

## Resource Sheet #5

# The Boy's War

### **About Medical Treatment and Amputations:**

"The weapons used in the Civil War had ten times the killing power of those used in the Revolutionary War. Flesh was ripped and eyes punctured by flying pieces of metal, cannon shells severed arms and legs with ease and, because metal helmets were not yet worn, head injuries were very common. Unfortunately, the doctor's ability to treat these wounds or simply to lessen the pain was primitive at best.

After one battle, Elishia Stockwell came upon this scene: 'we moved on to the east side of town where they were fetching the wounded. They were laying them in rows with just room to walk between. They had tents for those who were worse off, and where they were amputating arms and legs. There was a wash out back of one tent that had a wagon load of arms and legs. The legs had shoes and stockings on them.'

Many soldiers looked upon the doctor's work as useless mutilations heaped on top of misery, and the fact that large numbers of the injured would linger in agonizing pain for days only to die did not enhance the reputation of the medical profession."

From "*The Boy's War*" page 87

### **About Being a Prisoner of War:**

"Supplies of all kinds were lacking, and many boys reported having to get their blankets and clothes from the bodies of dead men. One soldier managed to scratch out a description of one of his last meals: "One course meal cracker and a bit of bacon".

A Confederate boy visited Andersonville prison and came away with these thoughts: "The Prison struck me as being at best but a miserable makeshift. The day I saw them they were a sweltering mass of humanity, each unit of which was confined to a space not more than twenty feet. This of itself- the crowding of thirty-two thousand human beings so thickly together- was sufficient to make the prison unsanitary. But that was not all. I saw whole carcasses of slaughtered animals being cut up and made ready for distribution. The refuse of which fell into the creek, and together with filth that washed into it from the hillside during heavy rains, necessarily contaminated the water...I do not know how many died that day, but probably one hundred at least."

From "*The Boy's War*" page 83

Murphy, Jim. *The Boys' War; Confederate and Union Soldiers Talk About the Civil War*. New York: Clarion Books, 1990.