



U.S. Army Medical Service

What do we take for granted?

We see and hear ambulances all the time. We depend on them to transport us quickly to a well-appointed hospital if we're ill or injured.

But what if there were no ambulances? In the early part of the Civil War, the U.S. Army lacked an efficient system for getting its wounded to hospitals. There were too few ambulances, and they were poorly organized. For example, at the second battle of Bull Run in late 1862, thousands of soldiers lay on the field for days, and many died waiting for transport that never came or came too late. This and other lessons—at Antietam, Fair Oaks, and other early battles—led the army to better arrange and equip a separate ambulance service. The efficient removal of the wounded to field hospitals and general hospitals later in the war is credited with saving many lives.

Still, army ambulances were a far cry from the vehicles we use today. Below is an early ambulance designed by a U.S. Army doctor and used during the war. Soldiers nicknamed this sort of cart an "avalanche," no doubt a comment on its comforts.



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See: George W. Adams, *Doctors in Blue* (New York: Scribner, 1962); Frank H. Hamilton, *A Practical Treatise on Military Surgery* (1861, reprint San Francisco: Norman, 1995).

OHIO'S CIVIL WAR GOVERNORS

William Dennison, Jr.

Born in 1815 in Cincinnati, he was our state's 24th governor, serving one term from 1860 to 1862. He was a Republican, and had previously served in the Ohio Senate. His most notable achievement during the war was mobilizing Ohio's troops quickly at President Lincoln's urgent request for volunteers.



David Tod



Born in 1805 in Youngstown, our 25th governor served one term, from 1862 to 1864. He ran on the Union Party ticket. His contributions to Ohio during the war included organizing effective civilian aid for soldiers and instituting the draft when it became necessary.

John Brough

Ohio's 26th governor, born in 1811 at Marietta, served part of one term, from 1864 to 1865. He was a Unionist like David Tod before him. His chief contributions to the state during the war included making army officer promotions more fair in Ohio, and organizing field inspections of army hospitals. He also sent the Ohio National Guard into federal service to help win the war. Brough died in office in August 1865, four months after the war ended.



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What was the human cost of the Civil War?

It is impossible to figure the real cost of the American Civil War, because the suffering of individual families and people cannot be measured. However, some things can be counted, and can give us some insight into the war's effect. Below are some statistics that may provide a picture of the enormity of the struggle.

	United States	Confederate States
Enlistments	2,893,304	1,317,035
Death from battle	110,070	94,000
Death from disease	224,586	164,000

It's clear from the numbers that disease was even more dangerous than battle for soldiers on both sides. In the Union Army, where detailed records were kept, these were the most dangerous diseases:

	cases	deaths
Chronic diarrhea	170,488	27,558
Typhoid fever	75,368	27,050
Acute dysentery	233,812	4,084
Malaria	49,871	4,059
Chronic dysentery	25,670	3,229
Acute diarrhea	1,155,266	2,923

During the 1860s physicians were just beginning to understand the causes of these illnesses, but their effective prevention didn't happen until after the war. Appreciation of antiseptic procedures and the real value of cleanliness, plus an understanding of how diseases are communicated, generally did not occur under the hard circumstances of military medicine in the Civil War.

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What if you were a Civil War recruit?

You'd be subject to all sorts of questions and examinations, depending on how skilled the examining surgeon was, and how much time he had. Also, your exam might depend on how badly recruits were needed, and what sort of political pressure there was to fill quotas. A thorough exam might include:

- A comprehensive bathing.
- Presenting yourself unclothed to the surgeon for inspection.
- Many questions: Have you ever been sick? Have you any disease now? Have you ever had fits? Have you ever received an injury upon the head? Have you ever had a fracture, a dislocation, or a sprain? Are you in the habit of drinking? Or, have you ever had the "horrors"? Are you subject to the piles? Have you any difficulty in urinating? Have you been vaccinated or had the small pox?
- A physical exam: Head, ears, face, eyes, nose, mouth, voice, neck, chest, abdomen, private parts, vertebral column, arms and legs, fingers and toes.
- You'd have to run, walk, hop and balance on one foot, flex and rotate arms and legs, stretch and kneel.

The surgeon would look for evidence that you couldn't do army work: Old illnesses that might flare up, too heavy or slight, syphilis, hemorrhoids, too many missing teeth, fingers, toes or other parts, extreme deformities, etc. He'd also judge your habits and moral health with questions about drinking, fighting, and gambling.

If you pass all these tests and questions—you're a soldier.

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