

Honor Our Legacy

We celebrate Major Jonathan Letterman, The Civil War Doctor Who Pioneered Battlefield Care.

Native Son, Jonathan Letterman was born and raised in Canonsburg, PA. His father, a physician, had his medical office in the family home at the current site of the Canonsburg Borough Building, 68 East Pike Street.

Jonathan Letterman attended Jefferson College which later became Washington and Jefferson College (W&J) in Washington, PA. While attending Jefferson College, he co-founded the third chapter of the Beta Theta Pi Fraternity.

Rea Andrew Redd, Director of the Eberly Library at Waynesburg University initiated the idea of the Memorial Marker which will be installed at the birthplace of Dr. Jonathan Letterman.

Produced according to the specifications of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the Memorial Marker has the written endorsement of Andrew Masich, President and CEO of the Senator John Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh, PA.

The Dedication Ceremony will be held on Veterans Day, November 11, 2017, 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m., at the Canonsburg Borough Building, 68 East Pike Street.

Marching in the parade will be members of the Canon-McMillan High School Band, Veterans, Active Military Personnel, Civil War Re-enactors, Boy and Girl Scouts, First Responders—Emergency Medical Service, members of the medical community from Canonsburg Hospital, and representatives of the Fire Department and Police.

Among the speakers are: The Reverend Catherine Peternel, Director of Pastoral Care at Canonsburg Hospital, who will give the Invocation; Rea Andrew Redd will talk about Dr. Jonathan Letterman; the Honorable Mayor David Rhome of Canonsburg; Washington County Commissioner, Larry Maggi (Veteran and former Sheriff of Washington, PA); Dr. John Knapp, President of Washington and Jefferson College (confirmation of participation as a speaker is pending).

Provided weather conditions are favorable, on display will be a full-scale reproduction of the “Wheeling” Ambulance like the one that Dr. Jonathan Letterman assisted in designing for the Ambulance Corps he established.

The traveling exhibit about Dr. Jonathan Letterman on loan from The National Museum of Civil War Medicine, Frederick, MD will be on display in the Frank Sarris Library in Canonsburg.

The educational component of the project includes a public lecture by *The New York Times* bestselling author, Scott McGaugh who wrote the biography of Dr. Jonathan Letterman, *Surgeon in Blue*. The talk by Scott McGaugh will be held on the W&J campus, November 16, 2017 at 6:30 p.m.

Opening the program will be a performance by members of the Fife and Drum Corps of the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall and Museum, Pittsburgh, PA. The African American boys, 12-18 years in age, are outfitted in Civil War uniforms representing the United States Colored Troops. Their precision drills are crowd pleasers.

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The traveling exhibit on Dr. Jonathan Letterman from the National Museum of Civil War Medicine will be on display in the lobby of the auditorium.

Refreshments will be available after the program.

Free. All are welcome.

We would appreciate an announcement to the audience of the Major Jonathan Letterman medical Excellence Award on September 15, 2017 and The Conference on Civil War Medicine on September 16, 2017, sponsored by the National Museum of Civil War Medicine.

Follow on Facebook: Dr. Jonathan Letterman

Donate online: GoFundMe [gf.me/u/bn9htw](https://www.gofundme.com/u/bn9htw)

Out of town visitors, consider the hotel SpringHill Suites by Marriott at 16 Trinity Point Drive, Washington, PA, (724) 223-7800, across the street from shopping malls and restaurants, one mile from the W&J campus and nine miles from Canonsburg, PA.

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Dr. Jonathan Letterman, fourth from left, seated, medical director of the Army of the Potomac, is shown with his staff in November 1862 in the Eastern Theater of the Civil War.

Canonsburg will honor Letterman on Veterans Day

Native son saved countless lives with key techniques as doctor during Civil War

By RICK SHRUM
Staff writer
rshrums@observer-reporter.com

Welcome home, Jonathan Letterman.

Canonsburg will be honoring this native son, an innovative Civil War physician, with a historical marker in a most appropriate location: on the municipal building lawn, believed to be the site of Letterman's boyhood home. And the plan is to do it on an appropriate date: Nov. 11, Veterans Day.

"This man has been largely forgotten. I believe the

whole community should realize he was a major figure in history," R.T. Bell, borough council president, said over the phone Saturday afternoon.

Letterman, medical director of the Army of the Potomac, is credited with saving countless lives during the bitter war waged from 1861 to 1865. He implemented a triage system, a process of sorting out the wounded according to those who were in the greatest need of urgent treatment. It was modeled

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after procedures believed to have been introduced a half-century earlier in the Napoleonic Wars, and added order and efficiency to battlefield treatment.

He did what he deemed necessary, taking over houses and barns; turning tents into field hospitals; and coordinating ambulance corps, using two- and four-wheeled carts to transport the wounded.

Many of the principles he introduced are still in use today.

Civil War Trust magazine refers to the doctor as "the Father of Battlefield Medicine."

Until 1862, when Letterman was appointed medical director, the Union did not have a formal procedure for treatment. "Soldiers had to get to the hospital on their own, and would die from injuries that were minor," Bell said of the first year of the Civil War. Many of the wounded were unable to move, were not treated and died in the field.

Rea Andrew Redd, a history professor and director of the library at Waynesburg University, fired the first shot in Letterman's defense. He got approval from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission to put up a marker, a proposal he later presented to borough council. Redd, 65, of Peters Township, has met several times with Bell and Mayor David Rhome on this matter, most recently Thursday, when they finalized a location for the memorial and selected a date to dedicate it.

Pending council approval, of course. "I don't foresee a problem," said Bell, who anticipates a thumb's up at the Aug. 8 voting meeting.

The marker will be placed on the lawn at the corner of East Pike Street and Green-side Avenue, to the left of the borough building entrance. That location, according to the professor, is where Letterman lived as a child and where Letterman's father — also a surgeon named Jonathan — practiced medicine.

"The Letterman family home was later used by Canonsburg as its borough building," said Redd, who also is a military re-enactor.

Rhyme and Bell are pushing for a Veterans Day dedication. "That is an ideal time," Rhyme said. Letterman will be honored along with all who have served in the military and its medical corps, plus current medical and emergency personnel and first responders.

Redd said in an email the historical marker "will be done in accordance with the Pennsylvania History and Museum Commission's regulations." He said the memorial and installation will cost less than \$1,100 and that "a significant portion of the funds have been raised."

After a year and a half as medical director, Letterman left the Army in 1864 and moved with his wife, Mary, to San Francisco, where he became a coroner. She died a few years later, and he fell into a deep depression. After a series of illnesses, the doctor from Canonsburg died in March 1872, a mere 47 years old.

In a little over three months, the war hero will become a hometown hero.

(Observer-Reporter, Washington, PA July 24, 2017)

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Notes from the book jacket of *Surgeon in Blue*:

“There was not a day during WWII that I did not thank God for Jonathan Letterman. He was truly a surgeon for the soldiers.”

—MAJOR GENERAL PAUL R. HAWLEY,
chief surgeon, European theater of operations

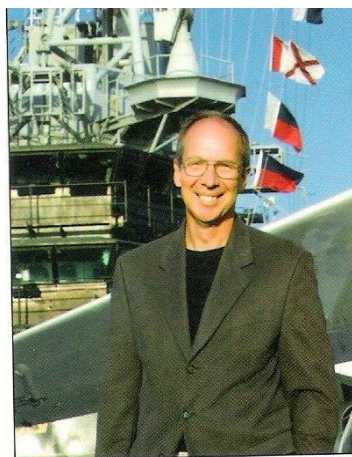
Surgeon in Blue is the first full-length biography of the Civil War surgeon who, over the course of the war’s bloodiest battles—from Antietam to Gettysburg—redefined military medicine.

Jonathan Letterman was an outpost medical officer serving in Indian country in the years before the Civil War, responsible for the care of just hundreds of men. But when he was appointed the chief medical officer of the Army of the Potomac, he revolutionized combat medicine over the course of four major battles—Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg—that produced unprecedented numbers of casualties. He made battlefield survival possible by creating the first organized ambulance corps and a more effective field hospital system. He imposed medical professionalism on the chaos of battle. Confronting conditions of squalor, poor nutrition, and rampant disease that left 20 percent of the men unfit to fight, he improved health and combat readiness by pioneering hygiene and diet standards.

Based on original research, and with stirring accounts of battle and the struggle to invent and supply adequate care during impossible conditions, *Surgeon in Blue* recounts Letterman’s life from his small-town Pennsylvania beginnings to his trailblazing wartime years and his subsequent life as a wildcatter and the medical examiner of San Francisco. At last, here is the missing portrait of a key figure of Civil War history and military medicine. His principles of battlefield care continue to be taught to military commanders and first responders.



(Dr. Jonathan Letterman. Photo: Library of Congress)



SCOTT MCGAUGH, the marketing director of the USS *Midway* Museum, is a veteran journalist and the author of *Battlefield Angels* and several books on the USS *Midway*. His television appearances include the History Channel, Discovery Channel, and Fox TV, and he gives public speeches and travels regularly for the museum. He lives in San Diego.

(Arcade Publishing, *Surgeon in Blue*, Scott McGaugh. Photo: Kristin Peele)