

was a shortage of qualified personnel in this region, so the Herschel Post Master was delegated to travel with the military to Barkly East to re-open its telegraph office. In his absence, his work was done by Mrs. Glueck and she travelled daily between Lady Grey and Herschel on horseback, and served the postal and telegraphic needs of both communities.

It is said that every time the Boers approached Lady Grey, Mrs. Glueck would replace the working set of instruments with the damaged set. The Boers would then further damage the instruments found in the office and she would replace it with the working set and inform the closest British force of the situation as soon as they had left. She used native runners to keep the British fully informed of the position in the town and district and materially assisted in the military operations conducted by the British command.

Her efforts did not go unnoticed. In his report to Parliament for 1899 the Postmaster General singled her out for her work, making special mention of the manner in which she safeguarded official property during the course of the Republican invasion. Sarah Glueck's actions at the start of the war seized the imagination of the public, and once the story reached the British press, her courage was given international coverage. Poems were written about her, and pictures of her were sold in their thousands throughout the Empire.

She was likened to the legendary Barbara Fritchie, an American patriot during the Civil War who defied the Confederate troops as they advanced through Frederick MD by waving the Stars and Stripes from a window of her home.

Mrs. Glueck was mentioned in dispatches, and a tribute to her heroism appeared in Major Hook's book on the campaign. The *London Times* hailed her as one of the heroines of the war and awarded her a substantial cheque. She also received 100 pounds from the *Daily Mail* for plucky conduct in face of enemy. Lord Milner said of her, "she is one of the most outstanding women I have ever met" and marked his appreciation of her bravery and devotion by promoting Mrs. Glueck to the Post Mistresship of Springs, a post she held for 20 years, until she was retired. After a fruitful life, she died in Springs on 27 February 1933 and the following obituary appeared in a Port Elizabeth newspaper:

Mrs Glueck, who was honoured in South Africa and Britain as one of the outstanding heroines of the Anglo-Boer War, died aged 66.

THE POSTMISTRESS WHO WAS A "BARBARA FRITCHIE"

*When you talk of deeds of glory
Of this campaign in the South,
Where the deeds seem super human
In the battle and the fray,
You'll remember one brave woman
In the town of Lady Grey.
It's the olden, golden story
Of the weak who can be strong;
It's the deed that rates the glory
Of the brightest wealth of song;
It's the old world-you can hear it,
Working with us here today;
It is Barbara Fritchie's spirit,
In the town of Lady Grey*

Zionist Record,
1 December 1950
S.A. Rochlin

The Plucky Post-Mistress of Lady Grey

Sarah Bella Glueck

(born Abrahams)



A Remarkable Woman

Sarah Bella Abrahams, born circa 1867 in Zagare, Lithuania (Russia), was the daughter of Elias Abrahams (naturalized British subject, 1865). Her husband, Marcus Glueck, was born 1867 in Kletzkow, Germany. The couple married in the United States and had two children – Freda Hannah (1889) and Percival Joseph (1891).

The family arrived in South Africa in the early 1890's. Sarah Glueck must have been a well travelled and well educated lady, speaking Russian, German, English and possibly Dutch. She was the Vice-President of the Debating and Dramatic Societies and her favourite pastime was fancy work, painting, riding, shooting and reading.

She began her career in the Post Office in 1897 as a postal assistant at Lady Grey, near the Lesotho border, in the division of Aliwal North.

In 1899 the Anglo-Boer War broke out between the two Boer republics and Britain. Hostilities began with the invasion of Northern Natal, the North-Eastern Cape and parts of the Northern Cape by Boer Armies.

Commandant Jan Hendrik Olivier came from Aliwal North to Burgersdorp, and rode into Jamestown with 50 men, hoisted the Republican colours, appointed Free State magistrates, and hurried back to Aliwal North to catch up with his commando which was going on a tour of annexation towards Barkly East. The Boers had first marched for Herschel, the centre of a large native district, but the magistrate, Major Hook, informed them that he could not be responsible for the attitude of the local tribe (the Fingos) unless they left his district undisturbed. It is typical of the peculiar character of the war that the Boers acquiesced in the suggestion and rode on to Lady Grey.

Lady Grey Boers did not wait for Olivier's commando to arrive. On 17 November 1899 the Field Marshall of Lady Grey, C.P. van der Merwe, Assistant Field Marshall Andries de Wet and Stoffel Myburg, Commandant of the Rifle Commando, posted Olivier's proclamation on public buildings.

They arrested Ass. Res. Magistrate Frank Banfield Gedye, occupied the gaol and magazine, disarmed loyalists and confiscated all rifles



MAJOR DAVID BLAIR HOOK

and ammunition. Gedye begged the burghers to consult Reverend David Ross before taking any action. The Reverend advised them not to get involved but they would not listen. Stoffel Myburgh commanded local burghers to join and soon he had 100 men on his side.

Andries de Wet was stopped in his tracks when he endeavoured to take possession of the Post Office. He was met by the Post Mistress, an English woman, Mrs. Glueck, who declined to turn over to them the office and its contents, and ordered them to leave the

premises. The Boers went outside and hoisted the Free State flag, but Mrs. Glueck pulled it down and ran up the Union Jack. They affixed Olivier's Proclamation of Annexation to the Lady Grey post office notice board, but Mrs. Glueck tore this down and substituted it with the Governor's Proclamation against treason. The Boers gave up the contest and retired.

Mrs. Glueck and other loyalists sent to Herschel to invite Major Hook to come to the relief of the town, but Olivier and Hook had already encountered each other on the way. On 19 November 1899 the Republican forces returned in greater numbers, and despite her vigorous protestations, they took over her offices and smashed the



Middle: Mr. Sterley, Field Cornet of Lady Grey; Mr. van der Byl, Herschel; Mr. Court, A.R. M. Herschell; Major Hook, resident magistrate of Herschell; Mrs. Glueck, the brave Post Mistress of Lady Grey; Inspector Ryan, Cape Police; Sub-Inspector Hutchins, Cape Police Front: Basuto (native) Police.



COMMANDANT JAN HENDRIK OLIVIER

telegraph instruments. Hook had not yet arrived and Gedye instructed all Government offices to quit. The police fled and the rebels took over.

Mrs. Glueck obeyed the order, but she was among the last to leave, burdened not only with her household goods, but with every bit of property of value in the post office, including her precious instruments. She fled to Herschel where she installed herself as Post Mistress.

On 21 November Olivier, with part of his commando, were on their way from Aliwal North to Lady Grey.

Olivier had Hook to contend with and had arranged to meet him in Lady Grey. They agreed that Hook would keep the peace in the black area on condition that the Boers would not invade Herschel. The Boers kept their side of the agreement but Hook actively supported the British forces.

On 22 November Oliver proclaimed Lady Grey as part of the Free State. After the Battles of Stormberg and Dordrecht, various skirmishes and a great deal of suffering and hardship, small groups of disillusioned and bitter rebels arrived on farms and towns in the North Eastern Cape in search of a Magistrate, English Officer, or friendly loyalist to whom they could surrender their arms. They were keen to take up Gatacre's offer to lay down their arms and return to their farms.

From 6 March 1900 most of the rebels from Lady Grey and Barkly East started to arrive in Lady Grey to surrender their arms to Major Hook from Herschel. The loyalists in Lady Grey, under leadership of Jim Sterley, notified Major Hook and requested his return to Lady Grey with the support of his troops. They also sent a message to the rebels, notifying them that they could surrender their arms in Lady Grey.

When Hook arrived, a proud Jim Sterley was able to hand over the arms that had already been given to him by the rebels. Many rebels from Aliwal North, with Brabant and his troops at their heels, rushed to Lady Grey to surrender their arms. Mrs. Glueck returned to Lady Grey. On 9 March 1900 Major Hook reoccupied Lady Grey.

The postal and communication infrastructure of the north-eastern districts of the Cape was re-established with great difficulty. There