



# THE COURIER



## Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table



Special Ladies Night Gala

December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009 Meeting #104

**Dino's Restaurant at I90 & State Rt. 306 Willoughby, Ohio**

Guest Speaker: **Richard L. McElroy**

Topic: **American Presidents and First Ladies**

Canteen at 6:00 pm

Dinner at 7:00pm

Guests are welcome

**Reservations required Please call Bill Meissner**

**Phone 440 257 7889 e-Mail: gbmeissner@aol.com**

**Richard L. McElroy** is no stranger to the Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table. Besides hosting many historical programs on C-Span and PBS, Mr. McElroy helped make our 2002 visit to the President McKinley Museum memorable with his humor and easy-going style. He was born in Smithfield, Ohio and is a graduate of Carrollton High School. He earned his undergraduate and master's degrees in History from Kent State University and has taught in both the Stow and North Canton School districts. Mr. McElroy also taught courses in Political Science and Education at Mount Union College. In 2003, **President George Walker Bush** named Richard McElroy to a special White House Forum to promote the Study of the Social Sciences.

Richard McElroy and his wife Pamela have a daughter, 2 sons, 5 grandchildren and 1 great grandson. Our presenter enjoys collecting baseball cards and the autographs of famous personalities. He is the author of more than 100 stories and articles and has published 12 books including: *James A. Garfield, His Life and Times, William McKinley and Our America, American Presidents, Fascinating Facts and Stories*. McElroy has also tried his hand in local politics by serving two terms on the Canton, Ohio City Council. He also served on the Stark County Planning Commission.

Richard McElroy is a prodigious writer who has received many national and local awards. He is listed in Who's Who in America. He was awarded the Liberty Bell Award by the Stark County Bar Association. The Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table is honored to have Richard McElroy and his wife Pamela as our guests for our special Ladies Night program.

**CIVIL WAR MINUTES by Franco M. Sperrazzo Special Events Coordinator**

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**Mark Miner** traveled 135 miles from the Pittsburgh area in what turned out to be an entertaining 50 minute slide presentation for the 37 members present. **Mr. Miner's** subject was **Tom Custer**, brother of legendary Civil War **General George Armstrong Custer**. Speaking of the illegitimate son of **Tom** (two time Medal of Honor recipient), and the relationship he had with one of **Mark's** ancestor, farm girl Rebecca **Minerd**. **Mr. Miner** gave substance to clear chicken broth soup. We were taken to areas around New Rumely, Ohio to historical grave sites. A family tree was drawn forming ties between the **Custer and Minerd** families. We finally were led to Tontogany, Ohio where the well kept secret occurred. **Tom Custer** died with **General George** at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in June, 1876. **Young Tommy** was born around 1871 and died in 1896. His short life was rather uneventful. He was an oilfield laborer, and succumbed to typhoid fever. His **Mother Rebecca** was obscure and lost to history. **Mark Miner** made something from seemingly nothing to create an effective and interesting program.

**Holiday Party:** We will have a polished pianist for our enjoyment throughout the evening playing jazz favorites, musical classics, show tunes and pop standards. Our key note speaker will be **Richard L. McElroy**, who has authored several books on Presidents from **George Washington** to **George W. Bush**. *For this meeting call Bill Meissner, at 440-257-7889.* **Steve Abbey** will be out of town. We will charge \$25.00 per person for this December only. The extra \$3.00 will include sirloin beef tips, wine and 4 raffle tickets. How about that for a generous holiday gift? Remember to bring guests to this meeting too!

**Book Raffle:** Special thanks to **Bob Baucher, Dan Cudnik, Brian Kowell, George Grim** and anyone who recently contributed books to our fundraising cause. Please bring any other topic material to our holiday gathering.

**Health Update:** **Frank Moore** and Norton **London** are both recovering from recent medical issues. We hope to see both troopers return action to share the holiday festivities with us. To good health gentleman!

**WRHS:** Having to sell off 22 historic vehicles, layoffs, budget cuts to make ends meet, Western Reserve historical society has scaled down museum hours. They are now closed on Sundays and Mondays. The research library is only open Thursday through Saturdays. The new winter program calendar has just been released and can be accessed on line at [www.wrhs.org](http://www.wrhs.org), or call for information updates at 216-721-5722.

**Dino's Commemoration:** Special recognition will be made to **Pat and Kathy Tibaldi** owner's of **Dino's Restaurant & Banquet Center**. **President Arlan Byrne** asked me if a plaque to be presented and displayed in the lobby would be appropriate. Some of the founders embraced the idea and we ran with it. Great idea and work **Arlan**. We started at Bluey's on April 14<sup>th</sup> 1998, moved to Perkin's Pancake House in 2000 and remained there about 3 years. We have been back to our present location some 7 years and counting. We have equally built a professional, personal and friendly relationship. Salute for many more years to come!

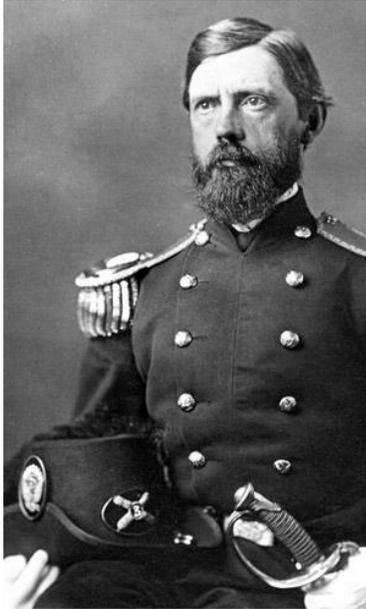
**December 8<sup>th</sup>, Meeting:** **JET Tirpak, John Sandy and Franco** first heard **Richard L. McElroy** on February 22, at the "Sons of the American Revolution" **George Washington Birthday Celebration**. The late **Robert Battisti** booked **Mr. McElroy** on April 27, 2002 at the **McKinley Museum and Monument** in Canton, Ohio. Fortunately I recalled a moving verse **Richard** wrote in a book he wrote that I purchased that day. It inspired me to contact him 7 1/2 years later. It is possible **Mr. McElroy** will have copies of his newest book due for release this fall titled, **Battlefield Presidents**, "Zachary Taylor and Benjamin Harrison and Their America." More on his biography on our cover page. **Richard and Pamela McElroy** will be our honored guests to celebrate this holiday season together. We hope you can join us and bring your guests too!

## General John Reynolds and Catherine Mary Hewitt, a love story

*The soldiers who struggled, fought and died in the American Civil War were more than just faceless images; they were young men from cities, small towns, villages and farms. They had families back home. They had dreams and aspirations for a better life, but the war for union exacted a bitter price. More than 620,000 would never see home or their loved ones again. This is the story of an engaged couple and how the war impacted their lives.*

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John Reynolds was born on September 21, 1820, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He was one of nine surviving children of John and Lydia Reynolds. He graduated from the Lancaster Academy in 1837 and earned an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point. Pennsylvania Senator James Buchanan was a close friend of the Reynolds family and helped secure John Reynolds' appointment to West Point. Reynolds graduated from West Point in 1841 and ranked 26<sup>th</sup> in his class of 50 cadets. He was commissioned a brevet second lieutenant and assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Artillery at Fort McHenry near Baltimore, Maryland. Reynolds was transferred to St. Augustine, Florida and later served at Fort Moultrie in Charleston, South Carolina.



John Reynolds had the good fortune of being assigned to duty with General Zachary Taylor's command during the Mexican-American War in 1846-1848. He was promoted to brevet captain for gallantry after the Battle of Monterey. Later he was promoted to brevet major not long after the Battle of Buena Vista. John Reynolds befriended Winfield Scott Hancock and Lewis Armistead while stationed with General Taylor's command in Mexico.

After the Mexican War, John Reynolds was transferred to duty in New Orleans. In 1853, he was assigned to Fort Lafayette, which was located on a small island near New York City. In 1857 Reynolds was ordered to report to Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston to participate in the U.S. Army's expedition to the Utah Territory. Mormons in the Utah Territory became increasingly hostile to Federal laws concerning polygamy and were attempting to establish a theocracy. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1857, Mormon militia disguised as "Indians" attacked a wagon train near Mountain Meadows, Utah killing more than 120 settlers bound for California. President James Buchanan sent 2,500 troops to Utah to put down the Mormon resistance and reestablish the jurisdiction of the Federal government. The Mormon Rebellion quickly dissipated and the Mormons agreed to submit to the statutes of Federal law.

In 1860, John Reynolds was stationed in California and ordered to return to West Point where he would assume the duties of Commandant of the Corps of Cadets. While on board the steamship back to New York City he met 24 year old Catherine Mary Hewitt, a strikingly pretty young lady with blond hair and blue eyes. John Reynolds was the consummate career army officer. He was totally devoted to his military duties and showed little interest in members of the opposite sex. But there was something special about Catherine Hewitt. He fell hopelessly in love with Catherine whom he called Kate.

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Catherine Mary Hewitt was born on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1836 near Stillwater, New York. Her mother died when she was very young. In 1856 she was hired as a governess for a family that was traveling to San Francisco, California. While in San Francisco she worked at a Catholic Girls School run by the "Daughters of Charity." She converted to the Catholic faith and planned to study at the Sacred Heart Academy in Torresdale, Pennsylvania. John Reynolds was raised in a staunchly Protestant family. He was taught to be reserved and hard working. In 1860 America, Catholics were seen as low class immigrant papists that lacked sobriety and self discipline.



With the outbreak of the Civil War in April of 1861, Catherine Hewitt and John Reynolds pledged their love to each other and exchanged rings. They decided to keep their engagement a secret for fear of upsetting the peace of the Reynolds family. They would wait until after the war to marry. Kate told John that if he did not survive the war that she would enter a Catholic religious order and become a nun. She gave him 2 Catholic medals to wear. She attached her ring which was engraved with the words "Dear Kate" to one of the medals. John gave Kate his West Point Class ring.

On August 20, 1861 John Reynolds was promoted to the rank of brigadier general and assigned by Major General George McClellan to the volunteer officers review board in Washington. Later, Pennsylvania Governor Curtin appointed Reynolds to command a brigade of the Pennsylvania Reserves. The Pennsylvania Reserves were comprised of sturdy farmers, lumber jacks and miners from Clearfield, Jefferson, Crawford and Indiana counties. The legendary "Brookville Rifles," led by Captain Amor McKnight, were among the units to become part of the Reserves. John Reynolds became friends with the other brigade commanders: George Gordon Meade and Samuel Crawford.

During General McClellan's Peninsula Campaign in the spring of 1862, John Reynolds' Pennsylvania Reserves were attached to the V Corps of the Army of the Potomac and saw heavy fighting at Beaver Dam Creek. Reynolds was captured on June 27, 1862 after the Battle of Boatswain's Swamp, by Confederate forces under General Daniel Harvey Hill. General Reynolds was exhausted from the Battle of Gaines Mill and 2 days of nearly constant fighting and a lack of sleep. Reynolds was taken to Libby Prison located on the James River in Richmond, Virginia. After about six weeks he was exchanged for a Confederate officer and returned to command the entire division of the Pennsylvania Reserves.

In late August 1862, the Army of the Potomac was removed from the Peninsula and began redeploying near Manassas. The Pennsylvania Reserves commanded by John Reynolds would see action at the Second Battle of Bull Run. Major General John Pope commanded the Union Army of Virginia supplemented by more than half the men from the Army of the Potomac and still could not defeat Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. General Reynolds and the Pennsylvania Reserves did their part to stem the severity of the loss by securing Henry House Hill and stopping the Confederate attack. After the costly Union defeat at Second Bull Run, Robert E. Lee led his forces across the Potomac into Maryland and the South's first invasion of the Union North.

Pennsylvania Governor Andrew G. Curtin summoned General John Reynolds in the early days of September 1862 to return to his home state and take over command of the Pennsylvania Militia. The Governor and many of the citizens of the Keystone State were fearful that Robert E. Lee and his hungry hoard intended to bring the war to the heartland of the Union. The Army of the Potomac caught up with Lee's army on September 17<sup>th</sup> 1862 at the little farming town of Sharpsburg, Maryland. John Reynolds missed the terrible fighting at the Battle of Antietam but he returned to the Army of the Potomac before the Battle of Fredericksburg and was given command of the I Corp. On December 13<sup>th</sup> 1862, the I Corps brigade commanded by General Meade managed to break the Confederate line in Stonewall Jackson's position along an unfinished railroad bed north of Fredericksburg. General Reynolds did not reinforce Meade's breakthrough because that portion of the battlefield was controlled by Grand Division Commander William Franklin. Franklin failed to comprehend what Meade's brigade had achieved because of the high number of Union casualties on all the portions of the battlefield.

In the spring of 1863, John Reynolds was promoted to Major General and commanded the I Corps of the Army of the Potomac at the Battle of Chancellorsville. General Reynolds' I Corps was positioned on the extreme left of the Union army and saw very little action in the ensuing battle because Army of the Potomac Commander, General Joseph Hooker decided to move the I Corps to the extreme right of the Union line just as Stonewall Jackson's Confederate Corps was slamming into Oliver Howard's XI Corps west of the Chancellor House. Chancellorsville resulted in another terrible Union defeat and John Reynolds wasted no words in blaming Hooker's incompetence for causing it.

In early June of 1863, General Reynolds was summoned to the White House to meet with President Lincoln. Reynolds reputation as a reliable and consummate officer had made him the prime candidate to replace Joseph Hooker as commander of the Army of the Potomac. However, Reynolds wanted complete control of the army and did not want to be subjected to directives from Edwin Stanton or acting Army Chief of Staff, Henry Halleck. Reynolds considered Halleck and Stanton incapable of directing the movements of the army. Lincoln and the ranking Republicans of his cabinet would never agree to such a demand despite Reynolds' outstanding reputation. On June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1863 George Gordon Meade became commander of the Army of the Potomac and Robert E. Lee emboldened by his smashing victory at Chancellorsville decided to invade Pennsylvania and bring the war to the north once again.

On July 1<sup>st</sup> 1863 General John Buford deployed the troopers of his two Union Cavalry brigades along McPherson Ridge northwest of the Adam's county seat of Gettysburg, Pa. He managed to delay an attack by an entire Confederate division until John Reynolds and the Union I corps arrived. John Reynolds was shot and killed shortly after he arrived on McPherson's Ridge while trying to direct a sweep in the nearby woods by the men of the Iron Brigade. As member of the general's staff recovered his lifeless body, they removed some of his personal items to secure them for his family back in Lancaster, Pa. One of the men of his staff noticed the Catholic medals and the lady's ring attached to it with the engraving "Dear Kate." The staff secured these items and a number of letters with a return addressed of Torresdale, Pennsylvania. Reynolds' staff sent these items to the Reynolds family.



**The spot where General Reynolds died** Alexander Gardner photograph

John Reynolds' body was transported to his sister Jennie's residence on Spruce Street in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The public funeral would be held on July 4<sup>th</sup> in Lancaster. Catherine Hewitt learned on the death of John Reynolds and went to the wake at his sister's house in Philadelphia. She introduced herself to the Reynolds family and they did their best to comfort each other during this sad occasion. Shortly after John Reynolds' funeral, Catherine Mary Hewitt entered the convent of the Sisters of Charity located in Emmitsburg, Maryland. She remained with the Sisters of Charity until 1868 when for some unknown reason she left the convent before taking her final vows to become a nun.

Catherine Mary Hewitt returned to the place of her birth in Stillwater, New York. Miss Hewitt remained in Stillwater until her death from pneumonia in 1895. Catherine Mary Hewitt never married.

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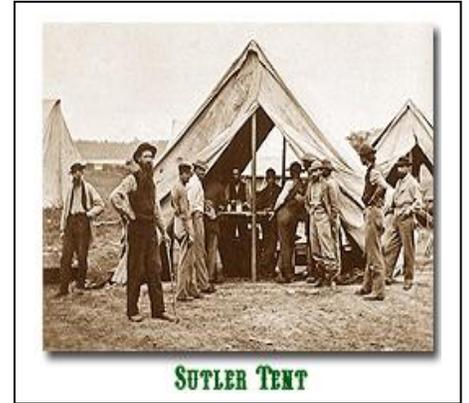
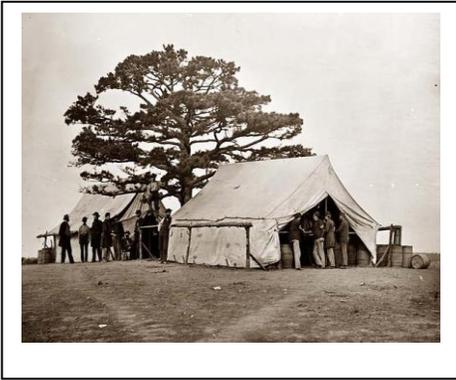
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## THE “NUTS AND BOLTS” OF THE CIVIL WAR

COMPILED BY CARL DODARO

### “SUTLERS of the CIVIL WAR”



**With the Holiday shopping season upon us, this month’s “Nuts and Bolts” deals with the merchants to the Civil War Soldier, The Sutler**

From the National Park Service Glossary of Military Terms – “SUTLER – a trader who sold drink and provisions to the troops. Beginning in 1812, a civilian appointed to serve as the sole licensed merchant operating on a military post or appointed to accompany a regiment in the field during wartime. As a military reform, after the Civil War, post sutlers were discontinued and replaced by the supposedly more carefully regulated post trader, which was in turn replaced in 1889 by the post canteen, and in 1895 by the post exchange (PX).”

The sutler was not an enlisted man, only a civilian. Army Regulations stated that sutlers could be appointed as one for every regiment, corps, or separate detachment, of course, with the approval from a higher authority. They made a business of suttling, or supplying food, and an assortment of other articles to the troops. He was a dry-goods dealer, a grocer and provided other necessities that were likely to be called for in the service of the soldiers. His chief profession was keeping a stock of goods that answered the demands of the stomach. His line of canned goods were used mostly for the officers’ messes. (The art of canning meats, fruits and vegetables was almost unheard of at the time.)

Sutlers sold all types of goods not provided by the government, and some goods that were provided but never arrived on time. They had few competitors because peddlers were not allowed in camp. But in towns, many commanders banned a sutler, allowing his men to

purchase from the townspeople. In many cases, the men bought from the sutler or went without. But they weren’t always satisfied. They claimed the prices were too high, weights short, and in many cases they had to use “chits” or tokens that were good only at the issuing sutler’s tent. In addition, military rule didn’t allow a sutler to carry a soldier’s debt to more than a third of the soldier’s monthly pay. And the sutler got



his money before the soldier was paid, directly from the paymaster. That’s why sutlers always showed up on payday, but were noticeably absent when goods were short or their customers had used up their credit. And in most units, the sutlers were “taxed” by the unit, usually a percentage of their total month’s business. This money went into special funds like the unit’s band, education of children born to members of the regiment, or to stock the regimental library. It also bought fruits and vegetables and special items for wounded members of the unit who were hospitalized. One 1<sup>st</sup> Massachusetts Calvary member observed that “it is doubtful if the sutler in this regiment realized more than 300% profit.”

In the main, sutlers were regarded as holding a semi-official position in their regiments and were subject to military orders. The armies also moved sutlers goods in government wagons, which didn't please commanders who needed the horses and wagons, and had to feed and maintain the horses. When the action got hot, the army also had the responsibility of moving sutlers to the rear.

One sutler of the 1<sup>st</sup> New York Cavalry had been commissioned by the governor and thought himself a commissioned officer, so dressed like the field officers, minus the shoulder straps. One day on the road he met General Phil Kearney, who was a stickler for officers dressing perfectly. He inquired of the sutler where his shoulder straps were, demanding to know his rank and regiment. The gentleman explained that he was the sutler. As Kearney's orderly reported, "Kearney fairly frothed at the mouth, and the atmosphere almost turned blue as the general shot out vocabulary of oaths newly coined for the occasion. He dismounted the sutler in knee-deep mud and made him double-time it back to the camp under the threat of putting a ball and chain on his leg."

Some prices the sutler received for his goods were: butter, which was many times rancid, \$1.00 a pound; cheese 50 cents a pound; condensed milk 70 cents a can; the blackest of tobacco, called "navy tobacco" \$1.25 a plug and the best investment; 6 molasses cakes or cookies for a quarter of a dollar. Pay for the average private was but \$13.00 a month, raised to \$16.00 a month on June 20, 1864. Captain Henry A. Castle of Co. A, 137<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry described a sutler's inventory, 'Effete cigars which was a bunch of grass filling wrapped in genuine Havana onion leaves at Weathersfield, Connecticut; rancid sardines, plug tobacco in advanced state of ossification; misfit imitations of standard monarchical beverages; wrinkled pocket mirrors, spoiled ink, spongy paper, eyeglass needles, pointless pins, sausages of the conglomerate era, petrified.'

One soldier told of 'sutlers pies'. They were most unforgettable. They were described as: "Moist and indigestible below, tough and indestructible above, with untold horrors within." Many a soldier guessed as to the ingredient, or ingredients, that they were made from. One sutler in Halltown, Va., sold cat and dog meat pies, but soldiers were reluctant to eat pieces from different pies at the same time, "fearing that the ingredients on coming together in one stomach would remember and revive their ancient feuds." It mattered little to the sutler for the soldiers were used to mystery in all its forms. On the other hand, the pies were gulped down by the hundreds, price, 25 cents each.

Confederate units had their sutlers, but they were few and far between because the Confederacy suffered from an almost complete lack of items considered as sutler supplies during the war. Most goods for the Confederacy, civilian and military, were brought in by blockade runners.

The sutler (sometimes termed an army merchant), as mentioned previously, was a dry-goods dealer. He dealt in army regulation hats, cavalry boots, flannels, socks, and suspenders, to name a few. This wheeler-dealer was not allowed to deal in liquors, and, if caught, would lose his permit to deal with the troops. The sutler filled a need, if not a necessity, at military posts and in campaigns where he was considered an essential convenience. The soldier was not compelled to patronize him, however, it is common knowledge that nearly every soldier maintained some sort of an association with him because of the services he provided to the common soldier. And the stories told here mostly reflect a negative view of the sutler, but for the millions of soldiers he served, the risk of being in a war zone, being over run by the enemy or Indians, the time away from home and family, the sutler has never received the recognition he deserved. And yet, every soldier became accustomed to answering two basic questions, where his regiment was camped and where the sutler had set up his hut or tent.

Compiled from numerous internet sites, all of whom refer to the book (which is a pretty good read) called "HARDTACK AND COFFEE: OR THE UNWRITTEN STORY OF ARMY LIFE (1887) written by JOHN D. BILLINGS. The book has recently been re-published and is pretty easy to locate.

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The Courier is the monthly newsletter of the Northeast Ohio Civil War Round Table

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**Book Review by Joe Tirpak**  
**“Bull’s-Eyes and Misfires” Clint Johnson, Rutledge Press, 2002**

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Union Major *Jonathan Letterman* was one of 50 people selected by author Clint Johnson for this book. Letterman’s contributions helped shape the Civil War.

These true stories include both men and women, soldiers and civilians, and obscure people most of us never heard or read about before. And yet, each of them dramatically altered the course of the Civil War. Thus, the author identified the contributions or mistakes of these individuals and selected the designations: “*Bull’s-Eyes or Misfires.*” This is one individual’s story. His is a true “*Bull’s Eye!*”

Major Jonathan Letterman was both a professional soldier as well as a good physician. However, he was destined to become a great physician whose methods earned him the title: “*The Lifesaver of the Union Army.*” His methods of emergency treatment of the wounded caused a major shift in thinking. No longer would military officers view the casualties of either side as burdens, but as human beings that required care. The thinking prior to Letterman’s contribution was caring for the wounded took resources away from the main goal of winning the war.

Prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, Letterman was stationed at Fort Meade, Florida. In 1851, he met and became friends with Thomas J. Jackson, later known as “Stonewall” Jackson. Letterman later wrote a detailed master plan for evacuations and treatment of the wounded. This procedure was so well done that he earned the support of the U.S. Surgeon General William Hammond and General George McClellan. The master plan was forwarded to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton who verbally approved it. Subsequently, after the chaos of the Seven Days Battles, Letterman refined and resubmitted his master plan. This time Secretary of War Stanton and Major General Henry Halleck rejected it.

In spite of knowing that Letterman’s plan was rejected, McClellan and Letterman continued with the plan and organized the *Ambulance Corps* and implemented the treatment procedures, including *sterilization of surgical instruments*. They hoped that once the plan proved its value, Stanton would formally endorse it. They were wrong!

By mid-war the evacuation, treatment and sterilization procedures worked so well that they were officially endorsed. However, Stanton did not forget or forgive. Nor did he take kindly to having his authority challenged. The vindictive Stanton removed Surgeon General William Hammond. Letterman resigned before Stanton could officially remove him. He died at age forty-eight of suspected stomach cancer.

Yes! Dr. Jonathan Letterman was truly “*The Lifesaver of the Union Army.*” Stay tuned for the next edition which the author designates a “*Misfire.*”