[Undated report] I opened a school Nov. 1st, 1862, at [Camp] Shiloh, a contraband village of two thousand inhabitants. . . . I had one hundred regular pupils whose ages varied from seven to sixty-five years. Of this number fifty learned to read quite intelligibly in two months. I adopted the “word method” of teaching, relied much on oral instruction and used every means in my power to awaken thought, while my sole object was to educate humanity and not simply the intellect of human beings. They were very anxious to learn, desired to support their school and in fact made a beginning to this end. I find them tractable, intuitive and imitative but not usually reflective.

[July 4, 1863] I am now moved into camp Fisk where I am at the head of a school of three hundred pupils. . . . How I wish you could see me in my little room ten feet square. It is papered with the Independent, and is fitted up so as to look decidedly nice and literary. I have . . . quite a library, pictures, maps, book case, globe, clock, carpet, the chair of state, and a cot with clean white pillow cases and sheets. . . . Vines have crept in and hang around the logs overhead, helping to beautify my little home.

[July 1863] I shall return to Memphis in about two weeks [to marry] Captain H. S. Hay. . . . I never before found a will as strong as my own. . . . If I am unhappy it will be my own fault. He would give up his life for me.

In late December 1864, Lucinda Humphrey Hay died at the home of a sister in Tipton, Iowa, from complications of childbirth weeks earlier. Although the school she established at Camp Shiloh in Memphis was destroyed in race riots in 1866 when federal troops were withdrawn, it was rebuilt the next year. LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis traces its roots to her school. 

These excerpts are from “Lucinda Humphrey Hay” by her sister Emma Humphrey Haddock and published in Iowa Historical Record (April 1894).

Elizabeth Fairfax, Army Nurse

Elizabeth Fairfax (right) wears an honorary badge from Nathaniel Baker Grand Army of the Republic Post 88 (Clinton, Iowa), circa 1885. She worked for the 26th Iowa Infantry from its early years until it was mustered out. On the reverse side of this photo are these words: “As an army nurse [she] took care of sick and wounded soldiers in camps where stationed. Since the war an old resident of Clinton, Iowa, and is well known. For 24 years she kept a laundry, and wove rag carpets for a living. By industry and economy she purchased and is now the owner of a little homestead. She has raised two children. Now advanced in years and feeble in health, she is no longer able to maintain herself by her former occupation. To secure a living she now peddles for grocery store, and sells her pictures. She served her country faithfully and is deserving of support.”