



Surgeon of the "Old Sixth": The Life and Times of Dr. Norman Smith and the Civil War's 6th Massachusetts

M.P. McConnell

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2015 INDIEFAB Book of the Year Award Finalist in Biography and War & Military

2016 Midwest Book Awards Finalist in Biography and Total Book Design

After the fall of Fort Sumter to Confederate forces in April 1861, Dr. Norman Smith predicted "that means war and I will go tomorrow morning if called upon." And so he did, two days later, as surgeon of the Massachusetts "Old Sixth" Regiment when it answered Lincoln's first call for troops. Best known for its fight through Baltimore, when it was attacked by a secessionist mob and met with the first deaths of the Civil War, this historic regiment provided the primary defense of Washington, D.C. while it was under siege. Regarded as the "life of the regiment," Smith headed to war leaving his new bride, having previously lost four wives and all four of his children. This is a story of the resiliency of a deeply patriotic and spiritual man whose career spanned profound changes in medicine and who grappled with the wartime illness that would eventually kill him. It is also the story of a regiment whose march to save the capital captivated a country in the early days of the war, inspiring poems, songs, and artists. Its story has since been largely overlooked but it earned its place in history as the "first to volunteer," "first to give their lives," and "first to reach Washington equipped and ready to defend the capital."

M.P. McConnell vividly exposes the chaos of the first days of the Civil War when the stakes were so high including new details about the "Old Sixth" Regiment's camp conditions, health problems, number of Baltimore casualties, and discipline challenges at the end of its service. The medical practice of a 19th century New England doctor comes alive in the story along with details of the first amputation of the Civil War by Dr. Smith just steps away from the Capitol Rotunda in the then chambers of the U.S. Supreme Court. Richly illustrated with the first-ever gathering of period artwork and photographs chronicling the "Old Sixth" Regiment's service, along with extensive research into archival collections with never before published first-hand accounts from letters, diaries, and orderly books--this work will appeal to the serious historian and non-historian alike!

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