



Walt Whitman

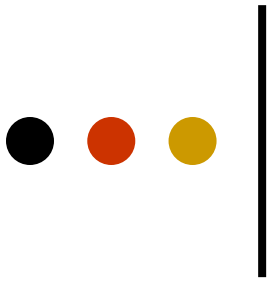
Civil War Nurse

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October 20, 2006

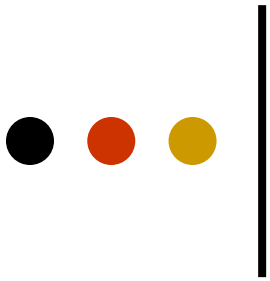


Bearing the bandages, water and
sponge,
Straight and swift to my wounded I go,
Where they lie on the ground, after the
battle brought in;
Where their priceless blood reddens
the grass, the ground;
Or to the rows of the hospital tent, or
under the roof'd hospital;



Ambulance Train





To the long rows of cots, up and down,
each side, I return;
To each and all, one after another, I
draw near – not one do I miss;
An attendant follows, holding a tray –
he carries a refuse pail,
Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and
blood, emptied and filled again.



A Brief Chronology

1819 – born on Long Island, New York

1855 – published first edition of *Leaves of Grass*

1863 – appointed a representative of the Christian Commission

1863-64 – works as a volunteer nurse in hospitals in Washington DC

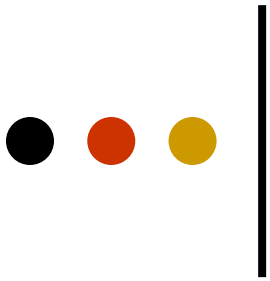
1865 – publishes *Drum-Taps*

1867 – *Drum-Taps* included in *Leaves of Grass*

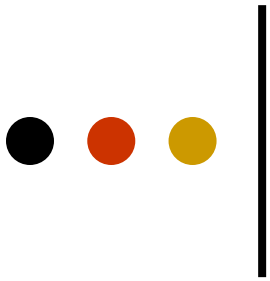
1892 – dies in Camden, New Jersey

Christian Commission Building in Washington DC





I onward go, I stop,
With hinged knees and steady hand, to
dress wounds;
I am firm with each – the pangs are sharp,
yet unavoidable;
One turns to me his appealing eyes –
poor boy! I never knew you,
Yet I think I could not refuse this moment
to die for you, if that would save you.



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,

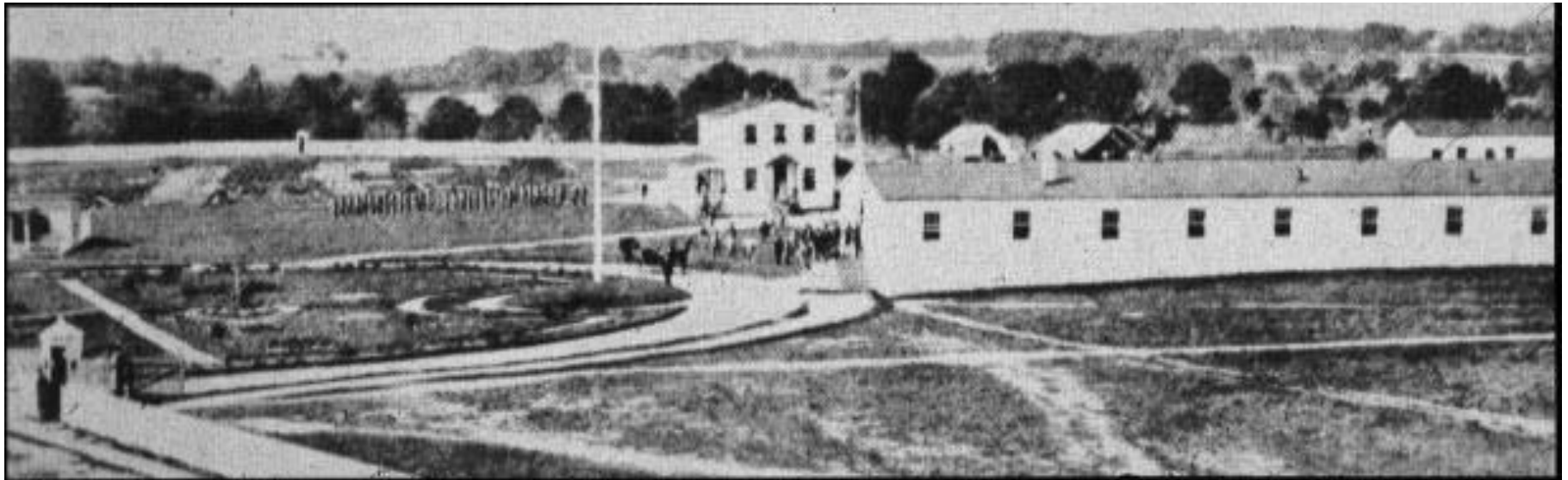


Civil War Hospitals

- Prior to war – few medical facilities in Washington
- Field hospitals – a collection of tents
- By 1862 – 20,000 wounded troops in Washington
- Public buildings converted to hospitals – average size 500 beds
- Poor heating, ventilation, sanitation

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Campbell Hospital Washington DC



originally a barracks for cavalry



Civil War Nursing

- Care was often performed by convalescing veterans
- Scurvy and malnutrition common
- Rampant infection
- Amputations common
- Leading diseases – typhoid, dysentery, malaria



Famous Nurses of the Civil War

Union

Dorothea Dix

Mary Todd Lincoln

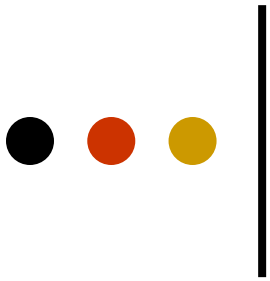
Mary Ann Ball Bickerdyke

Mary Jane Safford

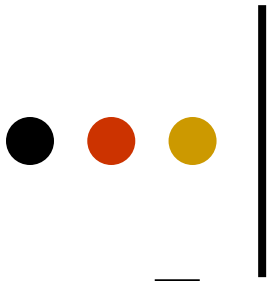
Clara Barton

Confederate

Sally Louisa Tompkins



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.)

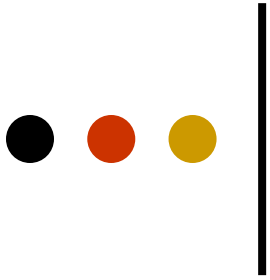


From the stump of the arm, the amputated
hand,
I undo the clotted lint, remove the slough,
wash off the matter and blood,
Back on his pillow the soldier bends with
curv'd neck and side-falling head,
His eyes are closed, his face is pale, he
dares not look on the bloody stump,
And has not yet look'd on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

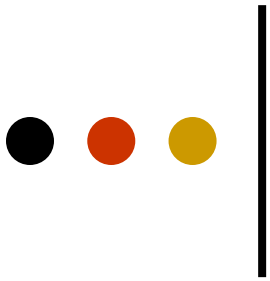


Maimed Soldiers

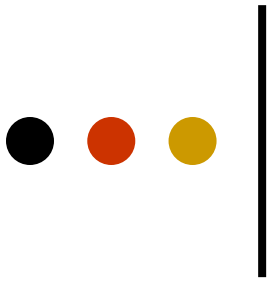




I dress a wound in the side, deep,
deep
But a day or two more, for see the
frame all wasted and sinking,
And the yellow-blue countenance
see.



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 beside
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.)



Was Walt Whitman Really a Nurse?

- Untrained
- Unpaid

Attention to psychological needs

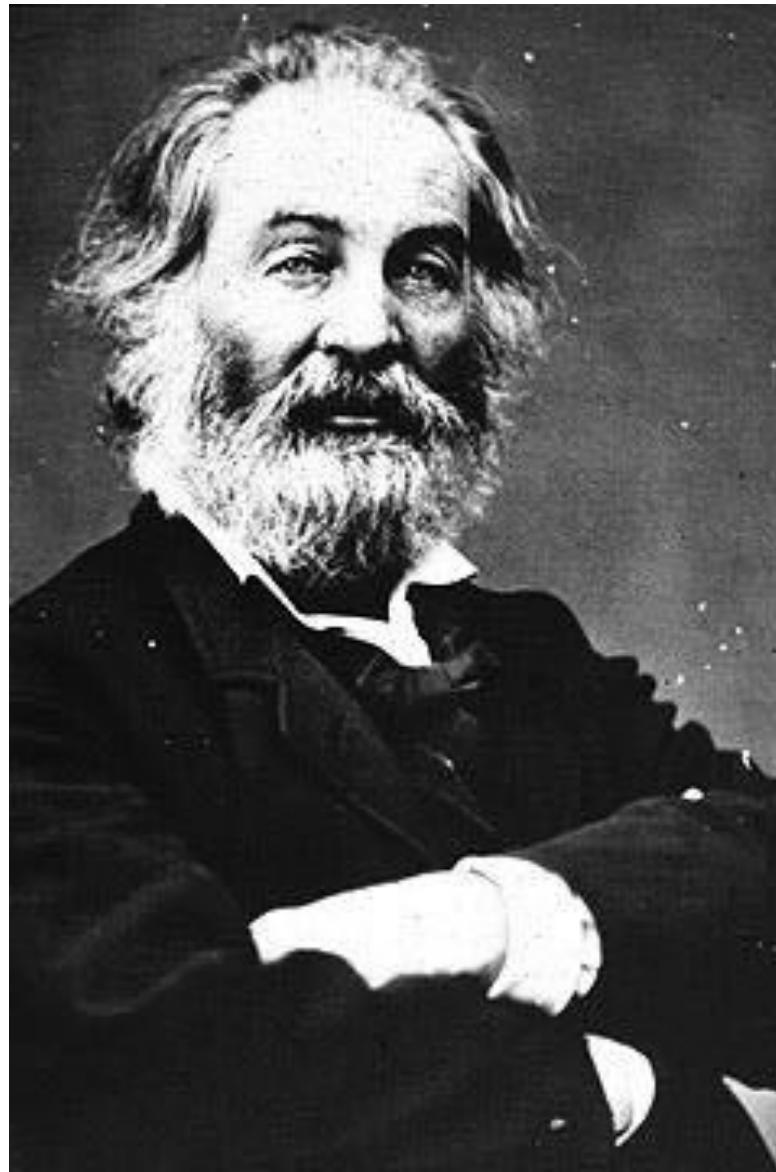
Provided physical care

Demonstrated compassion



Leaves
of
Grass.

Brooklyn, New York:
1855.



Walt Whitman 1867