Civil War. "A book of oddities," he said, "I think you'll really like this one." What an understatement. Published in 1960 and again in 1982 The Civil War, Strange & Fascinating Facts by Burke Davis has proved to be a thoroughly enjoyable read. It's one of those books that you can pick up and begin from any chapter, though you may not be able to put it down once started! By far, one of the more interesting chapters deals with famous onlookers; people destined for immortality in the annals of American history, who at the time led simple, even obscure lives. Some were too young to realize the significance of what was going on around them; others were of an age that the experience left an indelible imprint of the turmoil that nearly divided a nation. The following are anecdotes in the

lives of the famous:

In April 1862 Confederate infantrymen battled Federal resistance at Shiloh. In the ranks of the 6th Arkansas was a young private named Henry M. Stanley. He would later lead an expedition in Africa that would end in the famous greeting, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume."

In August 1863 the Abolitionist stronghold in Lawrence Kansas was destroyed by a Confederate band led by W.C. Quantrill. With him were young men who would ride into American folklore: the Younger boys and Jesse James.

As Lincoln's funeral procession made its way down Broadway, a 6 yr. old boy and his younger brother watched from a second story window. The boys were Theodore Roosevelt and his brother Elliott, the future father of Eleanor Roosevelt.

On July 11, 1864 Lincoln was nearly taken out by a sniper's bullet. A young captain beside Lincoln yelled for him to get down and pulled Lincoln to safety. The young captain was Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

In 1862 one of the first hot air observation balloons flew over Richmond. An observer studied with great interest from the ground. His name was Count von Zeppelin, father of the dirigible.

A society woman visiting Washington heard a passing regiment singing the chant, "John Brown's body," and a friend suggested she pen more suitable words to the tune. Waking in her hotel room during the middle of the night she forced herself to scribble some verses on hotel stationery. The now familiar verses begin, "Mine eyes have seen the glory..." She later sold the song to Atlantic Monthly for four dollars.

In the spring of 1865 as Jefferson Davis passed on his way

old boy watched the procession from the window of the minister's house. He was Woodrow Wilson.

In March 1862 general Curtis sent ten scouts into dangerous rebel lines at Pea Ridge/Elkhorn Tavern. The captain of the scouts was James Butler Hickok, later to become widely known as Wild Bill.

When the Confederate cruiser Alabama went down off Cherbourg hundreds of Frenchmen watched from the shore. One of them was so moved that he painted the scene which now hangs in the Philadelphia Art Gallery. The young painter was Edouard Manet.

In December 1862 a 30 yr. old "spinster" and volunteer nurse came to a converted hotel in Georgetown to aid the wounded. Within weeks she was taken ill with typhoid pneumonia and was expected to die. She lived and became the author of Little Women. She was Louisa May Alcott.

In March 1861 as Lincoln was inaugurated, a 25 yr. old artist in the crowd sketched away with his pencil. His rendition would appear in Harper's Weekly and he would go on to become one of America's greatest artists, Winslow Homer.