



## Mary Ann “Mother” Bickerdyke

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

### Introduction

Mary Ann “Mother” Bickerdyke (née Ball) (1817-1901) was born in Knox County, Ohio, near Mount Vernon. She attended Oberlin College and later became a nurse, assisting with the cholera epidemic of 1837 in Cincinnati. In 1847, she married Robert Bickerdyke and eventually they moved to Galesburg, Illinois, where she continued her work as a nurse. With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, a then-widowed Bickerdyke helped start a Union hospital in Cairo, Illinois, and throughout the war, she traveled with the soldiers and set up over 300 field hospitals. Bickerdyke was present at the Battles of Shiloh and Atlanta and often risked her own life to help during battles. Her work gained her the nickname “Mother” for treating the soldiers as if they were her own sons, as well as the admiration of Union Generals Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman. After the war, Bickerdyke provided legal assistance to Union veterans seeking their pensions and helped them resettle into civilian life. She also helped secure pensions for over 300 female nurses who had helped in the war. Bickerdyke died of a minor stroke on November 8, 1901, and is buried in Galesburg, Illinois.

### Important Dates

- July 19, 1817: Mary Ann Ball is born in Knox County, Ohio.
- 1837: Ball assists doctors in Cincinnati during cholera epidemic.
- 1847: Ball marries Robert Bickerdyke.
- 1856: The Bickerdykes move to Galesburg, Illinois.
- ca. 1858-1859: Robert Bickerdyke dies.
- 1861-1865: Bickerdyke works as a Union nurse during the U.S. Civil War.
- 1886: Bickerdyke receives a \$25 monthly pension from the U.S. government for work done during the Civil War.
- November 8, 1901: Bickerdyke dies in Bunker Hill, Kansas. She is buried in Galesburg, Illinois.

### Suggested Search Strategies

- Try the following terms in combination (as an “all” word search), proximity or as phrases: Mother Bickerdyke, Mary Ann Bickerdyke, Mary Ann Ball, Nurse Bickerdyke.
- Limit your search by date.
- Search newspapers in all states, not just Ohio.

### Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- [“Mother Bickerdyke”](#) *Cooperstown Courier* (Cooperstown, ND), February 2, 1883, Image 6.
- [“Jubilee for a War Nurse”](#) *Herald* (Los Angeles, CA), July 25, 1897, Image 4, col. 6-7.
- [“‘Mother Bickerdyke’ Honored”](#) *Hocking Sentinel* (Logan, OH), August 26, 1897, Image 3, col. 4.
- [“Nurse Bickerdyke Dead”](#) *Indianapolis Journal* (Indianapolis, IN), November 9, 1901, Image 2, col. 2.
- [“Mother Bickerdyke, The Great Army Nurse”](#) *Minneapolis Journal* (Minneapolis, MN), November 30, 1901, Image 17, col. 4-5.
- [“Mother Bickerdyke”](#) *Perrysburg Journal* (Perrysburg, OH), October 21, 1904, Image 3, col. 3.
- [“An Army Nurse”](#) *Pioneer Express* (Pembina, ND), December 7, 1906, Image 3, col. 3.
- [“Earned Love of all Her ‘Boys’”](#) *Belding Banner-News* (Belding, MI), May 21, 1919, Image 8, col. 3-5.