

## Issue 2: June 2020

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### TCCWRT IS ON FACEBOOK WITH TWO PAGES!

You may already know about our regular Facebook page with information on our Round table (Civil War Round Table – Twin Cities). But you may not know about our Civil War Round Table – Twin Cities Group page. On the Group page you will find posts shared from some of the best Civil War history organizations in the country including the American Battlefield Trust and Emerging Civil War. As a group member you can post and share any Civil War related items (photos, stories, questions) you wish. If you are already on Facebook, make sure you the search for our group and ask to be a member.

### 2020-2021 SPEAKER SCHEDULE

#### September 15, 2020 – Douglas Waller

“Lincoln’s Spies: Their Secret War to Save the Union”

#### October 20, 2020 – David Dixon

“Union General August Willich”

#### November 17, 2020 – Thomas Arliskas

“General U.S. Grant and the Battle of Belmont”

#### December 15, 2020 – Brian Steele Willis

“General George Henry Thomas”

#### January 19, 2021 – John Haymond

“The Infamous Dakota War Trials of 1862”

#### February 16, 2021 - John Fazio

“Decapitating the Union: Jefferson Davis, Judah Benjamin and the Plot to Assassinate Lincoln”



*First Minnesota Monument at Gettysburg*



*Kirkland Monument at Fredericksburg NMP*

## Contact Us

### Twin Cities Civil War Round Table

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## **2020-2021 SPEAKER SCHEDULE**

**March 16, 2021 – Leslie Goddard**

“Gone With The Wind and the Constuction of Civil War Memory”

**May 18, 2021 – Mike Movius**

“The State of the Civil War Round Tables”

## **FROM THE DUSTY COLLECTION...**

### ***George W. Simpson's Knife: Found in Minnesota***

Returning Minnesota veterans sometimes brought Confederate artifacts home with them. One turned up in a Minneapolis garage sale and was eventually coaxed away from its finder with the trade of a nice World War I helmet. For years this fine example of a D guard Bowie knife told only part of its story despite great efforts made to read its inscriptions.



On one side of the scabbard, scratched into the flaking gray paint finish, was a first pattern Confederate national flag with 8 small stars surrounding a larger one in the field. Below that, in large but faint block letters, "G.W. Simpson's Knife" could just be made out. On the reverse, readable portions of a long inscription included: "This knife was taken ... battlefield at ... Jan 19th by ... Regt ... A.B. White".

And lengthwise along the front face of the scabbard, in a fine Spencerian script, was lightly scratched "G.W. Simpson's Knife ... Presented ..." The foot-long knife blade bore the bold stamp of its skilled blacksmith maker, "W.H.S."



A look through [Cooper's Chronological and Alphabetical Record of the Engagement of the Great Civil War](#) showed only one good match for the date scratched on the knife--and that date had a Minnesota connection. January 19 and 20, 1862 were

field days for relic collectors in the 2nd Minnesota Infantry Regiment. They had just won their first major battle. After firing point blank through a rail fence at Confederates of the 20th Tennessee and 15th Mississippi lying on the other side, the Minnesotans advanced to capture the camps and entrenchments of the Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi troops who had opposed them near Logan's Cross Roads, Kentucky.



Private Edward R. Perkins of the 2nd wrote to his parents "The rebels were then shelled across the river and they soon hoisted the white flag. And then we had time to see & gather. We were let loose to get what we could and keep what we got...We took \$500,000 worth of property, 18 pieces of artillery & four thousand stand of small arms...but most of their guns were flint locks and shot guns." St. Paul newspapers recounted the

many relics sent home, including presentation swords, flags, muskets, and bowie knives. Sergeant A[llen] B. White, listed in the roster of the 2nd Minnesota, confirmed the inscription research to this point: White served the war in Company K, and was commissioned second lieutenant in 1865. At the Mill Springs battle he was so weak from a long sickness that he could barely stand, yet fought at the rail fence with the regiment.



G.W. Simpson proved more elusive. Most Confederates at Mill Springs were from Tennessee; research started with that state's soldiers. [Tennesseans in the Civil War, Part Two, Rosters](#) lists two soldiers by this name: one stationed at Fort Donelson, while the other, in the 11th Infantry and under Zollicoffer's command, did not participate in the battle. The superb and usually dependable Minnesota Historical Society reference library unfortunately held no rosters of Alabama or Mississippi soldiers.

The net was cast a little wider for clues. A 1972 [Civil War Times Illustrated](#) article authored by Lowell Harrison stated that "The 20th Tennessee fixed bayonets and the men of the 15th Mississippi ***unsheathed the cane knives that many of them carried***, and both regiments charged." The same bowie knife charge by the Mississippians was described in the [Official Records](#). Not surprisingly, the 15<sup>th</sup> Mississippi lost 226 men in the battle, more than any other unit.

Thinking that perhaps the Mississippi Archives might provide a clue, the Internet was searched for references. First, a check of the Louisiana State University's Civil War Center's huge WEB site pointed to a site titled [Mississippi Civil War Information](#). A quick scroll through regimental histories, cemeteries, historic sites and reenactment units led to a heading titled [Casualty Lists](#), and from there, amazingly enough, to [15th Mississippi Infantry--At Mill Springs, KY](#).

One mouse click away was the list of the men of the 15th killed at Mill Springs. Included was *Musician George W. Simpson, Company I, mortally wounded*. Another Simpson in the same company, perhaps a cousin, was killed that same day. So here was the answer, thanks to a volunteer who had transcribed rosters from microfilms of the Compiled Service Records, available from the National Archives, and then posted them on the Internet. Reading the accounts of the battle one can imagine the fury of that charge on the morning of January 19th, when even a musician drew his bowie knife and charged forward, only to fall before a Minnesotan's rifle musket.

George W. Simpson, age 21, enrolled in Captain R.C. Love's (known as the Choctaw Guards) of the 15<sup>th</sup> Mississippi on July 29, father, W.H. Simpson, was postmaster of Poplar Creek, where G.W. was to die of his wound on April 29, 1862. Serving as musician of his regiment's band, Simpson was shot through the captured at Mill Springs. Two months later he and a companion, Federal field hospital at nearby Somerset, Kentucky, overheard transfer recovering prisoners further north. The wounded escaped and made their way to Knoxville, where Simpson took his Mississippi home. Happy to be back home he went out on a ride, ruptured the wound, and died two days later. A brief version was up in the July 1910 [The Confederate Veteran](#) magazine; more details were in the original and longer manuscript shared by a Battlefield historian friend.

With everything falling into place, the scabbard was again under a refracting light. Now that fine script began to reveal Simpson's Knife, Presented by his Father ...". The rest of the might be forever lost, but the poignant message of a father giving knife which he would wield at his fatal wounding gives this relic a poignant significance. Confederate Musician George W. Simpson today lies with his parents and siblings in the Poplar Creek Cemetery in Montgomery County, Mississippi.



company 1861. His Mississippi principal bowels and lying in a plans to prisoners the train to horseback of this story specific Mill Springs

examined more: "G.W. inscription his son the

## THIS MONTH IN CIVIL WAR HISTORY - JUNE

1<sup>st</sup> 1862 – Robert E. Lee appointed Commander of the “Army of Northern Virginia”

1 <sup>st</sup> –3 <sup>rd</sup>	1864 – Battle of Cold Harbor, Virginia
5 <sup>th</sup>	1863 – J.E.B. Stuart hosts Grand Review of Cavalry
6 <sup>th</sup>	1862 – Memphis surrenders to Union forces
8 <sup>th</sup>	1861 – Tennessee formally secedes from the Union
9 <sup>th</sup>	1863 – Battle of Brandy Station, Virginia
12 <sup>th</sup>	1862 – J.E.B. Stuart begins his ride around McClellan’s army
15 <sup>th</sup>	1864 – Petersburg Campaign begins
17 <sup>th</sup>	1861 – Thaddeus Lowe demonstrates his hot air balloon
23 <sup>rd</sup>	1865 – Last formal surrender of Confederate forces
25 <sup>th</sup>	1862 – Seven Days Campaign begins
26 <sup>th</sup>	1864 – Stoneman begins his raid on Atlanta
27 <sup>th</sup>	1864 – Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia
30 <sup>th</sup>	1864 – Confederate Gen. Jubal Early begins march towards Washington DC

### **CIVIL WAR BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH - JUNE**

2 <sup>nd</sup>	1815 – Gen. Philip Kearny U.S.A.
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1808 – Jefferson Davis

**EDITOR’S NOTE: Many thanks once again to Lana Blumhoefer for the Civil War calendar information.**

**Can you contribute to a future newsletter? Writers are wanted to submit Civil War related articles to this newsletter.**

**Please submit your drafts to Bruce Cooper: [earlofbruce@hotmail.com](mailto:earlofbruce@hotmail.com)**