

# CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS' PORTRAITS: THE LILJENQUIST FAMILY COLLECTION

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Although the Civil War passed into history generations ago, the faces of those who fought in the war are still with us.

Hundreds of thousands of photographs were taken during the war years, some experts estimate. Some of those photos were of officers, battlefields, and political leaders, but many of them were portraits of individual soldiers on the way to fight, or on a break from battle. The items in the Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs at the Library of Congress capture the wartime lives of the everyday soldiers, some not yet out of their teens, who fought and died on both sides of the conflict. These small, personal portraits provide a unique window into the lives of ordinary men and their loved ones caught up in an extraordinary war.



Unidentified young African American soldier in Union uniform with forage cap  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/lilj/item/2010648968/>

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Personal Portraits in a Time of War

From 1861-65, more than three million Americans took up arms in the bloodiest conflict of the nineteenth century. Hailing from every state and territory, these men were real people who loved, feared, and often died in the service of their country. The century and a half separating us from our Civil War counterparts can accentuate our differences, but in many ways these soldiers were just like contemporary Americans.

There is one fact that makes Civil War soldiers seem much more modern than soldiers of the

nation's earlier wars: many of them had their pictures taken. The onset of war coincided with a boom in photography in the United States. By the start of the Civil War, photographs were much less expensive and much easier to produce than ever before. New technologies brought the price of the new ambrotype (glass-backed) and tintype (metal-backed) emulsion plates down to between 25 cents to \$2.50 in the Union states. The average Civil War soldier, who might make between \$11-16 per month, could finally afford his own personal photograph.

With so many Americans off fighting and only too aware of the possibility that they might not be returning home, the number of portrait photographs soared. The naval blockade against the Confederacy led to much higher prices—up to \$20—for photographs in the South. This cost difference is one reason for the disproportionately higher production of Union portraits, yet the Liljenquist Family Collection still serves as a visual record of Civil War soldiers on both sides.

The portraits of most soldiers were small—2.75 by 3.25 inches was the most common size—and could be carried in a friend’s jacket pocket, mailed home to family, or held in the hand of a loved one. The photos were often kept safe in ornate frames and decorated cases, some made of leather or molded from hardened shellac compounds. For many of these soldiers, a wartime portrait was a major occasion, and might be the only photograph ever taken of them. In the props, pose, and clothing that each chose, a viewer today can search for clues about the subject’s personality through the way he presented himself for his moment before the camera.

### Attitudes and Motivations

By the time the first shots were fired at Fort Sumter in April 1861, tensions between the free states and the slave states were at a boiling point. Even before abolition became an official aim of the Union, Northern soldiers fighting to protect the Union and Southern soldiers fighting to protect their way of life had more than enough motivation to go into battle. Soldiers on both sides expressed their sentiments through their portraits, some by displaying slogans, some by brandishing weapons or striking fierce poses.

Though enthusiasm would shrink as the war went on, at the beginning of the war, men were so eager to join up that a big problem for both armies was

finding enough supplies for its soldiers. Despite minimum age requirements, surviving photos indicate that there was a liberal interpretation of what constituted an eighteen year-old. Those too young to successfully feign maturity could join as drummer boys. The desire not to be left behind can be seen in the example of a nine-year-old drummer boy from Ohio, Johnny Clem.



After running away from home and shooting a Confederate officer in the battle of Chickamauga, he became the youngest non-commissioned officer in the history of the United States.

Sgt. Johnny Clem  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012650045/>

After the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, African Americans were able to enlist and fight on behalf of the Union. Some white Northerners were opposed to their inclusion, but by the end of the war close to two hundred thousand African American troops would join the armed services. Many of these soldiers and sailors took time to have their portraits made in uniform.

Women were not included in the armed forces, but often supported the war effort through volunteer organizations, as well as by making clothing, distributing supplies, and writing letters to their loved ones in the field. Letters from home can be found tucked inside the cases of photographs of Civil War soldiers.



Two unidentified women  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.36461/?co=lilj>

The men who donned blue or gray uniforms between 1861 and 1865 only spent a portion of those years in combat, and some photographs provide glimpses of the more humdrum moments of their military lives. In the few times of the day when they were not fighting or in drill, soldiers in camp played cards, performed music, and, in their own nineteenth-century fashion, relaxed. Many soldiers served together for long stretches of the war, and posed for portraits as comrades in arms.

Of the three million who served, more than 620,000 died by the end of the war, and many more were left badly wounded or otherwise changed by the experience. Many died in combat, but disease killed even more. Prisoners of war were often denied proper healthcare and nutrition, and thousands died in military prisons, some of starvation. Still, despite the physical and emotional trauma of the war's aftermath, the nation dove straight into the Reconstruction effort, and most soldiers returned to civilian life.

History has recorded little about most of the soldiers in these portraits. In fact, for the majority we don't even know their names. But their photographs have traveled on without them, passed from hand to hand over the decades until coming together in this collection. Today these portraits, which might have been intended for a few friends and sweethearts, can be seen and studied by people around the world. Although we may not know their names or their stories, we can look into their faces and ask ourselves what they experienced and how they felt as they played their part in a war that changed a nation.



Unidentified soldier in Confederate uniform with shotgun sitting next to dog  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2014645463/>



Two unidentified soldiers in Union cavalry uniforms  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2013645776/>

## SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

- Write a caption for a photo. What is happening? What is the subject feeling?
- Select an image. Predict what will happen one minute after the scene shown in the image. One hour after? Explain the reasoning behind your predictions.
- Study and analyze the items by and about Cornelius V. Moore. Consider the tone and content of the two letters. Reflect on what can be learned from the set that cannot be learned from a single item.
- Choose one of the photographs and create a series of correspondence telling the subject's story. Write one letter from before the photo was taken and one letter from after. Take into consideration the subject's age, facial expression, uniform, and any objects in the photograph.
- Consider that, in the 21st century, people can take a photograph whenever they want. During the Civil War, however, having one's photograph taken was rare enough to warrant carefully composing every aspect of the photo. Ask: If you were preparing for the only photo you would ever have taken of yourself, what items—or even animals—would you have with you? How would you pose? What would you stand in front of? Who would you send it to? If time permits, ask students to bring their items to class and take their "only" photograph.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



### Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/lilj/>



### Glimpses of Soldiers' Lives (Liljenquist Collection)

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/coll/Soldiersbiosintro.html>



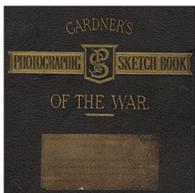
### Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/cwp/related.html>



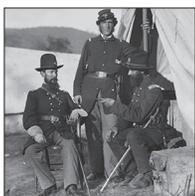
### Gladstone Collection of African American Photographs

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/gld/>



### Gardner's Photographic Sketchbook of the War

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/01021785/>



### Selected Civil War Photographs (1861-1865)

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwphome.html>



### The Last Full Measure: Civil War Photographs from the Liljenquist Family Collection

<http://myloc.gov/exhibitions/civilwarphotographs/pages/default.aspx>

## PRIMARY SOURCES WITH CITATIONS



"[Unidentified young African American soldier in Union uniform with forage cap.]" Photograph. c1863-65. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/lilj/item/2010648968/>



Shattuck, Sewall, photographer. "[Samuel W. Doble of Company D, 12th Maine Infantry Regiment, with Drum]." Photograph. c1861-65. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.37118/?co=lilj>



"[Private David Lowry, of Company E, 25th Virginia Cavalry Regiment, Company A, 41st Virginia Infantry Regiment, and Company D, 47th Virginia Infantry Regiment, in uniform and corsage of flowers with musket and book.]" Photograph. c1861-65. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2011661457/>



"[Two unidentified soldiers in Union uniforms holding cigars in each others' mouths.]" Photograph. c1861-65. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010650329/>



"[Private Henry Augustus Moore of Co. F, 15th Mississippi Infantry Regiment, with artillery short sword and sign reading Jeff Davis and the South!]" Photograph. c1861-65. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/lilj/item/2013645709/>



"[Unidentified African American soldier in Union uniform with wife and two daughters.]" Photograph. c.1863-65. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010647216/>

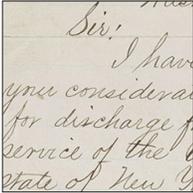


"[Sergeant Cornelius V. Moore of Company B, 100th New York Volunteers, a sergeant of 39th Illinois Regiment, a corporal of 106th New York Volunteers, and a private of the 11th Vermont Regiment in camp scene poses in front of painted backdrop showing military camp.]" Photograph. c.1861-65. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010650794/>



Moore, Cornelius V. *[Letter from Cornelius V. Moore to Henry Moore.]* Letter. c.1861-65. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012648287/>



Moore, Cornelius V. *[Letter from Cornelius V. Moore to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton asking for discharge.]* Letter. July, 1865. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012648286/>



Rees, Charles R., photographer. “[Private Edward A. Cary of Company I, 44th Virginia Infantry Regiment, in uniform and his sister, Emma J. Garland née Cary.]” Photograph. c.1861-62. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/lilj/item/2012645976/>



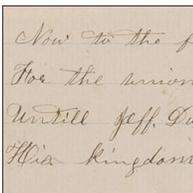
“[Unidentified Young Sailor in Union Uniform with American Flag in Front of Backdrop Showing Naval Scene].” Photograph. c1861-65. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.36457/?co=lilj>



Rees, Charles R., photographer. “[Brothers Private William Savage Moore and Private John C. Moore of Richmond ‘Parker’ Virginia Light Artillery Battery, 1st Company Howitzers Virginia Light Artillery Battery, and I Company, 15th Virginia Infantry Regiment, in Early Richmond Depot Shell Jackets].” Photograph. c 1861-65. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.32465/?co=lilj>



“[Private William P. Haberlin of Battery B, Pennsylvania Light Artillery in uniform with shoulder scales and great coat.]” Photograph. c1861-64. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010650791/>



Haberlin, William P. *Now to the field again I'll go ...* Letter. c.1861-64. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.  
<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2011645319/>



"[Unidentified girl in mourning dress holding framed photograph of her father as a cavalryman with sword and Hardee Hat.]" Photograph. c.1861-70. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010648759/>



Bundy & Williams, photographer. "[Private William Sargent of Co. E, 53rd Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment, in uniform, after the amputation of both arms.]" Photograph.

New Haven: Bundy & Williams, c.1861-65. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2013645637/>



"[Unidentified soldier in Confederate infantry uniform with musket and Bowie knife.]" Photograph. c..1861-65. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/lilj/item/2011661663/>



"[John E. Cummins of the 50th, 99th, and 185th Ohio Infantry Regiments in Union Uniform Next to a Horse]." Photograph. c1861-65. From Library of Congress: *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.37549/>



"[Child named Carl who became a soldier; with handwritten note and lock of hair in case.]" Photograph. c.1856. From Library of Congress, *Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs*.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/lilj/item/2010647219/>



"Two unidentified soldiers in Union cavalry uniforms with sword share a drink in front of painted backdrop showing camp." Photograph. Between 1861 and 1865. From Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/lilj/item/2013645776/>



"Unidentified soldier in Confederate uniform with shotgun sitting next to dog." Photograph. United States, between 1861 and 1865. From Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/lilj/item/2014645463/>