



NEWS

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First Minnesota Monument at Gettysburg

OUR FEBRUARY MEETING – 2/16/2021

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

John Fazio

More than a hundred books have been written about Lincoln’s assassination, yet one of the few certainties surrounding his death is the fact that little about it is certain. The literature on the subject is replete with errors, theories and guesswork. This comprehensive re-examination of the facts seeks to correct major and minor errors in the record, reconcile differences of opinion, offer explanations for unknowns and evaluate theories. Drawing on hundreds of sources, Fazio covers the prelude to the war, Booth’s accomplices and their roles in the conspiracy, the kidnapping ruse that concealed the intended decapitation of the United States government, the mysteries surrounding key players (Parker, Forbes and Cobb), the assassination itself, the attempted assassinations, Booth’s escape, the death of the president, the pursuit of the fugitives, the death of Booth and the trial and sentencing of his co-conspirators (except John Surratt) and one innocent man. The simple conspiracy theory is rejected by Fazio in favor of the theory that Booth worked with the complicity of the highest levels of the Confederate government and its Secret Service Bureau, whose twofold purpose was retribution and snatching Southern independence from a weakened and chaotic Federal government.

Fazio is a member of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable and has been its president. He frequently speaks on the war before Roundtables and other groups, has written and published numerous articles on the war and teaches Civil War history at Chautauqua Institution. He is also a member of the Lincoln Forum, the Western Reserve Historical Society, the Cleveland Grays and the Surratt Society.

ZOOM INFORMATION WILL BE EMAILED CLOSER TO THE EVENT

FOR THOSE WITHOUT COMPUTER ACCESS,
YOU MAY DIAL IN ON YOUR PHONE BY CALLING:

(312) 626-6799 Enter Meeting ID: 447 119 1474 and Passcode: 379757

2020-2021 SPEAKER SCHEDULE

March 16, 2021 – Leslie Goddard:

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

May 18, 2021 – John Haymond:

“The Infamous Dakota War Trials of 1862: Revenge, Military Law, and the Judgment of History.”

THIS MONTH IN CIVIL WAR HISTORY – FEBRUARY

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 4 th | 1861 – The seceded states meet in Montgomery, Alabama to form a new government. |
| 6 th | 1862 – Surrender of Fort Henry, Tennessee. |
| 8 th | 1861 – The Confederate States of America adopt a provisional constitution. |
| 14 th -16 th | 1862 – Battle of Fort Donelson, Tennessee. |
| 17 th | 1864 – Confederate submarine H.L. Hunley sinks the USS Housatonic. |
| 17 th | 1865 – Columbia South Carolina burned by Sherman’s Army. |
| 18 th | 1861 – Jefferson Davis inaugurated President of the Confederate States of America. |
| 20 th | 1864 – Battle of Olustee, Florida. |
| 20 th -21 th | 1862 – Battle of Valverde, New Mexico Territory. |
| 22 nd | 1865 – Wilmington, North Carolina captured. |
| 23 rd | 1861 – Voter in Texas approve referendum to secede from the Union. |

CIVIL WAR BIRTHDAYS – FEBRUARY

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 2 nd | 1803 – Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston C.S. |
| 3 rd | 1807 – Gen. Joseph E. Johnston C.S. |

- 6th 1834 – Maj. Gen. William Dorsey Pender C.S.
- 8th 1817 – Lt. Gen. Richard Ewell C.S.
- 14th 1824 – Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock U.S.
- 18th 1817 – Brig. Gen. Lewis A. Armisted C.S.
- 27th 1823 – Maj. Gen. William Buel Franklin U.S.
- 29th 1840 – Sergeant William H. Carney, 54th Massachusetts Vol. Infantry, Medel of Honor winner.

JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP!

Are you on Facebook? If so, please consider joining our Civil War Round Table - Twin Cities Group. On our Group page you will find posts shared from some of the best Civil War history organizations in the county including the American Battlefield Trust, Civil War Chronicles 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.



The Kirkland Memorial at Fredericksburg N.M.P.

From the Dusty Collection #8

Struck by a Bullet

Battlefield souvenirs struck by a bullet are evocative artifacts that were treasured by their original owners. While I've handled many over the years, here are three of some interest.

The cartridge box plate from the 1862 Shiloh Battlefield was found along with a number of other belt plates in a cigar box at a country auction outside Elgin, Illinois. I helped my collector friend down there dispose of the buckles but this one became mine. It has been passed around in quite



a few lecture programs over the years.

The oval brass plate with a lead filling was worn on the flap of the leather cartridge pouch and helped to keep the flap down and closed to protect the fragile paper cartridges inside. This one was struck by a one ounce 69 caliber minie ball which went completely through, ruining the cartridge box and quite likely wounding the unfortunate Union volunteer who wore it.



The officer forage cap turned up for sale by an old friend at a small artifact show in New Berlin, Illinois. He reported that it came from a garage sale and the family said it had been picked up on a Civil War battlefield by an unnamed war correspondent ancestor. I looked it over but passed on purchase, then after some sincere regrets called my friend the next week and had him send it to Minnesota.

The cap has an embroidered bugle of an infantry officer on the front, but unfortunately the

small metal regimental number is missing. Caps like this were privately purchased and better quality than the army issue forage cap.

The bullet which ruined the cap probably gave the officer quite a headache, if not worse!

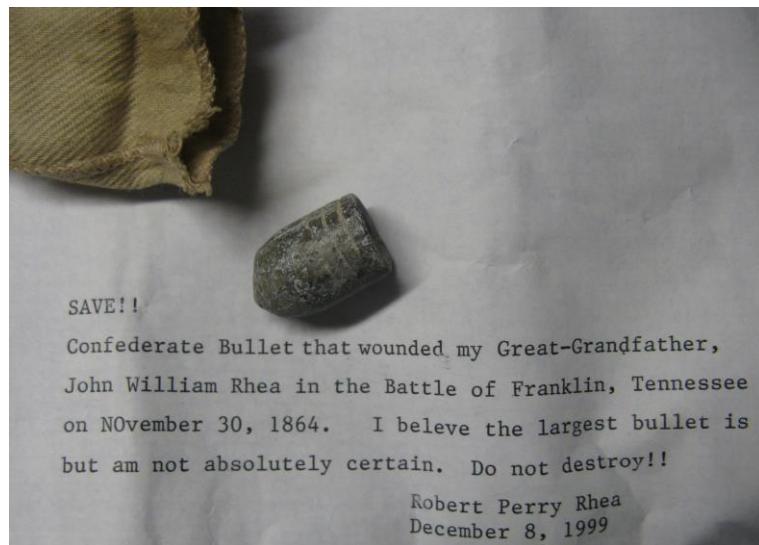
And the third artifact this month is a Confederate bullet that turned a middle-aged draftee and father into an invalid and led to his early death. Late last year I saw "Civil War bullet" listed as part of an upcoming estate sale, and so called the sale manager for more information. He said he was hoping that I would call, and said he had found the bullet in a labeled envelope saved in the estate. Some negotiating moved the envelope and bullet into the collection and prompted this article.

The little artifact turned into quite the research project not yet completed. The National Archives is still not filling orders for pension records so all the research had to be on line. The complete pension file, which will eventually tell me how and where the bullet wounded the soldier, and how it led to his early death awaits the Archives opening for business.



But first, who was this soldier? That proved fairly easy and found on my phone while still at the sale. The National Park Service's "Soldier and Sailor System" is a valuable free resource. You

simply enter the name and then filter for Union or Confederate, branch of service, and state if available. Fortunately, the name Rhea had only a couple of hits, and only one that had fought at Franklin: Private John W. Rhea, Co. A, 64th Ohio Infantry.



back each decade to 1860. John W. Rhea was living in Preble County Ohio and farming. But then a real surprise - when Rhea was drafted in 1864 at age 37 he left a wife and six minor children at home! And he was not the only middle-aged head of a large Ohio household forced to join the army in that last year of the Civil War. Federal manpower needs spared few.

Rhea and the other draftees rendezvoused at Sandusky in late September 1864, then later moved by train to Chattanooga where they joined the ten companies of the 64th Ohio on October 21. Just a month later they marched with the army to Spring Hill Tennessee where they fought a delaying action against Hood's advancing Confederates. Marching back to Franklin before dawn on the 31st of November the 64th Ohio was put in a very lightly fortified line some 600 yards in front of the main Federal works.



There they were overwhelmed by the Confederate attack and retreated as best they could up the slope to the main line. Survivors reported being so out of breath that they could only slowly walk, under fire by equally winded Rebels, as they approached the works. Somewhere near that

line John Rhea was shot and evacuated to a nearby field hospital where the bullet was removed. Those wounded or exhausted well in front of the works were not so lucky; some 54 from Rhea's regiment were reported missing and likely made prisoner.

John Rhea's wound must have been serious. By August 1865 he was receiving an invalid pension, and he died of rheumatic neuralgia just fifteen years later at age 52.

While most pension files are still unavailable, one interesting online resource did turn up. The subscription site *Fold3* now has scanned the full contents of Civil War widow pensions, at least for many of those who actually died during the War. And because they are arranged by regiment and company one can easily peruse details from specific units.

Looking through a few of these for the 64th Ohio Infantry other poignant stories from John Rhea's Company A emerged.

Middle-aged draftee Bateman Hartsock was captured at Franklin and tragically died in Mississippi, still a Confederate prisoner, and just six days after Lee's surrender. He left a widow and five minor children at home. And German born draftee Peter Sorg, mortally wounded at Franklin, left seven children at home, with an eighth born only twenty days after his death. These extensive widow pension files provided good details about John Rhea's short and sad experience in the army.



CONTACT US:

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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