Photo Sleuth, Portrait Analysis Recognized by AHF

Two stories that appeared in recent issues of MI were finalists in the 2015 Army Historical Foundation (AHF) Distinguished Writing Awards. “Revealed: The Identity of an Officer in an Iconic Group Portrait,” was written by Kurt Luther, author of Photo Sleuth. Luther describes his journey to determine the name of the white officer pictured in a lithograph of African-American soldiers at Camp William Penn outside Philadelphia. “Tintype Stares and Regal Airs: Civil War Portrait Photography and Soldier Memorization,” was authored by Isidora Stankovic of Yale University. “In this total war, the volunteer fighters secured a new individualized identity for the common soldier through portrait photographs,” she writes. Congratulations to Kurt and Isidora for this well deserved recognition.

Louisiana Connection

The middle soldier in the group of three Confederates featured in “Colts, Knives and Cigars” (Autumn 2016) is almost certainly from Louisiana. The device appears to be a pelican feeding its young, which was a traditional Louisiana symbol. Also, a number of Louisiana units wore blue so this is another clue these fellows are from Louisiana.

Mike Welch Smyrna, Ga.

Muskets held by N.C. Boys

The firearms held by the North Carolina Boys in Lee’s Army (“Colts, Knives and Cigars,” Autumn 2016) are actually Model 1842 3-band muskets, not Model 1841 rifles as indicated in the caption.

Paul Johnson Acworth, Ga.

Blue Light, Not Flare

Thanks for an informative and entertaining article on Cpt. Faunce and the Harriet Lane (“The Love of His Life,” Autumn 2016). One minor point is that the aerial launch of “a blue flare into the night sky” did not signal the approach of the ship to Charleston Harbor. As reported 15 April 1861 in the Charleston Mercury: “two red rockets burst in the air, followed by the burning of a blue light.” Blue light was actually an intensely white, handheld pyrotechnic signal. Such blue light has often been misunderstood by historians; they mistakenly believed that the Confederate submarine H.L. Hunley’s iconic blue light signal came from a lantern. My research on blue light was published in Civil War Navy magazine’s premier issue (2012), and one can see 1861 blue light in action on my YouTube video: youtube.com/watch?v=v9CG_FfySI

Christopher Rucker Spartanburg, S.C.

Zouaves Identified

The identities of two soldiers pictured in Dan Miller’s gallery of Zouave portraits (“Natty Glory,” Autumn 2016) were inadvertently omitted from the captions.

Ordnance Sgt. Frank J. Whitcher mustered into the 2nd Massachusetts Battery of Light Artillery, or Nim’s Battery, in July 1861. A medical student at the time of his enlistment, he was designated the “Chief of Piece” on his gun. He left the regiment before the end of the year to accept a second lieutenantcy in the 1st Maryland Light Artillery. He resigned from the army the following year and lived until 1881.

British immigrant Matthias Chadwick enlisted as a private in Company F of the 114th Pennsylvania, or Collis’ Zouaves, in the summer of 1862. Captured on May 5, 1863, during the Battle of Chancellorsville, he was paroled 13 months later. Chadwick returned to his regiment and served until 1865. The last time his name appears on a government record is 1880.