

THE FUGELMAN

**THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SECOND
WISCONSIN VOLUNTEER INFANTRY
ASSOCIATION**

**THE BLACK HAT BRIGADE---THE IRON BRIGADE
1861-1865**

VOLUME XXVII

ISSUE 12

DECEMBER, 2017

EDITOR: JAMES H. DUMKE

**FU-GEL-MAN: A well-drilled soldier placed in front of a military company as a model or
guide for others.**

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PASS IN REVIEW

From the quill of Lt. Colonel Pete Seielstad



Thanksgiving 2017 is now a fond memory and reflecting on our blessings is perhaps the most therapeutic. Being thankful for our family & friends tops the list. The holidays are approaching and I look forward to the sights, sounds and Spirit of Christmas and the hope of a New Year. Let the great expectations for a joyful holiday be fulfilled for all of us.

At our winter meeting in January we will discuss the year ahead and its events. We will also take care of the general business of the association. If you have an item of interest and concern that you would like to add to the agenda, drop me a line.

Last year I set up a security camera on Christmas Eve. The subsequent photo surprised me. It seems that I caught Ol' Saint Nick in the act. By all accounts, he appears to be a handsome fellow and none too embarrassed by being discovered.



As it appears, there was no need for a large sack of treasures for the occupant of this household, as a piece of coal doesn't require it and can be carried easily in Santa's pocket.

As for my friends, I can only wish that Santa would place them on the 'Nice' list.

Have a joyous Holiday and a spectacular New Year. Keep family and friends in your heart. Without them, it is the most severe poverty of all.

Until our next meeting, find a good (Civil War) book and enjoy your winter quarters with your family.

I remain your obedient servant,

Lt. Col. Pete Seielstad

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE TO THE TROOPS

This year as your editor sat contemplating the annual Christmas message to the troops, his thoughts were drawn to the past and its relevance to this year's message. Christmas is a time of miracles and a former member of Company K and his family are facing a huge struggle this holiday season. Tim Grover was a comrade and well liked by his messmates in Company K. Tim Grover's wife, Sandy, is suffering from pancreatic cancer and the diagnosis is not good. They certainly could use a miracle this year! This editor is sure all of us wish Tim and his family all the best over the holidays and we pray for that miracle. As I contemplate my years as a reenactor we have seen members come and go. Some have gone on to other eras of reenacting, some have had physical problems, and some have passed away. All of them are missed and cannot be replaced in our memories.

As reenactors we share a special bond with our colleagues. We drill incessantly, we share the experiences of battle (mock of course), campfires and meals, and relationships with the general public. All of these things are special and create a community among our members. We have just completed another successful campaign season and have gone into winter camp. It is now time to spend time with our families and recharge our batteries before launching into the 2018 campaign. And that brings us to the Christmas holidays. This is a time of bright lights, colorful decorations, the smells of foods we all enjoy, and the beautiful sounds of Christmas music. It is a special time filled with love, compassion, warmth, and, yes, miracles! We surround ourselves with family and friends as we celebrate the season of lights and fellowship.

Christmas also reminds us of God's love for all humankind. It commemorates the arrival of His messenger and the fulfillment of His promise to send us a messianic savior. God sent His son into the world to serve as a messenger of hope and salvation. For those of us of faith we hold fast to the arrival of God's son among human beings. During His time on earth Jesus would call His followers to act with compassion and forgiveness for others. Christians are called to act; to serve the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lonely, (the slave), and the imprisoned. The charitable acts of folks during the Christmas season are legend! To a large degree these many acts of kindness are a direct result of Christ's call to serve mankind in his stead, to make this world a better place.

Christmas is a time to remember those holidays of the past. We remember the holidays with our parents. We recall those Christmases as our children grew into adults. There are the warm memories of friends we shared experiences with during the holidays. There are the exertions as we ready for Christmas present. The decorating, the shopping for just the right gift for those special people in our lives, listening to those old familiar Christmas songs, and the parties fill our hearts and souls with joy. (This editor really misses the faculty Christmas parties . . . but not enough to un-retire!)

And so, during this season of joy and miracles your officers and comrades want to take this opportunity to wish all of you a very merry Christmas! May this wonderful holiday bring you joy, peace, and glad tidings now and throughout the year! May you experience a miracle or two as you celebrate the Christmas holiday. Hopefully the Grovers will also be the recipient of one of God's miracles. Until we meet once more in camp have a safe, happy, and meaningful Christmas celebration!!

CAMPAIGN SCHEDULES OF THE COMPANIES AND ASSOCIATION

JANUARY

Jan. 27 Association Annual Meeting—10:00 a.m.

REGIMENTAL DISPATCHES

SECOND WISCONSIN REGIMENTAL ANNUAL MEETING

Mark your calendars now and plan to attend the second Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Association annual meeting. As of publication the editor has not received verification of the date and time of the meeting. If tradition holds, and we are if anything a group wedded to tradition, the meeting should be on the last Saturday of January (January 27th) beginning at 10:00 a.m.

ITEMS FOR SALE AND SHARING BY GARY VAN KAUWENBERGH

Our friend and comrade Gary Van Kauwenbergh has a few items for sale and some violin cases looking for a proper home. Below you will find the details and descriptions of the available items.

INVENTORY REDUCTION: If you're interested in any of these items contact Gary Van Kauwenbergh at (608)274-0736 or garyvank@aol.com

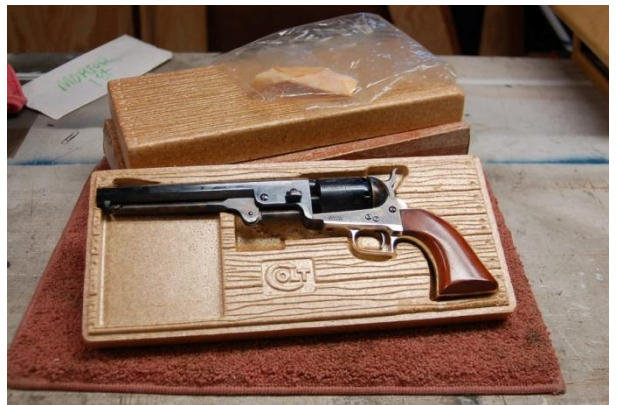


Wisconsin Buttons, \$15 each. - Original. Civil War pattern used for the Wisconsin five-button coats and Officer Frocks. No reproductions are readily available, and while they're not rare, finding good ones at a decent price is time consuming. Priced below the going rate, and I have a couple dozen available.

NCO sword, \$150 - Original, Model 1840 manufactured by Christopher Roby of West Chelmsford, West Massachusetts in 1863. Comes with reproduction scabbard, baldric and breast plate.



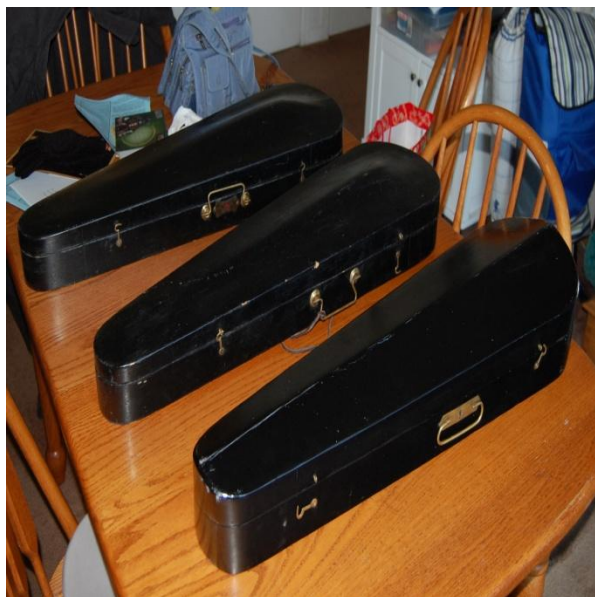
REVOLVER, Colt Navy, Model 1851 \$200. - 36 cal., Serial Number 139xx. Actually made by Colt in 1974, when they 'extended their product lines' with their Signature Series. Like-new in box; silver trigger guard. Fall Creek Sutlers is currently asking \$320 for new Pietta reproductions of this gun, and collectors are asking around \$600. I'm just passing it along to the membership for what I have into it.



Free to a good homes:

Wooden Violin cases. If you want to play your fiddle in camp without having to hide your modern case, have one of these with my complements. I went overboard refurbishing antique 'coffin style' wooden violin cases. Fresh black paint, interiors lined with red felt.





Four refurbished cases available, and one un-refurbished case available if you want to do your own.

ATTENTION TO ORDERS

CALL FOR DUES AND REPORTS TO THE REGIMENT

REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS

Second Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry

Gentlemen:

While many of us have settled into winter camp, the business of the army continues apace. There are guard mounts, picket duty, drill dress parade, and the upcoming regimental annual meeting. As a result of this

upcoming meeting there a number of obligations resting on the ranks and their officers.

It is incumbent on all our members to see that their annual dues are submitted as soon as practicable to their respective companies. This task must be completed prior to the regimental annual meeting. The sooner this obligation is addressed the sooner company secretaries can compile their rosters for submission to the regimental secretary and liability insurance be arranged.

Company secretaries are reminded that they must submit their company rosters and schedule of events to the Association secretary before the annual meeting. The sooner these reports can be compiled and submitted the better. It will relieve a great deal of stress on Dave Sielski in completing the Association's roster and event calendar.

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA EVENTS SCHEDULED

The 2017 Wreaths Across America event will take place at both Wood National Cemetery in Milwaukee and Forest Hills Cemetery in Madison on December 16th. This is a ceremonial event open to both civilian and military reenactors. Events at both locations will take place at 11:00 a.m. local time.

It began in 1992, when Morrill Worcester, of Worcester Wreath Co., donated some surplus wreaths to Arlington National Cemetery. In 2005, it received national publicity and began to spread. By 2014, more than 700,000 wreaths were laid at 1,000 locations in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and overseas.

The following dispatch was received from our colleague Bill Raftery in regards to the details for the Forest Hills Cemetery event for Wreaths Across America in Madison, Wisconsin. Please join your comrades for this special event and take note of the after action gathering at the Laurel Tavern for some collegial conversation and warming spirits! A big thank you to Bill for passing along this information to *The Fugelman*.

Call to Action

Volunteers needed for ceremonies on December 16 at Forest Hill Cemetery

Time; Muster at 10:30 am at Section 35

Uniform; Winter BDU's for WW2, Blues and brass for Civil War

Ammo; 3 rounds for each of two locations. Rifle salute will be at end just before taps.

After action conference at Laurel Tavern on Monroe St. all welcome!

Questions to me,

Bill Raftery

608-831-7769

Unfortunately the editor has no details for the event in Milwaukee. It is likely to follow the same format as in previous years.



Forest Hill Cemetery, Madison map:

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Forest+Hill+Cemetery/@43.0661868,89.4347507,686m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m2!3m1!1s0x8807acf913cbf221:0x44f6467ad1cc8051!6m1!1e1>

Wood National Cemetery, Milwaukee map:

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Wood+National+Cemetery/@43.0278414,-87.9828281,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x88051af1bcbf50ab:0x2984840c1882ccb3>

FROM THE CAMPS OF THE COMPANIES OF THE SECOND WISCONSIN

INFANTRY



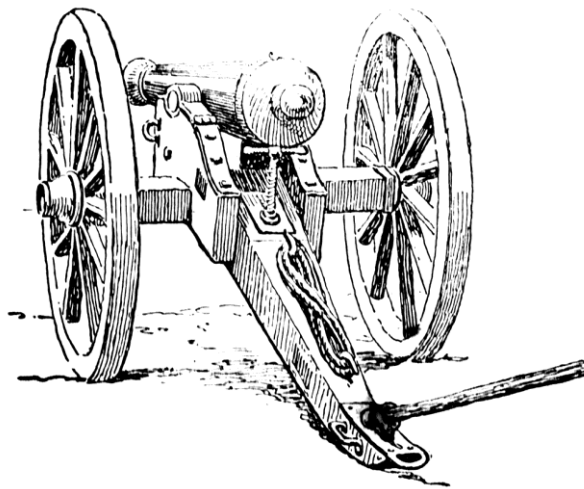
COMPANY B

COMPANY E

COMPANY K

COMPANY H

ARTILLERY



CONDOLENCES TO OUR COMRADE, BRANT DOTY

***The Fugelman* received the following communiqué from our comrade in the battery. Brant Doty is one of the most convivial comrades in the Association. So it is with deep sorrow to learn that Brant's sister passed away shortly before Thanksgiving. Brant's sister was living in Texas and passed away after a long illness.**

There will be a memorial service for the lost sister at the Doty Center on the campus of Great Lakes College in December. Brant's father had been a long time professor at the college.

As already noted, Brant is one of the truly nice guys in our hobby. On behalf of the Association members we pass along our deepest sympathy to Brant and the entire Doty family.

Death is not so very hard on those who leave this earthly realm. It is the survivors who must say goodbye to a loved one and mourn their passing. May God hold your family in his loving hands and comfort you in the loss of your sister.

SKIRMISHERS



2nd WISCONSIN REGIMENTAL FIELD HOSPITAL



THE BLOODY, DISORDERLY CHAOS OF CIVIL WAR COMBAT



Confederate reenactors in 2015. [Rob Bixby/Flickr](#) photo

‘MR. LINCOLN’S ARMY’ RECOUNTS HOW ORDERLY RANKS FELL APART WHEN THE BULLETS BEGAN FLYING

by ROBERT BECKHUSEN

The Civil War was the bloodiest conflict in American history and those who lived through it were beset by what historian Bruce Catton described as an “air of outright melodrama.”

The war certainly took on apocalyptic dimensions for many Americans. For others, it was a reckoning. The secession of the slave states and the outbreak of war in 1861 would escalate into an event which, to this day, is hard to wrap the mind around.

More than 700,000 people died. Millions of black slaves would be freed with the vanquishing of the Confederacy. There's a strong argument that the Civil War was America's second revolution.

I wish I knew more about the Civil War, which forever shaped the contours of my country's society and politics. What I encountered in Catton's *Mr. Lincoln's Army*, now available as an e-book through Open Road Media, is astonishing.

"The least inhibited theatrical director nowadays would throw out large parts of the script on the simple ground that it was too wild to be credible," he writes.

Most interesting are Catton's descriptions of battles, which were far more chaotic—even similar to World War I—than the orderly, popular depictions in paintings, illustrations and movies which most Americans have as their primary reference points to the Civil War.

***Mr. Lincoln's Army* was a landmark work when it came out in 1951. Catton is among a handful of Civil War historians, Charles Royster and James McPherson among others, who rank as the best. His works still rank in lists of the top books on the Civil War decades after they were first published.**

The U.S. Civil War was a conflict between Americans but also one that wasn't simply left for the generals to largely handle on their own. It was a war in which political considerations and domestic political *pressure* influenced the conduct of the war to a degree unheard of in prior conflicts.

But *Mr. Lincoln's Army* is not a dry, political story. It's a book about Gen. George McClellan's attempts to transform the Army of the Potomac into a

credible fighting force—and the conflicts with politicians grown agitated at his reluctance to send soldiers into battle.

The heart of the story, however, rests with the soldiers and the reality of serving in the U.S. Army during a time of war in the 1860s.



22nd New York Infantry at Harpers Ferry. U.S. National Archives photo

It's hard to overstate how different the United States was at the outbreak of the Civil War. There is a cliché that America was not a nation until after Appomattox. The population was too dispersed and regionalized to share a common national identity.

Few Americans traveled far from their homes, and a Hoosier from Indiana would find Maryland a “foreign land,” Catton writes. “Styles of architecture

and methods of farming were different ... and even the language seemed strange.”

Culture and place matters. It’s one thing to read about frontal assaults and flanking maneuvers, another to get a sense of who was leading them and serving—how the soldiers trained, what they ate and what their routines were actually like.

***Mr. Lincoln’s Army* also characterizes the diversity of the Union Army.**

America was a country of immigrants without a shared national identity. In addition to regionalism, ethnic and *immigrant* identity was reflected in the military to such a degree that a modern-day critic of “social experiments” in the army would have a panic attack.

Take the Irish Brigade—“63rd, 69th, and 88th New York, Irish to a man, carrying regimental flags of pure emerald green embroidered in gold with an Irish harp, a shamrock, and a sunburst.”

MR. LINCOLN’S ARMY (ARMY OF THE POTOMAC TRILOGY BOOK 1)

Their commander, Brig. Gen. Thomas Meagher was an Irish revolutionary leader who rebelled against England in 1848, was captured and dumped in Australia. Arriving in America, he saw the Union as a land of freedom.

Now imagine an all-Syrian battalion in the modern-day U.S. Army, complete with an ex-Free Syrian Army commander leading it. That’s not far removed from the kind of Army the United States *sent into battle* in 1861.

The cultural differences were also political. Abolitionist New Englanders in particular were appalled at slavery when witnessing it first-hand during their deployments in Maryland, a slave state which stayed in the Union.

“The 21st Massachusetts found that the thrift and neatness of New England farms were not visible here, and the colored field hands seemed shockingly ragged, ignorant, and shiftless,” Catton writes. “To this abolitionist regiment, slavery seen at first hand was abhorrent.”

“In general, the Western troops were less disturbed than the New Englanders. To the Westerners, this war was being fought to restore the Union; to the New Englanders, the abolition of human slavery was mixed up in it too, and freedom was an all-embracing idea that included black men as well as white. Sentiment back home was strongly abolitionist, and it was felt in camp.”

When *Mr. Lincoln’s Army* was first published, picturesque accounts of Civil War battles were predominant—particularly images of well-ordered ranks of men marching toward each other like automatons.

Yet friendly fire occurred with tragic effect. During the early skirmishes between the Army of the Potomac and Confederate forces outside Washington, D.C., Union artillery shelled a civilian funeral procession from a distance, mistaking them for enemy troops.

At Bull Run, a Massachusetts regiment began firing while still in column formation, leading to soldiers shooting *down their own line*. “Naturally, men in the leading ranks were killed and wounded by the fire of their own inexperienced comrades in the rear.”

The reality of Civil War combat was confusing and disorderly. Technological advancements such as rifled muskets extended the killing power and lethality of the standard infantry combat weapon, annihilating units of soldiers standing shoulder to shoulder.

“Neat, formal battle lines didn’t seem to make their appearance in actual combat,” Catton writes in *Mr. Lincoln’s Army*. “Instead everybody got behind a tree or a stump or a boulder if he could possibly manage it.”

The armies had begun to adjust themselves to the new state of affairs. The skirmish line—which originally had been merely a thin cordon of scouts going ahead to make sure the enemy didn’t have any unpleasant surprises concealed in advance of his main line—was being built up, bit by bit, into an attacking line. An assault on a hostile position was ceasing to imply a steady, unbroken advance by men whose one aim was to reach a hand-to-hand encounter; the old lithographs of Civil War battles, drawn by men who weren’t present, have left a false impression.

Attacking soldiers would shoot while “hiding behind any obstruction the ground afforded.” While those soldiers blazed away, their comrades would advance in smaller formations. This was a radical shift from the enormous battle lines of the Napoleonic wars.

By the 1860s these older tactics were “utterly useless; murderous enough to satisfy the most bloodthirsty, but almost as out of date as it would be today.”

A battle line which was getting the worst of it often gave way almost imperceptibly, the men firing and then stepping back a couple of paces while they reloaded, the attackers moving forward in the same manner. While this happened the line that was being beaten would leak men to the rear, as individual soldiers here and there decided they had had enough and turned to run.

Small inequalities in the ground—an outcropping of rock, a sunken road, an old fence whose rails could be pulled loose and piled along the ground to provide protection—were apt to become of decisive importance.

The book is highly recommended.

<https://warisboring.com/the-bloody-disorderly-chaos-of-civil-war-combat/>

CIVIL WAR MILESTONES

DECEMBER

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Dec. 1, 1864 | General Schofield arrives in Nashville, joining Maj. Gen. Thomas and they await an anticipated attack by Gen. Hood |
| Dec. 3, 1826 | Gen. George B. McClellan, USA, born |
| Dec. 5, 1839 | Gen. George A. Custer, USA, born |

Dec. 6, 1833	Col. John S. Mosby, CSA, born
Dec. 6, 1864	Salmon P. Chase nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court
Dec. 7, 1861	USS “Santiago de Cuba” removes Confederate agent James W. Zacharie from the British ship “Eugenia Smith” in the Gulf of Mexico
Dec. 7, 1862	Battle of Prairie Grove, Arkansas
Dec. 7, 1863	Jefferson Davis delivers a “State of the Confederacy Address”
Dec. 8, 1863	Lincoln makes proclamation of Amnesty & Reconstruction
Dec. 10, 1864	Sherman emerges at Savannah, Georgia
Dec. 13, 1862	Battle of Fredericksburg
Dec. 13, 1864	Fort McAllister surrenders
Dec. 15-16, 1864	The Battle of Nashville (Between Franklin and Nashville, Hood’s army virtually destroyed)
Dec. 19, 1814	Edwin Stanton, U. S. Secretary of War and one of the great war leaders in American history is born

Dec. 19, 1864 **Lincoln calls for 300,000 volunteers to replace losses**

Dec. 20, 1860 **South Carolina secedes**

Dec. 20, 1864 **Gen Hardee evacuates from Savannah**

Dec. 25, 1821 **Clara Barton born**

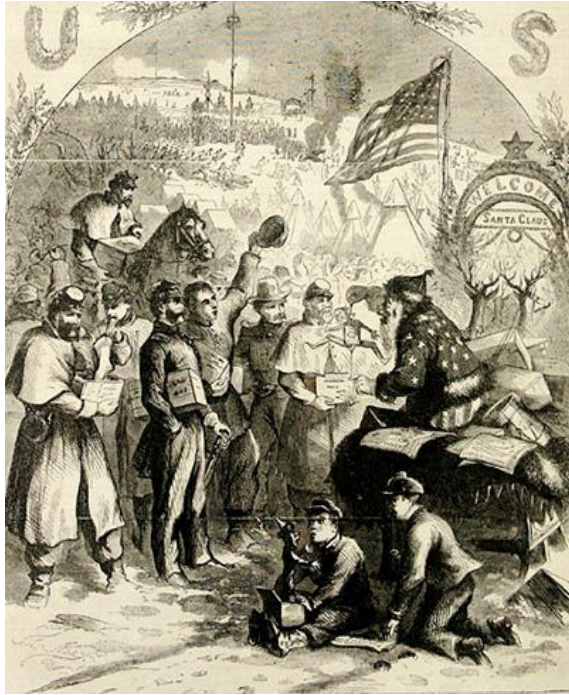
Dec. 25, 2017 **CHRISTMAS DAY**

Dec. 27, 1831 **Brig. Gen. Lucius Fairchild, USA, born**

Dec. 31, 1815 **Gen. George Meade, USA, born**

CHRISTMAS DURING THE CIVIL WAR

ON THE HOMEFRONT



Christmas in Camp, illustration by Thomas Nast for Harper's Weekly.

It can be difficult to relate to the men and women of the Civil War era. Despite the extraordinarily different circumstances in which they found themselves, however, we can connect with our forebears in traditions such as the celebration of Christmas. By the mid-19th century, most of today's familiar Christmas trappings — Christmas carols, gift giving and tree decoration — were already in place. Charles Dickens had published “A Christmas Carol” in 1843 and indeed, the Civil War saw the first introductions to the modern image of a jolly and portly Santa Claus through the drawings of Thomas Nast, a German-speaking immigrant.

Civil War soldiers in camp and their families at home drew comfort from the same sorts of traditions that characterize Christmas today. Alfred Bellard of the 5th New Jersey noted, “In order to make it look much like Christmas as possible, a small tree was stuck up in front of our tent, decked off with hard tack and pork, in lieu of cakes and oranges, etc.” John Haley, of the 17th Maine, wrote in his diary on Christmas Eve that, “It is rumored that there are sundry boxes and mysterious parcels over at Stoneman’s Station directed to us. We retire to sleep with feelings akin to those of children expecting Santa Claus.”

In one amusing anecdote, a Confederate prisoner relates how the realities of war intruded on his Christmas celebrations: “A friend had sent me in a package a bottle of old brandy. On Christmas morning I quietly called several comrades up to my bunk to taste the precious fluid

of...DISAPPOINTMENT! The bottle had been opened outside, the brandy taken and replaced with water...and sent in. I hope the Yankee who played that practical joke lived to repent it and was shot before the war ended."



"Christmas Eve" Harper's Weekly, Jan. 3, 1863

For many, the holiday was a reminder of the profound melancholy that had settled over the entire nation. Southern parents warned their children that Santa might not make it through the blockade, and soldiers in bleak winter quarters were reminded, more acutely than ever, of the domestic bliss they had left behind. Robert Gould Shaw, who would later earn glory as the commander of the 54th Massachusetts, recorded in his diary, "It is Christmas morning and I hope a happy and merry one for you all, though it looks so stormy for our poor country, one can hardly be in merry humor." On the Confederate home front, Sallie Brock Putnam of Richmond echoed Shaw's sentiment: "Never before had so sad a Christmas dawned upon us...We had neither the heart nor inclination to make the week merry with joyousness when such a sad calamity hovered over us." For the people of Fredericksburg, Virginia, which had been battered only a matter of days before Christmas, or Savannah, Georgia, which General Sherman had presented to President Lincoln as a gift, the holiday season brought the war to their very doorsteps.

Christmas during the Civil War served both as an escape from and a reminder of the awful conflict rending the country in two. Soldiers looked forward to a day of rest and relative relaxation, but had their moods tempered by the thought of separation from their loved ones. At home, families did their best to celebrate the holiday, but wondered when the vacant chair would again be filled.

CHRISTMAS NIGHT OF '62

The following is a poem by Confederate soldier William Gordon McCabe giving his thoughts on Christmas Night 1862.



**The wintry blast goes wailing by,
the snow is falling overhead;
I hear the lonely sentry's tread,
and distant watch-fires light the sky.**

**Dim forms go flitting through the gloom;
The soldiers cluster round the blaze
To talk of other Christmas days,
And softly speak of home and home**

**My saber swinging overhead,
gleams in the watch-fire's fitful glow,
while fiercely drives the blinding snow,
and memory leads me to the dead.**

**My thoughts go wandering to and fro,
vibrating 'twixt the Now and Then;
I see the low-browed home again,
the old hall wreathed in mistletoe.**

**And sweetly from the far off years
comes borne the laughter faint and low,
the voices of the Long Ago!
My eyes are wet with tender tears.**

**I feel again the mother kiss,
I see again the glad surprise
That lighted up the tranquil eyes
And brimmed them o'er with tears of bliss**

**As, rushing from the old hall-door,
She fondly clasped her wayward boy -
Her face all radiant with they joy
She felt to see him home once more.**

**My saber swinging on the bough
Gleams in the watch-fire's fitful glow,
while fiercely drives the blinding snow
aslant upon my saddened brow.**

**Those cherished faces are all gone!
Asleep within the quiet graves
where lies the snow in drifting waves, -
And I am sitting here alone.**

**There's not a comrade here tonight
but knows that loved ones far away
on bended knees this night will pray:
"God bring our darling from the fight."**

**But there are none to wish me back,
for me no yearning prayers arise
the lips are mute and closed the eyes -
My home is in the bivouac.**

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRIAGE

POSTED ON: JUNE 7TH, 2014

Robert Slawson, MD, FACR

***Originally published in June 2014 in the Surgeon's Call, Volume 20,
No. 1***

In today's world there is an interest in the origins of systems for handling casualties in battles and in civilian life. Little is known about the fate of the wounded in early times. Whether any system existed is questionable. Certainly there was always a body of people, men and women, who followed the armies and who would provide some of the ancillary services to the soldiers. These included, of course, food preparation and laundry but also care for the sick and wounded. These camp followers were legend and were still in existence at the time of the Civil War. However, this group was unable to provide all of the necessary care. Gradually this was recognized and armies started to provide for medical care. It is uncertain exactly when this began, but at some point physicians/surgeons began to accompany the armies.



**Baron Dominique-Jean Larrey.
*Courtesy of Musée du Louvre, portrait by Anne-Louis Girodet de
Roussy-Trioson, 1804***

The first known system for caring for the wounded in a timely fashion appears to have been organized by Dominique-Jean Larrey. Larrey was a surgeon in revolutionary France and became the surgeon in charge of the medical care for Napoleon's Imperial Guard in the early 1800s. Larrey noticed that many men were being injured; and because there was no organized system for removing these men from the battlefield until the fighting was done, many men were dying from wounds that should have been treatable. Larrey reasoned that, if the men could get medical care early enough, many could be saved. He organized a system of medical teams and

wagons into mobile hospitals. The units would go onto the battlefield to treat the men, including performing any necessary surgical procedures. He called the units *ambulance volante*, or “flying ambulances.”

In France at that time, the word “ambulance” applied not only to the wagons that carried the wounded, but also to the mobile hospital itself—the teams of surgeons, assistants, and nurses who accompanied these wagons. Larrey sorted the casualties according to the severity of wounds, and gave first priority to the most seriously wounded as these would die first if not treated immediately. Operations and amputations were done on the battlefield, even under fire. He also stated that only the severity of the wound mattered, and he disregarded rank or prominence. His ambulances subsequently removed the wounded to the hospitals. Larrey became well-known for his plan and was created a Baron by Napoleon because of his work. On one occasion he was captured but was recognized and freed. His work was also well known in Britain. Note that the term “triage” was not used at this time. Larrey’s system of handling casualties did not agree with what later became known as triage because his priorities were different.

A note about British military medicine at this time is also relevant. Michael Crumpler, in his book *Men of Steel*, describes the care of the wounded in the Napoleonic wars, and states that a sorting of casualties was done although not yet called triage. Details of the sorting are not clearly given.

He describes the medical care system consisting of aid stations, field hospitals and general hospitals. This system was soon forgotten in the peacetime years, as happens in many countries without large standing armies.

In 1846 British Naval Surgeon John Wilson approached casualty sorting differently, and with a different goal. Wilson argued that surgeons should focus on the patients who needed immediate treatment and for whom treatment was likely to be successful, deferring treatment of those whose wounds were less severe and those whose wounds were probably fatal with or without immediate intervention.

The next major war took place in Turkey and the Crimean part of Russia between the British, the French, and the Turks against the Russians in the mid-1850s. The French and the British had medical units and ambulances but no reported system of prioritization for handling casualties. While the French had an organized ambulance corps prior to the war, the British did not. The British used heavy wagons pulled by six-horse teams and used retirees as ambulance drivers and stretcher-bearers. These men could not tolerate the hard physical labor involved. The lack of adequate roads and railroads, as well as poor harbor facilities, added to their problems.

The British system never worked well. For the British, the main emphasis was on the regimental hospitals located near the battlefields. Handling of the wounded prior to arrival at the regimental hospitals is not discussed. General hospitals did exist but initially they were several days' journey from the battlefields and transport was slow and disordered. Later in the war, general hospitals were established in the Crimea but medical evacuation was still very poor. In either case evacuation home to England was a long slow journey. Florence Nightingale's involvement was with the sanitary conditions in the general hospitals, primarily in Turkey; but her ideas did later influence hospitals in the Crimea as well. There is no evidence that she was involved with the regimental hospitals.

Surprisingly the next chapter involves the Russians. The great Russian surgeon, Nikolai Pirogov, came to the Crimea and, with the help of Grand Duchess Helena Pavlovna, he established hospitals and developed a system of sorting battle casualties. He divided the casualties into four groups in order of care priority. The mortally wounded were assigned to the care of the Sisters of Mercy. The seriously wounded who required urgent surgery received it at the emergency dressing station. The less seriously wounded were transferred for surgery the next day. Those who had minor wounds were treated and returned to their units. Pirogov would not have used the word "triage" for this sorting of casualties because of the language he spoke, but it was triage. Hospitals were established and nursing care was under the care of the Sisters of Mercy, a nursing order started by Grand Duchess Helena Pavlovna.

Although we use the term "triage" to apply to battle wounded and usually date it from the Civil War, there is no evidence that the term was ever used during that war. The term is in none of the many surgical manuals of the time or in the *Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion*. None of the many published letters and diaries of surgeons and nurses from the Civil War ever used the word. But although the term "triage" is not used, there was clearly some sorting being done. At the First Battle of Bull Run, Union Surgeon C.C. Gray stated "We were obliged to select some for immediate removal as it seemed possible to save them by treatment and shelter." Union Assistant Surgeon John H. Brinton, serving in the west at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in early 1862, described some sorting of the wounded while under fire, with the less gravely wounded being removed to the rear. Cornelia Hancock states at Gettysburg that the surgeons left behind "began the paralyzing task of sorting the dead and dying from those whose lives might be saved."

Confederate Surgeon J. J. Chisolm discussed the role of the surgeon, stating that all of the wounded must undergo a thorough exam. Chisolm also described the duties of the assistant surgeon on the battlefield stating that he must look at all wounds, do hasty dressings, and place men on the litter,

but not do surgery. He further stated that at the field hospital the wounded were not treated in the order in which they arrive but that the more severely wounded would always receive the earliest attention.

The term “triage” is derived from the French word “trier” meaning “to sort” and was initially used for sorting food products such as coffee. Its first known medical use was in World War I, when the French used it to apply to the sorting of casualties. It was rapidly adopted by the British who assumed only three levels of classification: minimally wounded; seriously wounded but treatable; and mortally wounded. Triage stayed in the international medical lexicon and is still widely used.

Because it is popularly believed that triage had its origin in the Civil War, it is necessary to look at the developments in handling casualties in that war. At the outset of the war, no system of medical evacuation existed and no ambulance corps or effective use of ambulances was present. With the disarray in casualty handling at the First Battle of Bull Run, it became obvious to many that a system had to be devised. As recently as 1859, the Union Army had had no ambulances. The war began with a mix of two-wheeled and four-wheeled ambulances, predominated by the two-wheeled variety. These would prove inadequate for the terrain and the number of casualties. Even worse, the ambulance drivers were not only untrained, they were not in the army but were civilian workers responsible to the Quartermaster Corps.

The hospital system that existed was still that of the pre-war army, with the major focus on the regimental hospitals. The first line of care was at the regimental level, and the sick and wounded that could not readily be returned to battle were sent to the regimental hospital. They remained there as long as possible, hoping for recovery and a return to duty. Those that could not be adequately treated at this level were ultimately sent to the general hospitals.



Union Surgeon Charles Tripler
Courtesy of the National Library of Medicine

Efforts were made beginning in the summer of 1861 to create an ambulance corps with personnel, wagons, and horses under the direct control of the Medical Department. Union Surgeon Charles Tripler made such a recommendation soon after becoming Medical Director for the newly formed Army of the Potomac. Surgeon General Clement Finley rejected this proposal, as did the higher military staff and the Secretary of War. Such a proposal was also made early by the newly-formed United States Sanitary Commission. This later proposal also went nowhere. Tripler did try to institute an ambulance corps by directing the brigade surgeons to muster the regimental musicians and the delegated surgeons' helpers for weekly instruction in proper handling of ambulances and stretchers.

Another early source agitating for the creation of an ambulance corps was the Boston surgeon, Henry Bowditch, whose son had suffered from lack of care at the First Battle of Bull Run. Tripler also began record keeping within the regiments regarding the sick, the wounded, and their treatment and disposition. Only prearranged transfers were allowed. He directed that the newly created brigade surgeons give regular help and instruction to the regimental surgeons. Unfortunately Tripler received little support from Surgeon General Finley in any of his efforts. Tripler had great difficulty obtaining supplies, tents, blankets, and, of course, ambulances. This was, in part, because adequate numbers of these items did not exist and the Quartermaster Corps gave precedence to "war materials." The Quartermaster Corps did not consider medical supplies and ambulances high-priority items. When the spring offensive began in 1862, only a small

percentage of the requested, required, ambulances and supplies were available.

The appointment of William Hammond as Surgeon General in April 1862 helped Tripler to some extent. The problems with the Quartermaster Corps persisted; and, in spite of repeated requisitions for more ambulances, the ambulance shortage was still acute at the time of Tripler's resignation in June of 1862. It did not begin to improve until after the arrival of his replacement, Jonathan Letterman. In August 1862, Letterman attempted to solve the ambulance problem by creating, within the Army of the Potomac, an ambulance corps with officers, men, ambulances and horses all under the control of the Medical Department. This proposal was sent to the Surgeon General, who endorsed the system; but the proposal was again rejected by the senior army staff and therefore by the Secretary of War. Nevertheless, Letterman persisted and obtained approval from the Commander of the Army of the Potomac, Major General George McClellan, who happened to be a friend of his. McClellan may well have been receptive to this idea because he had been one of the official observers the Army had sent to the Crimean War, and would have seen the problems caused by the lack of coordinated care.

Letterman's system was instituted within the Army of the Potomac but this army was soon fragmented when many of the units were sent to General Pope and McClellan's command was lessened. It would be re-instituted in September when the entire Army of the Potomac was returned to the command of McClellan, on the way to the battles of South Mountain and Antietam. Many of the units in the new army had never been trained in the system, so it was only partially effective in these battles.



Evacuating the Wounded at Antietam, Courtesy of the LOC

In October 1862, Letterman, with approval from the Surgeon General and the army commander, re-organized medical care, thus creating a medical evacuation system. Medical care would start with an assistant surgeon and attendant at the edge of the battle who provided the first level of care. Those lightly wounded were sent back to battle and those who could benefit from medical care were sent to the field hospitals located beyond cannon range where urgent care would be given. Most amputations took place in these field hospitals. Patients would then be sent to brigade hospitals, then on to general hospitals for recuperation and further care. Gradually such systems evolved or were adapted in other armies and gradually what would become known as “the Letterman Plan” developed. Even though most armies had developed similar evacuation systems, these did not become official until February 1864.

In World War I, the approach to handling casualties changed again, with the emphasis on helping the largest number of people. It was stated that a single case, even if it urgently required attention, should wait if it would absorb a good deal of time. In the same time frame a dozen others might be treated. The greatest good for the greatest number of people was the rule. Many supported giving treatment to the less severely injured so that more soldiers could return to duty. It was during this time that the French first applied the term “triage” to the sorting of casualties.

Today the term “triage” is routinely applied to both military and civilian disasters. The term should only be used when true mass casualties occur, where the number of casualties is expected to exceed the care facilities available in the area. This is much more likely to occur in a military situation, although several recent weather-related catastrophes have shown the need for such a system as care facilities are damaged and reduced. Medical triage is not needed when there is no shortage of medical care facilities or when no medical care facilities existed at the start. A health care worker evaluates each patient’s medical needs and specific recommendations are made in each instance. The sorting of casualties according to a predetermined scheme, applied throughout all echelons of the system, is essential to its successful operation. The triage officer uses an established plan with specific criteria. Triage planning has already decided the conditions to use based on resources available and such planning, of necessity, involves a certain degree of health care rationing.

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