

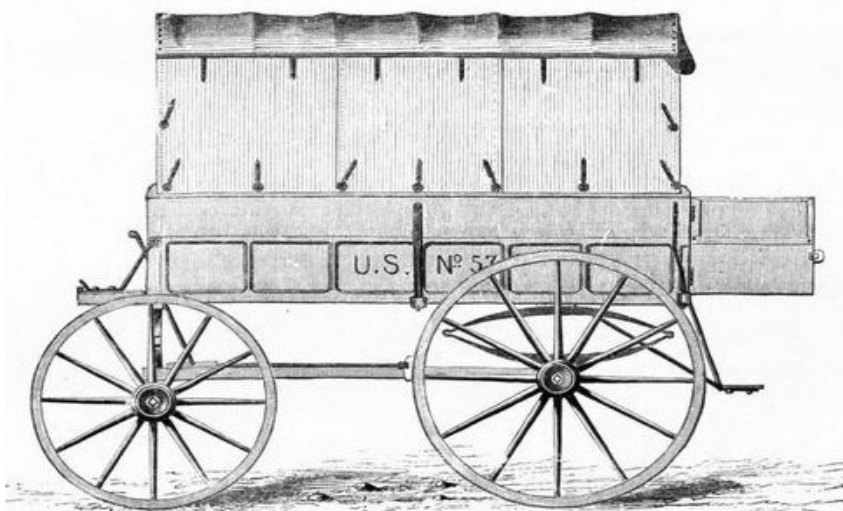
U S MILITARY AMBULANCE CORPS

At the outset of the Civil War, wounded soldiers were left to fend for themselves unless carried off by their comrades. They would often lay where they fell for days, suffering from their wounds, exposure and thirst.

Dr Jonathan Letterman was appointed medical director of the Army of the Potomac and he set about creating a system to deal with casualties on an organized basis. At his behest, on 2 August 1862, General George B McClellan issued General Order 147 creating the U S Army Ambulance Corps.



Dr Jonathan Letterman



Wheeling Ambulance

Letterman laid out standards for an ambulance that would have a crew of 3, a driver and two stretcher bearers. The ambulance that was to become most common was known as the Wheeling or Rosecrans ambulance. It was designed by General William Rosecrans and produced in large quantities at the Wheeling Wagon Works.

Dr Letterman also devised an evacuation system that consisted of three tiers:

1. A Field Dressing Station-where initial dressings and tourniquets could be applied
2. A Field Hospital-located close to the battle, usually in tents or commandeered homes and barns.
3. A Large Hospital-a permanent location equipped for long term care.

By developing this system, Dr Letterman initiated the concept of *Triage* in a battlefield setting.

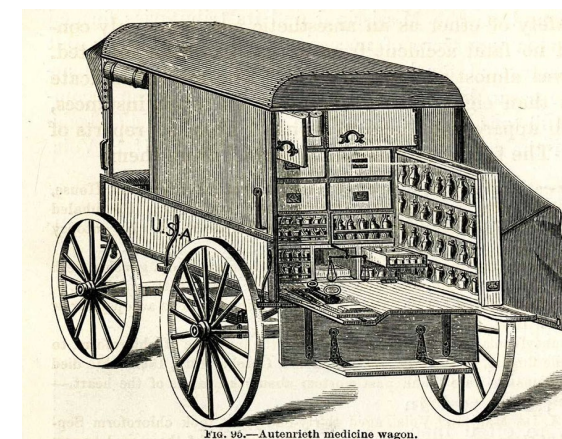


A Field Hospital

The system proved its worth at the Battle of Fredericksburg in December of 1862. With almost 1,000 ambulances available, all Union casualties were evacuated during the night of 13 December. A side benefit of this system was that it did not pull combat troops from the field to act as litter bearers.

With this success the Ambulance Corps became incorporated across the Union Army.

Another innovation that came out of the Ambulance Corps was the adoption of a Medicine Wagon that was attached to the Ambulance Corps and carried the critical supplies needed by the doctors at the field dressing stations and the field hospitals.



The *Triage* system devised by Dr Letterman has remained basically unchanged though medicine, equipment and procedures have all advanced with the times.