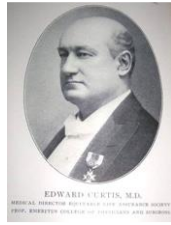


The Curtis at Lincoln's Bedside

Compiled by George Curtis



After President Abraham Lincoln was shot in Ford's Theater on the evening of April 14, 1865, he was carried across the street to the Petersen house in critical condition. Dr. Edward Curtis, U.S. Army, assigned to the Office of the Surgeon General, was one of the many doctors who visited Lincoln's bedside that night.

After the President passed away on the following morning, his body was placed in a temporary coffin, covered with an American flag, and returned by hearse to the White House, accompanied by a cavalry escort. At the White House, an autopsy was performed by Army Surgeons Edward Curtis and Joseph Woodward. Also in attendance were Surgeon General Joseph K. Barnes, a few civilians, and military officers.

Dr. Curtis described the details of the autopsy in a letter to his mother. The description and the report of Dr. Woodward can be found on the National Institute of Health website at www.nlm.nih.gov.

Edward Curtis was born in Providence, Rhode Island (RI) in 1838 to George Curtis (1796-1856) and Julia Bowen Bridgham (1810-1874). He was a seventh-generation descendant from Henry Curtis and Mary Tainter of Sudbury, Massachusetts 1635; thus, Edward, George, David, John, John, Ephraim, Joseph, Henry Curtis 1635. Edward was the fourth of six sons: James Burrill Curtis (1821-1895), George William Curtis (1824-1892), Lt. Col. Joseph Bridgham Curtis (1836-1862), and Dr. John Green Curtis (1844-1913).

Edward graduated from Harvard in 1859 and received his medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1864. He had entered the army as medical cadet in September 1861, became acting assistant surgeon in May 1863, assistant surgeon in 1864, and was brevetted captain and major in March 1865. He resigned from the army in 1870, and began a medical practice in New York City.

During the later years of his army service he was in charge of the microscopical section of the Army Medical Museum, and was especially engaged in developing the art of photographing through the microscope.

After retiring from the U.S. Army, Dr. Curtis became a lecturer on histology at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1870 and in 1873 was given the chair of materia medica and therapeutics, becoming professor emeritus in 1886. He was made assistant surgeon to the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary in 1872, surgeon in 1874 and in 1876 became medical director of the Equitable Life Assurance Society, retiring from active practice. Dr. Curtis published the "Catalogue of the Microscopical Section of the U.S. Army Medical Museum"

(Washington, 1867), and "Manual of General Medicinal Technology" (New York, 1883). (Source: Appleton's Encyclopedia of American Biography, Volume 2, New York, 1887)

Dr. Curtis married Augusta Lawler Stacy of Chester, Pennsylvania, in 1864, and they had five children: George Lee, Constance, Natalie, Bridgham and Marian. He died of a cerebral hemorrhage at his home in New York, November 28, 1912, at the age of seventy-four.