



CURRICULUM SUPPLEMENT FOR WEDDED TO WAR

The Award-winning Civil War Novel by Jocelyn Green

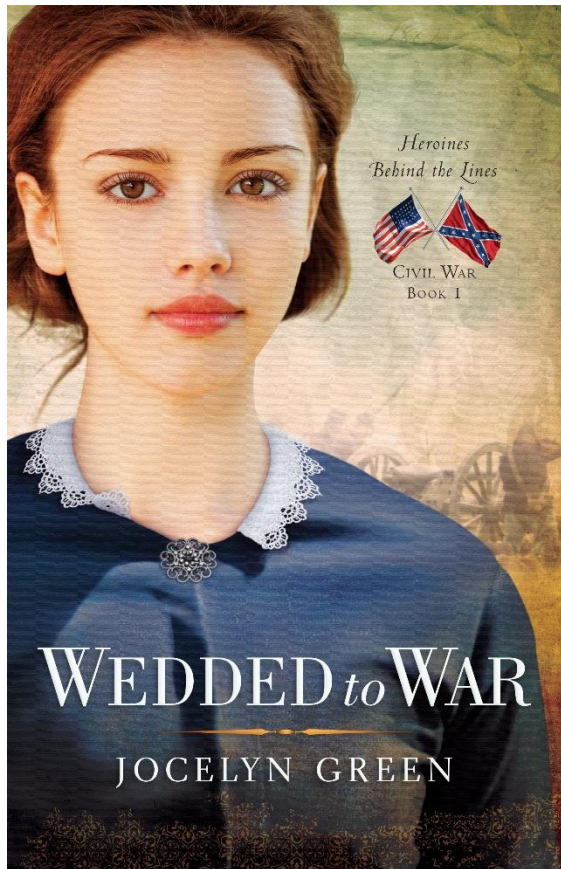


www.jocelyngreen.com
www.heroinesbehindthelines.com

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Introduction



I love it when history comes alive through a well-told story, or a “living book.” I hope that’s exactly what happens for you and your student when you read any of the novels in the Heroines Behind the Lines Civil War series.

In the back of each novel, I include a bibliography so your student can further her study with her own reading. Visit www.heroinesbehindthelines.com for more resources, including historic photographs from the Library of Congress. In the back of each novel is also a section called “The History Behind the Story” explaining what in the story is fact, and what is fictional. But for those of you who’d like to dig even deeper, this supplemental resource provides more insights into the fascinating time period and setting for *Wedded to War*.

I hope *Wedded to War* and this resource whets your student’s appetite for our nation’s history!

Blessings,
Jocelyn

About *Wedded to War**

**Christy Award finalist in historical fiction and first novel; Gold Medalist in historical fiction from Military Writers Society of America*

“The research behind this shines. Green’s descriptions of the first hospitals, the horrors of battlefield medicine, and the extraordinary courage and vision of the women who took on this challenge carry the whole book. For this alone it’s worth the read.”

~Historical Novel Society

It’s April 1861, and the Union Army’s Medical Department is a disaster, completely unprepared for the magnitude of war. A small group of New York City women, including 28-year-old Charlotte Waverly, decide to do something about it, and end up changing the course of the war, despite criticism, ridicule and social ostracism. Charlotte leaves a life of privilege, wealth—and confining expectations—to be one of the first female nurses for the Union Army. She quickly discovers that she’s fighting more than just the Rebellion by working in the hospitals. Corruption, harassment, and opposition from Northern doctors threaten to push her out of her new role. At the same time, her sweetheart disapproves of her shocking strength and independence, forcing her to make an impossible decision: Will she choose love and marriage, or duty to a cause that seems to be losing? An Irish immigrant named Ruby O’Flannery, who turns to the unthinkable in the face of starvation, holds the secret that will unlock the door to Charlotte’s future. But will the rich and poor confide in each other in time?

Book Trailer

Click the image below to view the book trailer for *Wedded to War*.



Five Real People who Inspired *Wedded to War*

Historical fiction is based on facts—and that includes people who lived during the time period. Today I'd like to share with you five real people who inspired my Civil War novel, *Wedded to War*. I want you to fall in love with my fictional characters, but I also hope you will grow to respect the real people in the novel, as well. I am convinced that each of them felt ordinary, like you and me, but they did extraordinary things and should be remembered for them.

1) [Dorothea Dix](#). Social reformer Dorothea Dix went straight to Washington within a week of war breaking out and didn't leave until she had a meeting with President Lincoln himself. Her goal: for the government to allow women to be nurses. It was a shocking suggestion, for nurses in hospitals up until that time had all been male. Proper Victorian women could not be expected to touch a strange man's body, even if he was sick or wounded—or so society believed.



Yet the numbers alone were enough to convince Lincoln he needed help.

At the start of the war, the U.S. Army Medical Department had a total of 28 surgeons, and no general hospital. Lincoln gave permission, and made Dix the Superintendent of Female Nurses. She had the authority to provide nurses to the army, and she wanted to be taken seriously. So her requirements for women nurses were stringent: they must be married, at least 30 years of age, of good health and character. They must not wear hoops under their skirts, ruffles, bows or jewelry. She was even known for turning away women because they were not homely enough. (Pretty women were accused of bringing out the men's "natural desires.") Even so, Dix was bombarded with applicants.

Readers of *Wedded to War* will meet Dorothea Dix, or "Dragon Dix" as she was commonly called, in the novel.



2) [Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell](#). An English immigrant, Dr. Blackwell was the first woman to earn a medical degree in the United States, and ran an infirmary for women and children near the slums of New York City. When the Civil War broke out, she realized the Union army needed a system for distributing supplies and organized four thousand women into the Women's Central Association of Relief (WCAR). The WCAR grew into chapters around the county, and this body systematically collected and distributed life-saving supplies such as bandages, blankets, food, clothing and medical supplies.

Blackwell also partnered with several prominent male physicians in New York City to offer a one-month training course for 100 women who wanted to be nurses for the army. This was the first formal training for women nurses in the country. Once they completed their training, they were sent to Dix for placement at a hospital.

By July 1861, the WCAR prompted the government to form a national version—the United States Sanitary Commission. And it all started because Dr. Blackwell decided to mobilize the women of the country to help the Union.

Dr. Blackwell plays a major role in *Wedded to War*.

3) [Georgeanna Woolsey](#). At 28 years old, Georgeanna should not have been allowed to serve the army as a nurse, but she got through the application process anyway. Against her mother's and sisters' wishes, she was one of the 100 women trained in New York City to be a nurse. Not content to sit in a parlor and knit or scrape lint, she was eager to go where the fighting was, to get her hands dirty in a way she had never been allowed to before as a wealthy, privileged woman.



Georgeanna wrote many letters and accounts of her experiences, including this: “Some of the bravest women I have ever known were among this first company of army nurses. . . . Some of them were women of the truest refinement and culture; and day after day they quietly and patiently worked, doing, by order of the surgeon, things which not one of those gentlemen would have dared to ask of a woman whose male relative stood able and ready to defend her and report him. I have seen small white hands scrubbing floors, washing windows, and performing all menial offices. I have known women, delicately cared for at home, half fed in hospitals, hard worked day and night, and given, when sleep must be had, a wretched closet just large enough for a camp bed to stand in. I have known surgeons who purposely and ingeniously arranged these inconveniences with the avowed intention of driving away all women from their hospitals. . . .These annoyances could not have been endured by the nurses but for the knowledge that they were pioneers, who were, if possible, to gain standing ground for others. . . .”*

Georgeanna Woolsey is the inspiration for my main character in *Wedded to War*, Charlotte Waverly. Georgeanna's sister Eliza inspired the fictional sister Alice, as well.



4) [Louisa May Alcott](#). Before she wrote *Little Women*, Louisa May Alcott was a nurse at the Union Hotel Hospital in Georgetown for six weeks before she contracted typhoid fever and had to return to her home in Concord. Her book *Hospital Sketches* is full of vivid descriptions of hospital life, from her own duties to the personalities and sufferings of her patients.

Louisa arrived in Washington too late for her to fit the timeline of *Wedded to War*, but her account of the horrific hotel-turned-hospital—which matched the Sanitary Commission report—helped me color my own descriptions of the Union Hotel Hospital. My main character Charlotte finds herself there in the summer of 1861 and quickly learns what it really means to be a nurse in the Civil War.

5) [Frederick Law Olmsted](#). Most people know him as the landscape architect of New York City's Central Park, which opened just a few years before the war began, or as the founder of modern landscape architecture. But he also played a critical role as the executive secretary of the U.S. Sanitary Commission from 1861 until he burned out from the job in 1863. He was a master administrator, and did untold good for the Union army by inspecting hospital camps and suggesting life-saving improvements in their hygiene, sanitation, cooking, and general care. Olmsted also helped form the fleet of hospital transport ships that removed sick and wounded Union soldiers from the swamps of Virginia during General George B. McClellan's ill-fated Peninsula Campaign during the summer of 1862. (For more on the hospital transport's service, read *The Other Side of War* by Katharine Prescott Wormeley and *Hospital Transports*, published by the Sanitary Commission in 1863 and available to read in full for free at <http://books.google.com>.)



Frederick Law Olmsted is a character in *Wedded to War*, interacting with Charlotte Waverly both in Washington and on the hospital transports.

*Bacon, Georgeanna Woolsey and Eliza Woolsey Howland, *My Heart Toward Home: Letters of a Family During the Civil War*. Roseville, Minnesota: Edinborough Press, 2001 (81).

Women's Fashion during the Civil War

Three elements of Civil War fashion are especially interesting to me, however, and I hope they will interest you as well: corsets, hoop skirts, and mourning dress.

The Corset

Virtually every woman wore a corset of some type under their clothing, from working class women to domestic servants to genteel ladies of society. The ideal was a waist of 15 inches, but corsets did come in different sizes so we know that not everyone squeezed themselves to match this standard. Corsets were stiffened with whalebone, steel, or even oak splits for women in the South during the war.

Most corsets closed in the front with metal brads and eyelets, and more rarely they laced up the back with hooks and eyes. Women whose corsets laced up the back would have needed help dressing.



During the Victorian Age, including the Civil War, a tightly laced corset was widely associated with a woman's virtue. In fact, many terms we use today to describe someone's morality come from this association:

“The allusion to loosening one’s stays [corsets] as a prelude to sexual activity permeated everyday life, so that women who were called “loose” were not being described physically so much as morally. Other terms that were used to describe behavior were very closely linked to costume and appearance. “Terms such as “upright,” “restrained,” or “upstanding” certainly describe a corseted woman’s physical appearance as well as her reputation just as “unbridled,” “unrestrained,” and “loose” were epithets linked to appearance. . . .The woman’s body was to be constrained within appropriate undergarments that were to be taken off only in privacy or within the confines of the marriage bedroom. Sarah Hale, editor of *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, as well as author of several books covering etiquette, considered a woman’s clothing to be an effective indication of her morality, and the corset was a requisite part of that appearance.”¹

The Hoop Skirt

The women’s fashion feature most associated with the Civil War era is the hoop skirt, named for the structural support of wire hoops or whalebones called “crinolines,” worn under the skirt to hold its shape. In a typical dress, the width of the skirt at its widest point (which was close to the floor) was about 50 to 70 percent of the woman’s height.² In formal gowns, such as those worn by First Lady Mary Lincoln (shown at right), the skirt was up to eighteen feet in circumference, using twenty-five yards of fabric.³

Many women saw the crinoline as an improvement over the weight and cumbersomeness of wearing multiple petticoats—and there was less laundry, but hoop skirts posed other challenges. Sometimes the skirts tilted up on one side, exposing views of legs and undergarments, and they could catch on fire if women stood too close to fireplaces. The wide girth kept men at a distance and filled rooms and stage coaches quickly. New York omnibuses charged higher fares for women with hoops.⁴



Click the image below for a brief, informative video on hoop skirts and corsets from Kent State University:



Critics of the hoop skirt were many. A popular song of the times jibed:

*Now crinoline is all the rage with ladies of whatever age, A petticoat made like a cage—oh, what a ridiculous fashion! 'Tis formed of hoops and bars of steel, or tubes of air which lighter feel, And worn by girls to be genteel, or if they've figures to conceal. It makes the dresses stretch far out a dozen yards or so about, And please both the thin and stout—oh, what a ridiculous fashion!*⁵

Civil War nurses did not wear hoops under their dresses due to safety, convenience, and hospital or Sanitary Commission regulations. The hoop skirts were of great use, however, for those wishing to conceal valuable property. Refugees carried bags of silverware or money, runaway slaves carried an extra change of clothes, and daring women smuggled army supplies such as boots through enemy lines—all by attaching them to their crinolines. By 1865, the rage for crinoline began to recede.

Mourning Dress

Death touched the hundreds of thousands of families during the Civil War, and the women put on mourning attire according to their stage of grief.



Mourning Costumes, 1861, Courtesy of New York Public Library Digital Edition

The period of mourning varied according to the relationship with the deceased. A widow was expected to wear deep mourning for at least one year. This included bombazine (dull, lusterless black) fabric, widow's cap, black cuffs and collars, and black crepe. Black petticoats, stockings and parasols were also required.

During the second stage of mourning (from twelve months to eighteen months after the death), the widow could trade silk or wool for the bombazine and add jet black jewelry and ribbons to her attire. The third stage of mourning commenced at eighteen months after the death, and allowed the half-mourning colors of grey, purple, mauve, lavender, or black and grey in her dress.

A daughter's rules for a parent's death were less stringent. She needed to only wear black for six months, then two months of half-mourning colors.

Corsets, hoops, and mourning dress were integral to women during the Civil War, and can be found in the characters of *Wedded to War*. (For photographs of women's fashions worn in the Civil War, visit my [Civil War Women's Fashion Pinterest board here.](#))

Sources

1. Stamper, Anita A. and Jill Condra. *Clothing through American history: the Civil War through the Gilded Age, 1861-1899*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2010. Page 109.
2. Leisch, Juanita. *Who Wore What? Women's Wear 1861-1865*. Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 1995. Page 70.
3. Rutberg, B. *Mary Lincoln's Dressmaker*. New York: Walker and Company, 1995. Pg 40.
4. Ibid.
5. Hoffman, Frank, and William Bailey. *Fashion and Merchandising Fads*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Page 115.

A Woman's Place: Tension in Nursing

The clash between surgeons and women nurses which Georgeanna Woolsey described (see page 6) had its roots in how each group of people viewed the woman's place in society. Americans in the mid-nineteen century commonly believed that men and women had their own separate spheres of activity. Men occupied the commercial, business and political fields. Women's activities were relegated to home, church, women's clubs and reform groups, and circles of female friends and relatives.

But in which sphere did the hospital fall? Normally, when someone fell ill, a doctor visited the home, examined the patient, and left the nursing care to the female relatives living in the household. Wives, sisters, daughters, and grandmothers administered medicine, dressed wounds, and saw to the patient's recovery. The only people treated in the hospital were those who didn't have women at home to nurse them.

Once the war began, medical care for soldiers had to be systemized since the troops could not recover at home (although many wives and mothers travelled hundreds of miles to personally nurse their own wounded family members). Male doctors held that the ward was part of the military hospital, so it fell under their dominion. Popular opinion also held that women would faint in the presence of war's gruesome casualties, and that their innocence would be marred with exposure to the naked male body.

Women nurses were convinced the hospital ward belonged in the female domain, since they were treating sick soldiers the same way they would in their own homes—and the home was unequivocally within the female sphere. More tension arose between men and women when the female nurses viewed the doctors' advice as suggestions rather than strict orders, for at home, they had the freedom to follow or not follow the doctor's orders as they saw fit.

Over the course of the war, the surgeons and nurses came to accept and work with each other as both groups proved their mettle and shared genuine desire to save lives and speed recovery of the soldiers.

Chief Camp Diseases of the Civil War



Wedded to War explores the medical care of the Union army during that first chaotic year of the Civil War. During this time, disease was more of a killer than injury, especially in the Army of the Potomac during their ill-fated Peninsula Campaign in the marshes and swamps south of Richmond, Virginia.

Below are a few of the most prominent diseases that affected troops even before they could shoulder their rifles in battle. This information can be found in many sources, including the National Museum of Civil War Medicine (www.civilwarmed.org) in Frederick, Maryland, which I visited as part of my research for this novel. The statistics for the Confederate side were not tracked as well. (Other sources will be listed at the end of this section.)

Diarrhea and Dysentery

The terms diarrhea and dysentery were often used interchangeably, but both were widespread and seriously debilitating. (Some sources say General Robert E. Lee was suffering with it during the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863, and that it affected his decision-making ability.) On the Union side, there were at least 1.6 million cases with more than 27,000 deaths during the course of the war. Causes ranged from poor diet and cooking practices (called at the time “death by frying pan”) to infection with microscopic organisms. For unknown reasons, chronic diarrhea and dysentery sometimes persisted for the

remainder of a soldier's life. Treatment included a good diet of fresh fruits and vegetables, opiates in alcohol and sometimes oil of turpentine and glycerin.

Malaria

Malaria is a fever-inducing disease caused by microscopic parasites transmitted to humans by the bite of the Anopheles mosquito—but no one knew this during the Civil War. The cause was thought to be “swamp miasma,” an invisible agent which floated through the air. Nearly a million cases of malaria were reported in Union records, with approximately 4,800 deaths. The disease was most common among soldiers of both sides serving in the deep South. Quinine, as the powdered bark of the cinchona tree or as quinine sulfate derived from the bark, served as an effective preventative and cure.

During the Peninsula Campaign, as portrayed in *Wedded to War*, quinine was in short supply. The photo at right shows an improvised field hospital on the Virginia Peninsula. No doubt some of these men were suffering with malaria in this swampy environment.



Nutritional Diseases

The major nutritional diseases seen during the war were scurvy (vitamin C deficiency), night blindness (vitamin A deficiency) and malnutrition. With diets often devoid of fresh fruits or vegetables, the vitamin deficiencies were often seen together. In addition to the individual disease symptoms (i.e. tender or bleeding gums), the poor diet led to compromised immune systems which hampered recovery from wounds and other diseases. Decent diet was known to cure and prevent the problems, but field logistics made this nearly impossible. There were 46,000 cases of scurvy in Union records, with 771 deaths.

STDs

“Camp-followers” and city brothels offered ample encounters with prostitutes. Sexually transmitted diseases, primarily syphilis and gonorrhea, were common in the armies of both North and South. Among white Union troops, there were 182,800 cases of both diseases combined. There were no effective

treatments, and there would be none until long after the war. Among the techniques they tried were rest, diet, injection of various metals in to the urethra, internal use of mercury compounds and even the application of mercury vapor on the surface of the body. Reports that nearly one-third of post-war deaths in veterans' homes were due to late-stage venereal disease show the futility of these treatments.

Typhoid Fever

Typhoid fever, an intestinal infection caused by the bacterium *Salmonella typhi*, is generally contracted from contaminated food or water. Symptoms include delirium, fever, exhaustion, and red skin lesions. Associated diarrhea can lead to puncturing of the intestines and death. Survival of the infection was known to confer immunity from further infection. Union records show 75148 cases among white troops with 27,058 deaths, a 36 percent mortality rate. Similar rates were found in Black Union troops and Confederate troops. Treatments, generally ineffective, included opiates for pain, quinine for fever, various diets and calomel (a mercury medicine).

Recommended Sources:

This is just a general overview of a few of the diseases that afflicted Civil War troops. For more in-depth study, I recommend:

1. Adams, George Worthington. *Doctors in Blue: The Medical History of the Union Army in the Civil War*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952. [For the South, see *Doctors in Gray* by H.H. Cunningham.]
2. Freemon, Frank R. *Gangrene and Glory: Medical Care during the American Civil War*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998.
3. Letterman, Jonathan. *Medical Recollections of the Army of the Potomac*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1866. Available at Google Books here: <http://bit.ly/OnmGGw>
4. Wilbur, C. Keith. *Civil War Medicine*. Guilford, Connecticut: The Globe Pequot Press, 1998.
5. Woodward, Joseph Janvier. *Outlines of the Chief Camp Diseases of the United States Armies*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1863. Available at Google Books here: <http://bit.ly/M0b1b2>

The Minie Ball

The minie ball was a new and deadly invention which changed the nature of battlefield wounds in the Civil War. Every surgeon, and certainly every patient, felt its impact. The following is an excerpt from *Wedded to War*, as Dr. Caleb Lansing shares his frustration with Charlotte:

“Everything I learned in medical school is useless,” Caleb began again. “I have to relearn everything, practicing on living, breathing human beings.” He raised his head and looked at her with fire in his eyes. “Blast the French captain who invented the minie bullet! It flattens against human flesh on contact—” He clapped his hands together loudly, and Charlotte jumped. “And it does not pass directly through like a round ball does. Oh, no. This little devil of a deformed ball tumbles into the body, tearing through muscle and getting tangles in tissues; bones splinter and shatter into hundreds—and I mean hundreds—of spicules, which are driven through muscle and skin.” He shook his head and cursed. “Tiemann’s bullet forceps are as useful in getting a bullet out as a butter knife is in eating soup. No I’m afraid the minie ball doesn’t leave much debate about the necessity of amputation.” (pages 178-179)

Below you’ll find a brief video from the History Channel on the Civil War Minie Ball.



Civil War Medicine

I learned so much by visiting the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick, Maryland. Visit their Web site at www.civilwarmed.org. If you can make a field trip there, I'm sure it will be valuable to you. While you're there, consider visiting Antietam and Gettysburg, as well. Or Washington, D.C. (If you do go to Washington, check out this [Wedded to War Travel Guide](#) I've created for you.)

Wedded to War gives readers a good idea of Civil War medicine, but here is a video from the Smithsonian channel with some fascinating visuals in it. I will warn you, slightly after the two-minute mark, there is a still photograph of a pile of amputated limbs. Weak stomachs, beware.



Portraits in Civil War Nursing

Civil War nurses truly were heroines. The following stories are glimpses into a few more of them. Each of these stories is excerpted from my nonfiction book I co-authored with Karen Whiting: [*Stories of Faith and Courage from the Home Front*](#). (This would be another excellent resource for home schooling families!)

The Path of Duty



Like many other women in the nineteenth century, [Louisa May Alcott](#) likely brought a romanticized view of nursing soldiers when she left her home in Concord, Massachusetts, for the Union Hotel Hospital in Washington City. Anxious to do her duty, she looked forward to serving her first patients. But when, three days after her arrival, forty horse-drawn ambulances arrived packed with wounded from the Battle of Fredericksburg, her spirit shrank at the gruesome sight.

“The sight of several stretchers, each with its legless, armless, or desperately wounded occupant, entering my ward, admonished me that I was there to work, not to wonder or weep,” she later wrote. “So I corked up my feelings, and returned to the path of duty.”

Her “path of duty,” as she called it, was the oversight of a forty-bed ward in what had once been the hotel ballroom. In addition to treating battle wounds, she found herself nursing many soldiers from nearby camps who came with dysentery, pneumonia, measles, typhoid fever, and other diseases. Each morning when she awoke, she dressed and then flung open windows and doors, choosing the bitter cold lashes of winter wind to a ward room without ventilation, “for a more perfect pestilence-box than this house I never saw.”

She washed her patients’ faces, served them rations administered medicine, sang lullabies, and moistened the dressings on the soldiers’ wounds.

But her healing work was not relegated to the physical body. For days, she sat with a boy from New Jersey who sustained only a minor wound to the body but more severe damage to his psyche. The memories of the Battle of Fredericksburg were being vividly relived in his mind on a continuous reel of pain and terror as he counted his fallen comrades over and over. Alcott became part of the battle scene

he saw, as well—he sometimes grabbed her arm as if to pull her out of harm’s way. Though she was helpless to cure this type of injury, she stayed with him, despite the emotional toll it took on her own spirit.

The wounds of war, she discovered, were deeper than she could hope to heal.

In the Line of Fire

Though it was only a little after noon, [Clara Barton](#) could not see the sun. The smoke at Antietam, Maryland, was so dense it clouded her vision, and the hot sulphurous breath of battle parched her mouth until her lips cracked and bled.

At her feet, a man lying on the ground asked her for a drink. Kneeling at his side, she raised and held him with her right hand. *“Just at this moment,”* she later recalled, *“a bullet sped its free and easy way between us, tearing a hole in my sleeve and found its way into his body. He fell back dead.”*⁴

Soon after, she encountered a man with a bullet still buried in his face. Knowing the surgeons were occupied with more serious operations, he implored her to use her pocketknife to carve out the ball herself.



“This was a new call. I had never severed the nerves and fibers of human flesh, and I said I could not hurt him so much. He looked up, with as nearly a smile as such a mangled face could assume, saying, ‘You cannot hurt me, dear lady, I can endure any pain that your hands can create. Please do it. It will relieve me so much.’

“I could not withstand his entreaty and opening the best blade of my pocket knife, prepared for the operation . . . I extracted the ball and washed and bandaged the face. . . . I assisted the sergeant to lie down again, brave and cheerful as he had risen, and passed on to others.”

Though she is the Civil War's most famous field nurse, Clara Barton wasn't the only one to put herself in harm's way to care for soldiers even before the bullets stopped flying. Alabama's Juliet Opie Hopkins was hit twice in the leg at Seven Pines, Michigan's Annie Ethridge was wounded in the hand at Chancellorsville, and New York's Elmina Spencer, was shot through the sciatic nerve at City Point, Virginia. Yet none of these women left the service of nursing.



Cyclone in Calico

[Mary Ann Bickerdyke](#) was known as “Mother Bickerdyke” or the “angel of the battlefield” to the soldiers she tended. But she had also earned another nickname for herself: “Cyclone in Calico.”

As the matron of a large hospital in Cairo, Illinois, she discovered that food meant for the soldiers were being stolen by the surgeons and ward masters. When she confronted the chief surgeon about it, he ordered her to leave the hospital.

She refused. Taking the matter into her own hands, she spiked a batch of stewed peaches with medicine that would induce vomiting. Later, when she walked in on a group of men groaning and wretching, she knew she had found her culprits. “Next time I’ll use rat poison!” she warned them.

When she caught a ward master wearing a clothes meant for the soldiers, she made him strip to his underwear in full view of the patients. When her authority was questioned, she responded, “I have received my authority from the Lord God Almighty; have you anything that ranks higher than that?”

Hannah Ropes, matron of Union Hotel in Washington, also confronted wrongdoing. A hospital steward suggested that she join him in reselling hospital clothing, soap and food; she reported him to Surgeon A.M. Clark, who proved to be apathetic. So she went straight to Surgeon General William Hammond with the charge. “I am here doing my Master’s work,” she explained. “The poor privates are my children for the time being.”

When a steward struck a boy with a chisel and imprisoned him in a rat-infested hospital cellar, Hannah paid Hammond a personal visit. He would not see her. So she took her complaint to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, who had the steward and Surgeon Clark arrested and put in the Old Capitol Prison. These women—and many others like them—were expected to strictly follow orders while working in the hospitals. But when faced with injustice, they traded womanly submission for doing what was right. Some lost their jobs for it, and some, like Mary Ann and Hannah, saw justice served.

*For an in-depth look at Civil War nursing, I recommend *Women at the Front: Hospital Workers in Civil War America* by Jane E. Schultz. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004)

Civil War Songs and Poems

Looking at the popular songs and poetry gives us a more robust flavor of the Civil War era. Music was so much a part of life then (just as it is today) that some of the lyrics made their way into my novel, *Wedded to War*, and they will appear in the rest of the series as well. Here are a few songs and poems which both reflected and colored public and military sentiment for people like the main characters in *Wedded to War*.

Beat! Beat! Drums!

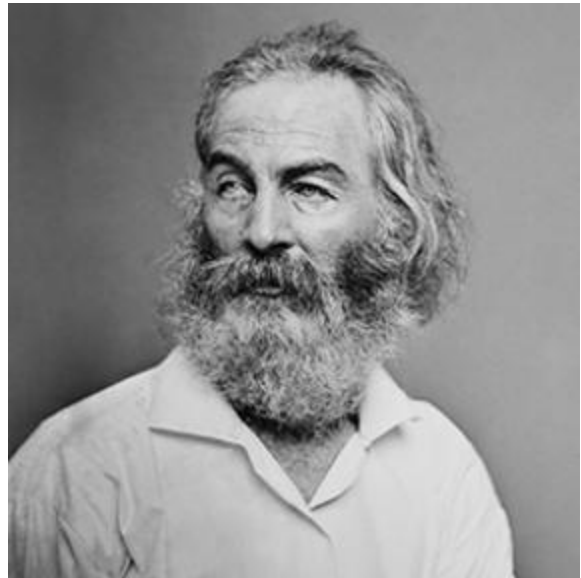
By [Walt Whitman](#)

This poem epitomizes the patriotic frenzy that ripped through the country in the early days of war.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Through the windows—through doors—burst like a
ruthless force,
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,
Into the school where the scholar is studying,
Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he
have now with his bride,
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field
or gathering his grain,
So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you
bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets;
Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no sleepers must sleep in those beds,
No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or speculators—would they continue?
Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?
Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the judge?
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,
Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,
Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie awaiting the hearses,
So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you bugles blow.



Victory's Band

By Dan Emmett

This 1861 song of the North was sung to the tune of Dixie's Land, the anthem of the South. In Wedded to War, Dr. Caleb Lansing hears soldiers singing these words with bravado before their stunning defeat at the Battle of Bull Run.

We're marching under the Flag of Union,
Keeping step in brave communion!
March away! March away! Away! Victory's band!
Right down upon the ranks of rebels,
Tramp them underfoot like pebbles,
March away! March away! Away! Victory's band.

CHORUS: Oh! We're marching on to Victory!
Hurrah! Hurrah!
In Victory's band we'll sweep the land,
And fight or die for Victory!
Away! Away!
We'll fight or die for victory!

The rebels want a mongrel nation,
Union and Confederation!
March away! March away! Away! Victory's band!
But we don't trust in things two-sided,
And go for Union undivided,
March away! March away! Away! Victory's band

CHORUS

We're marching down on Dixie's regions,
With freedom's flag and Freedom's legions.
March away! March away! Away! Victory's band!
We're rolling down, a "Pending Crisis,"
With cannon-balls for Compromises,
March away! March away! Away! Victory's band

CHORUS

Ball's Bluff

By [Herman Melville](#)

The battle of Ball's Bluff was fought on October 21, 1861, on the banks of the Potomac River northwest of Washington, D.C. It was major defeat for the Union, and a shocking experience for citizens who witnessed dead bodies floating downstream. In Wedded to War, this was the beginning of Chaplain Edward Goodrich's developing crisis of faith. Melville paints a sobering picture of the fight.



One noonday, at my window in the town,
I saw a sight — saddest that eyes can see —
Young soldiers marching lustily
Unto the wars,
With fifes, and flags in mottoed pageantry;
While all the porches, walks, and doors
Were rich with ladies cheering royally.

They moved like Juny morning on the wave,
Their hearts were fresh as clover in its prime
(It was the breezy summer time),
Life throbbbed so strong,
How should they dream that Death in rosy clime
Would come to thin their shining throng?
Youth feels immortal, like the gods sublime.

Weeks passed; and at my window, leaving bed,
By nights I mused, of easeful sleep bereft,
On those brave boys (Ah War! thy theft);
Some marching feet
Found pause at last by cliffs Potomac cleft;
Wakeful I mused, while in the street
Far footfalls died away till none were left.

Battle Hymn of the Republic

By [Julia Ward Howe](#)

Julie Ward Howe was prompted to rewrite the lyrics to the tune of John Brown's Body (aka the [John Brown Songs](#)) when she was staying at the Willard Hotel in Washington City in November 1861. She awoke before dawn, penned the new lyrics, and went back to bed. It was first published in the Atlantic Monthly in 1862 and soon became the rallying cry of the Union. Singing songs like this at a battlefield hospital increased morale—and helped drown out the moaning of wounded and dying men.

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the
Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of
wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift
sword;
His truth is marching on.

CHORUS: Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!

Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!

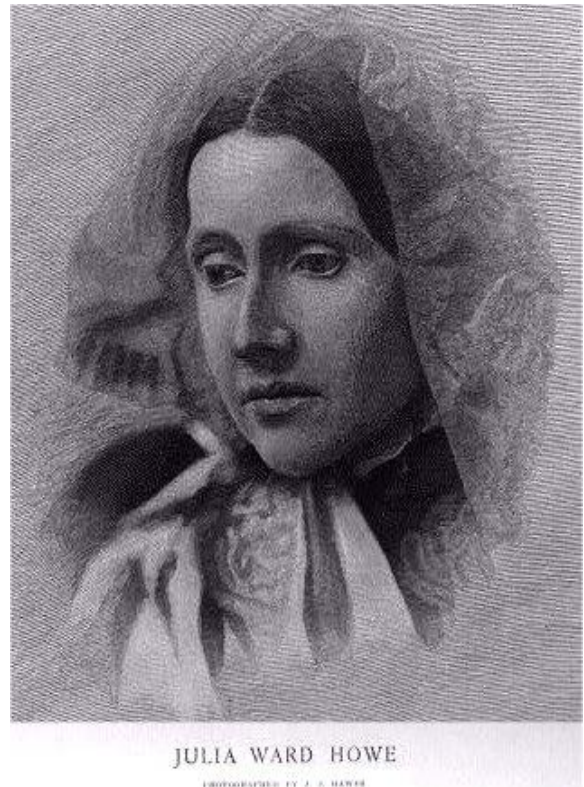
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!

His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch fires of a hundred circling camps
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps;
His day is marching on.

CHORUS

I have read a fiery Gospel writ in burnished rows of steel;
“As ye deal with My contemners, so with you My grace shall deal”;



Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with His heel,
Since God is marching on.

CHORUS

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat;
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet;
Our God is marching on.

CHORUS

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me:
As He died to make men holy, let us live to make men free; [originally ...let us die to make men free]
While God is marching on.

CHORUS

He is coming like the glory of the morning on the wave,
He is wisdom to the mighty, He is honor to the brave;
So the world shall be His footstool, and the soul of wrong His slave,
Our God is marching on.

CHORUS

The Wound Dresser

By Walt Whitman

Walt Whitman moved to Washington, D.C., to work in a paymaster's office and help the wounded soldiers however he could. Over the course of the war, it is estimated that he made more than 600 separate visits to military hospitals and ministered to at least 100,000 patients. His observations led to the poem, "The Wound Dresser," excerpted below. ([Read it in full here.](#))

On, on I go, (open doors of time! open hospital doors!)
The crush'd head I dress, (poor crazed hand tear not the bandage away,)
The neck of the cavalry-man with the bullet through and through I examine,
Hard the breathing rattles, quite glazed already the eye, yet life struggles hard,
(Come sweet death! be persuaded O beautiful death!
In mercy come quickly.)

From the stump of the arm, the amputated hand,
I undo the clotted lint, remove the slough, wash off the matter and blood,
Back on his pillow the soldier bends with curv'd neck and side falling head,
His eyes are closed, his face is pale, he dares not look on the bloody stump,
And has not yet look'd on it.

I dress a wound in the side, deep, deep,
But a day or two more, for see the frame all wasted and sinking,
And the yellow-blue countenance see.

I dress the perforated shoulder, the foot with the bullet-wound,
Cleanse the one with a gnawing and putrid gangrene, so sickening, so offensive,
While the attendant stands behind aside me holding the tray and pail.

I am faithful, I do not give out,
The fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound in the abdomen,
These and more I dress with impassive hand, (yet deep in my breast a fire, a burning flame.)

Thus in silence in dreams' projections,
Returning, resuming, I thread my way through the hospitals,
The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,

I sit by the restless all the dark night, some are so young,
Some suffer so much, I recall the experience sweet and sad,
(Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have cross'd and rested,
Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips.)

Civil War Recipe: Alice Carlisle's Gingerbread

Gingerbread was popular among soldiers in both the North and South. Wives like Alice Carlisle often baked and sent loaves of this spicy bread to their husbands in camp, and when hospitals had the ingredients, they baked this for the patients who could eat it.

Ingredients:

- 1 TB butter
- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 1/4 cups molasses
- 1 egg
- 1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 1/2 tsp. allspice
- 1 cup very hot water

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Grease a 9" square baking pan with the butter. In a large mixing bowl, combine the flour, soda and spices, and cut in softened butter to the flour mixture with a fork. Combine molasses, egg and water in a small mixing bowl. Add the liquid ingredients to the dry ingredients and stir well. Pour the batter into a baking pan and bake 35-40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Makes 9 servings.