

Living History: Is that Wool Uniform Hot?

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In Dr. Carl Becker's Presidential Address to the American Historical Association in 1931, he touched on the idea that the academic historian's antiquated research may not influence the layman. He argued,

The history that lies inert in unread books does no work in the world. The history that does work in the world, the history that influences the course of history, is living history, that pattern of remembered events, whether true or false, that enlarges and enriches the collective specious present, the specious present of Mr. Everyman.

The Army Medical Department Center of History and Heritage's (ACHH) "living history" program attempts to relay the true story of Army Medicine. This experience helps develop critical thinking skills and historical mindfulness in US Army soldiers through their senses.

Various means are used within education to enhance learning. Some students retain a remarkable amount of information from a seemingly photographic memory. Others find repetition enables the ideas and concepts to resonate within their mind. Many will confess a leaning toward the visual arts to make knowledge stick. Some are blessed with a

perfect understanding through lecture. An accurate portrayal of an historic event or person can capture the intellect through visual, tactile, auditory, and olfactory means. Who can recall a childhood scene of the Holidays where you smell food cooking, hear the music playing, and feel the wrappings torn from gift boxes? It is through the medium of living history that edu-

cation reaches a wide audience by stimulating the senses.

The ACHH utilizes the Army Medical Department Living History Company to enhance professional military education. Throughout the Army and popular culture, reenactments or historical interpretations have told the story of the Army. One of the largest gatherings of period military living historians is hosted by the US Army Heritage and Education Center in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania in an annual living history event entitled "Army Heritage Days." Here living historians and reenactors portray a chronological timeline of history. The Army Medical Department Regiment has a Historic Uniform Program consisting of selections of medical uniforms from all conflicts of the US Army. Normally purposed for military ceremonies and heritage events such as noncommissioned officer inductions and historical commemorations, the uniforms may be loaned to all Active, Reserve, and

National Guard medical activities.

Ceremonies are just one facet of highlighting the continual evolution of Army Medicine. Period reproduction uniforms are utilized in conducting leadership professional development, enhancing tours of the Army Medical Museum, or bringing life to history in the classroom whether in or out of doors. You can organize a

learning environment utilizing the senses or become an active participant in telling the story of Army Medicine. Customers and volunteers are welcomed!



Volunteers living historians portray a Civil War field hospital (l-r) Paula Ussery, Scott Woodard, Dave Windsor, Karl Boller, and Jed Elrod. Photo courtesy of author.