



## Ushering in a New Era of Soldier Identification

**B**ack in February at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, I glimpsed the future of soldier photo identification. In the conference room of a building on campus, professor Kurt Luther brought our team up to date on CivilWarPhotoSleuth.com (CWPS).

In this moment, I realized that the time-honored process of soldier identification evidenced on the pages of this magazine since its founding had met the Digital Age.

Kurt is the founder of CWPS, and *Military Images* is a proud partner.

I came to know Kurt three years ago at the 2014 Gettysburg Show, where we had a great conversation amidst the hustle and bustle of activity. We shared our enthusiasm for Civil War portrait photography, and I came away deeply impressed by his grit and determination to identify unknown soldiers and sailors. And, Kurt was friendly and engaging to boot.

Our conversation paved the way for *Photo Sleuth*, Kurt's regular column in *MI*. Since its debut in the Winter 2015 issue, *Photo Sleuth* has explored concepts, methods and tools through case studies and other means. The columns have provided a tremendous boost to photo sleuths of all stripes, and I've found them incredibly helpful in my own research.

Kurt's work builds on the traditional approaches and processes familiar to anyone who has attempted to put a name to the face of an unknown Civil War soldier: Basic observations of uniforms, equipment and back drops, provenance and painstaking research using primary documents, journals, books, databases and other sources. I am reminded of many hours spent flipping through pages of regimental histories, searching faces on the American Civil War Research Database (HDS), and reaching out to fellow collectors through email and on Facebook—all in anticipation of that Zen moment when a rock-solid identification is made.

CivilWarPhotoSleuth.com is the next advancement in the identification process. CWPS brings together photo archives, research tools and online community to increase identifications and support new scholarship related to Civil War portrait photography.

Turn to Kurt's column on page 18 for details about this exciting new tool. And if you are planning to visit this year's Gettysburg Show from June 24-25, join Kurt and I at the *MI* table for a live demo. Oh, and bring an unidentified photo with you!

Together, I hope we can put even more names to faces of the unknowns in blue and gray.

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Betaface.com

The face recognition technology used in CWPS displays unique reference points used for comparison to other images.



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