



2ND MINNESOTA BATTERY OF LIGHT ARTILLERY



Hollywood would have us believe that medicine during the Civil War was all amputations without anesthesia, snake oil, and cure-alls in a male only world. While much of this did happen, reality is far from the Hollywood version.

The vast majority of amputations did have anesthesia, just not the levels we use now to conserve supplies and reduce risk to medical staff. Snake oils and cure-alls were rampant, but this served as the impetus to create legislation, which after several versions, we still abide by today, the Pure Food and Drug act.

While Civil War era surgeons didn't have the knowledge of viruses and bacteria we have now, they weren't as clueless as we are often led to believe. They knew more soldiers would get sick if camps were pitched in low swampy areas versus higher and drier ground. While many doctors did not have formal education, medical and pharmacy schools and licensing boards were starting to appear in

some states.

Medicine was largely a male driven profession during the Civil War, however, many women were more involved. Elizabeth Gooking Greenleaf is recognized as the first woman pharmacist in the United States, opening her own apothecary shop in Boston in 1727, one of only 32 apothecaries listed in the thirteen colonies. Elizabeth Blackwell graduated medical school in 1849 and opened her own clinic with two other women physicians in New York in 1857. Mary Corinna Putnam Jacobi was the first woman to graduate pharmacy school in 1863; she then went on to earn a medical degree in 1864.

The Second Minnesota Battery of Reenactors is proud to have a currently licensed pharmacist who brings to life an earlier time in the profession, portraying an apothecary. Learn the role of leeches in medicine and how many major medical systems still have medicinal leeches in their pharmacies. See how colors, primarily red and blue, served as symbols for any illiterate citizens of the time period and how those colors have traveled through history. Compare and contrast medicines available to the Union and Confederate armies and how those medicines changed throughout the war, some still in use today. Find out how the blockade led to important plant-based pharmaceuticals and even steam sterilization of suture materials.

Please understand our apothecary is only available for events when the hospital doesn't schedule her in this century!

