



NEWS

Issue 48: April 2024

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MEMBER PROFILE OF THE MONTH AIDAN RUCH BY LANA BLUMHOEFER



Aidan Ruch is one of our newest and youngest members, having joined the TCCWRT in September of 2023. He attended several lectures on the Civil War at the Minnesota History Center where he discovered our group existed.

Aidan's entire family are history buffs, which he says makes

it easy when planning family vacations. Many summers were spent checking out historical sites and museums. He shared, "The summer after my freshman year of college, my family went on a trip to England. I've always been a big fan of castles and battlefields, so it was fun to walk around those historic sights. One of my favorite places on the trip was visiting the city of York which still has its old walls around it.

It was as a freshman in high school when he read *Killer Angels*. That summer his family visited Gettysburg, and everything clicked for Aidan. Being able to read about the battle and then to physically be there was the first time he realized how real history was. His favorite battlefield is Gettysburg since that is the one that really sparked his interest in the Civil War. He is next interested in visiting Antietam, "especially since so much happened during the battle."



First Minnesota Monument at Gettysburg

Aidan is most interested in the Civil War because it occurred at the same time that major technological and societal changes were happening in America. He added that most of the generals had originally learned entirely different tactics but those became irrelevant due to technological changes. He believes that the Civil War brought about the birth of modern battleships and submarines.

He enjoys the presentations at the TCCWRT since many of them cover areas about the Civil War that he had not yet considered. “There are lots of books about the battles but not as many about other areas such as codebreaking or cowardice.”

Aidan recently has taken up blacksmithing as a hobby but has not considered performing in a living history situation as it would require him to have his own forge and other materials, which he hasn't yet acquired.

STEVEN SCHIER'S CIVIL WAR TRIVIA QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

Four years of intense combat left how many soldiers dead?

(See page 9 for the answer)

OUR 2024 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

April 27th Minnesota Civil War Symposium – Litchfield MN

May 21st “U.S. Colored Troops at War”

Dr. David Wright Falade

THIS MONTH IN CIVIL WAR HISTORY – APRIL

“SPECIAL EDITION HIGHLIGHTING APRIL 1865”

- 1st Battle of Five Forks near Petersburg, Virginia. Union forces capture Lee remaining supply line.
- 2nd Confederate Lieutenant General A.P. Hill is killed near Petersburg , Virginia.
- 2nd Battle of Petersburg ends. Army of Northern Virginia is forced to retreat.
- 2nd Confederate President Davis flees Richmond.
- 2nd Battle of Fort Blakely, Alabama. Last major battle of the Civil War.
- 2nd Battle of Selma, Alabama. Union forces break Confederate defense to capture city.
- 3rd Union troops occupy the Confederate capital of Richmond.

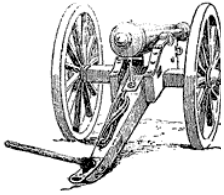
- 3rd Battle of Namozine Church , Virginia
- 4th Army of Northern Virginia arrives at Amelia Courthouse, Virginia
- 5th Battle of Amelia Springs, Virginia
- 6th Battles of High Bridge and Sayler's Creek both near Farmville, Virginia
- 7th Battles of Farmville, Virginia
- 9th Robert E. Lee surrenders the Army of Northern Virginia to U. S. Grant's Union forces at Appomattox Court House.
- 10th General Lee issues General Order #9 , His last of the war.
- 11th Battle of Mobile, Alabama
- 12th Mobile, Alabama surrenders.
- 13th Raleigh, North Carolina captured by Union troops.
- 14th Actor John Wilkes Booth assassinates President Lincoln at Ford's theater.
- 15th President Lincoln dies at the age of 56.
- 16th Columbus and West Point, Georgia are captured by Union forces.
- 17th Federal authorities arrest Mary Surratt in association with Lincoln's assassination.
- 26th General Joseph Johnston surrenders the remains of his army to William T. Sherman at Durham Station, North Carolina
- 26th Lincoln's assassin John Wilkes Booth is fatally shot by Sergeant Boston Corbett, 16th New York Cavalry.
- 27th The steamboat Sultana explodes and sinks in the Mississippi River.

TCCWRT MEMBERS WITH APRIL BIRTHDAYS

4/2 Steve Cook
 4/7 Keith Robideau
 4/9 Tom Smith
 4/10 Ron McDaniel
 4/10 Barb Rivers
 4/12 Bob Wicklem
 4/13 Ken Rowe
 4/16 Bruce Cooper
 4/18 Nancy Johnson

4/19 Jeffrey Smith
4/25 Louise Dowling

ANNUAL CIVIL WAR SYMPOSIUM



Annual Civil War Symposium
Saturday, April 27, 2024, 9:00 A.M.

Litchfield Opera House

Sponsored by the Rochester, Cannon Valley, Central Minnesota, Hiawatha Valley, Minnesota Valley, Albert Lea, Litchfield G.A.R., and Twin Cities Civil War Round Tables.

Perspectives on What This Cruel War Was Over

8:30 a.m. ***Registration***

9:00 a.m. ***Welcome, Introductions and Announcements***, Tom Hutchinson

9:10 a.m. ***What This Cruel War was Over, the View from the Common Soldier***, Dr. Chandra Manning

10:10 a.m. ***Minnesota Civil War Round Tables Brief Introductions***

10:15 a.m. ***Break*** (Browse books & memorabilia for sale AND Silent Auction.)

10:30 a.m. ***Slavery, Free Speech, the Media and the Road to Civil War***, Dr. Stefan Lund

11:30 a.m. ***Introduction to the G.A.R. and Historic Litchfield Hall***, Danelle Erickson, Director, Museum & G.A.R. Hall

Noon ***Lunch Break***

1:15 p.m. ***Civil War Contraband Camps, Emancipation as a Refugee Crisis***, Dr. Chandra Manning

2:15 p.m. ***Slavery vs. States Rights: The Seceding States' Rationale for Disunion***, Dr. Stefan Lund

3:15 p.m. **Closing Announcements**

The **Litchfield Opera House**, 136 N Marshall Ave. and **G.A.R. Hall & Meeker County Museum**, 308 N Marshall Ave., Litchfield, MN 55355 are located in downtown Litchfield, near the town square. See the “More Information” tab for directions/map/etc.

Registration: \$20 per person. No charge to Students with I.D.

Buffet Lunch (must book in advance): Extended to April 14th.

Motor Coach Transportation from the Twin Cities: Extended to April 14th.

To Register: By Zelle or PayPal at **tccwrt.com** or by check payable to TCCWRT with form below to:

Civil War Symposium, 5540 Sanibel Dr., Minnetonka, MN 55343

[Return portion below:

=====]

2024 Civil War Symposium, Litchfield Opera House

Registration Form – pre-registration required to guarantee admission.

Registration for Motor Coach seats is extended to April 14th.

Name(s): _____ Email:

_____ Phone: _____

____ Registration(s) @ \$20 ____ Student registration(s) @ \$0 _____

Meal(s) @ \$15 _____ Motor Coach @ \$10 _____

Total Enclosed: \$ _____ If you are a Round Table, please list your RT here:

From the Dusty Collection #38 *A Few Cavalry Carbines*

Over the years I've owned and examined a wide variety of Civil War carbines, but three managed to stay put in the collection. Those three are good examples of the development progression of this short rifle developed for horse mounted soldiers.

The first breechloading carbine, and first percussion ignition arm used by the US military was the Hall. The flintlock Hall infantry rifle introduced in 1819 was manufactured at an island factory outside Harpers Ferry, Virginia. While the regulars never used it, many militia men did. Some Hall rifles (converted to percussion) were used early in the Civil War and the Confederates even converted a few *back* to muzzle loaders!

The Hall featured a tip up breechblock activated by a push down side lever. A paper cartridge with round ball was pushed into the chamber, the breech block pressed down with the thumb, and a copper percussion cap then placed on the nipple under the hammer. With only a rudimentary seal between breechblock and barrel, the Hall's escaping gasses produced an impressive ring of fire in front of the shooter's face. Like most carbines, the Hall had a sliding ring on the left side to which was fastened a shoulder belt mounted swivel snap hook.



The cavalryman carried the carbine along his right side with the muzzle held downward in a small leather "thimble" or socket attached to his saddle's quarter strap. The shoulder belt prevented loss of the carbine. When the Regiment of US Dragoons was established in 1832 for frontier service, a new percussion Hall carbine was issued to them. It went through several improvements over the next decade and most surviving specimens saw much hard service. The Model of 1843 was the culmination of the series and was manufactured in quantity. Many saw service in the Mexican War but others were left unissued in government warehouses. The Civil War produced unprecedented demand for cavalry carbines. General John C. Fremont scrambled to arm his midwestern mounted troops. A small group of investors (J. P. Morgan among them) bought



5,000 obsolete M1843 Hall carbines at \$3.50, paid 75 cents to have each one rifled, and then sold them back to the government at \$22 each.

This rifled M1843 Hall was part of that scandal but caught my eye because of initials scratched in the stock. There is a large "B" and then a smaller "FHV."



unusual on Civil War arms because soldiers wanted to keep track of their own weapons. But that last letter "V" was intriguing. How many midwestern cavalymen might share those initials? In fact, only ONE did: Francis H. Vanderhoff of Company B, Second Illinois Volunteer Cavalry. The Second Illinois was mustered in August 1861. Vanderhoff was one of the veterans who reenlisted and rode to the end of the

war. By the fall of 1862 most Hall carbines were long out of the regiment, replaced with more modern Sharps. But this Hall, in the hands of Trooper Vanderhoff, had certainly fought at Fort Donelson, Shiloh and perhaps Iuka. Vanderhoff himself survived the war, received an 1882 invalid pension, and died in Idaho in 1924.

The Sharps was the most widely used Civil War cavalry carbine. Developed in the early 1850s it also went through several variations. John Brown's men were armed with so called Beecher's Bibles, actually Sharps carbines shipped to them in book crates. Eventually some 90,000 Sharps carbines were in Federal service. The iron mounted Model 1859 shown at the bottom had a patch box in the stock, while the mid-war simplified Model 1863 did not. Sharps



carbines converted to metallic cartridge continued to serve the cavalry until the early 1870s. The Confederacy even produced a clone with fewer parts, a plain block sight, and brass barrel band, shown here above the standard Federal version. The M1859 Sharps shown also has soldier initials on the stock, but "W.W." lead to over 20 possibilities among Illinois cavalymen alone.

The Sharps was a single shot, .52 caliber weapon that loaded a varnished linen or paper cartridge into the chamber when the breechblock was hinged down by the combination trigger guard and lever. The gas leakage problem was mostly solved by a patented insert with cone shaped cavity in the breechblock that was forced against the breech when the gun fired. While still percussion ignition, it had an interesting feature of a spring activated pellet primer system that popped a small wafer of mercury fulminate over the nipple just as the hammer fell. Far too

quirky for a cavalryman in the field, the pellet primers soon gave way to standard percussion caps. Cavalrymen with Sharps carbines could fire 5 or 6 aimed shots a minute unlike the infantryman's muzzleloading rifle musket that could only manage a couple of shots.

My first Sharps was a \$25 purchase from a family friend whose physician father had taken it in lieu of a medical bill many decades earlier. It was rough, but still worked well enough to take out plinking a few times in my high school years.

By the middle of the Civil War the effectiveness of repeating arms was obvious.

Chief of Ordnance General James Ripley opposed repeaters and is often faulted for being old fashioned. In fact, it was transportation of ammunition that partially fueled his caution. Fast firing weapons required more cartridges, and animal drawn wagons moving over frequently



muddy roads were not dependable. As Ripley retired in 1863 the new Spencer carbine was being enthusiastically received by Union cavalrymen. The Spencer was a seven shot repeater that fed rim fire (like a .22) copper cartridges forward through a magazine in the butt stock. The trigger guard/lever was lowered to cycle in a new cartridge while ejecting the previous fired cartridge case. The hammer still needed to be cocked each time, but the speed of firing and reloading was well above that of single shot breechloaders.

As a teenager I wanted a Spencer in the worse way, and so saved dimes in a small bank. When I had saved \$50, I talked the folks into driving me to the Peoria Illinois gun show, and there I finally found my Spencer on a table – but priced at \$75. I must have visited the dealer's table a half dozen times trying to talk him down but with no success. Near the end of the day, he saw me walking over and started shaking



his head. His exact words before I could even open my mouth were: “Kid, give me your fifty dollars, take the gun, and **leave me the h..ll alone!**” I was startled but thrilled, and always wanted to find that dealer in later years to thank him for his kindness to an obnoxiously persistent young collector.

That Spencer bore a serial number that I later discovered corresponded to a batch issued to the 6th Illinois Cavalry. While there is no way to know who carried the piece, it certainly saw service with the 6th in chasing Nathan Bedford Forrest through Mississippi and later at the Battle of Nashville. The National Archives holds hundreds of Civil War regimental record books, and some of those record the serial numbers of carbines and revolvers for which a company commander was responsible. In a few rare cases the individual soldier who was issued the arm is also listed, and this can double or triple an old gun’s value. My great great grandfather was given a 16 shot Henry repeating rifle, number 7774, in 1865 as a member of the Veteran Volunteers. Those elite men known as Hancock’s Veterans Corp were allowed to keep their weapons when mustered out. Grandpa’s Henry may still be out there somewhere....

Civil War carbines have always been popular to shoot with home cast lead bullets, paper cartridge cases, and percussion caps. They are fairly accurate and have only moderate recoil. But they can be a bear to clean with messy black powder residue in all the various recesses of the mechanism. But the Spencer was long a problem to shoot since the big rimfire cartridges were last made in 1926 and today cost around \$20 each. In recent years a number of carbines have been replicated for reenactors and competitive shooter: the Sharps, the Smith, the Gallagher, the Starr and probably others. Finally, it was the Spencer’s turn, although it is now chambered for a reloadable brass center fire cartridge. It is great fun to shoot a magazine full of those big 52 caliber cartridges, although there is the constant worry that this *large caliber Civil War assault rifle* might fall afoul of future loosely worded gun control laws!



STEVEN SCHIER’S TRIVIA QUESTION ANSWER:

620,000 to 750,000.

HELP WANTED

SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR: We're looking for someone to take over the picnic planning and other fun stuff.

Contact Carol at info@tccwrt.com for more information!



SAVE THE DATE!

TCCWRT 4th ANNUAL PICNIC

Tuesday, July 16, 2024
4:00 to 7:00 p.m.
Wabun B, Minnehaha Park
Details to Follow

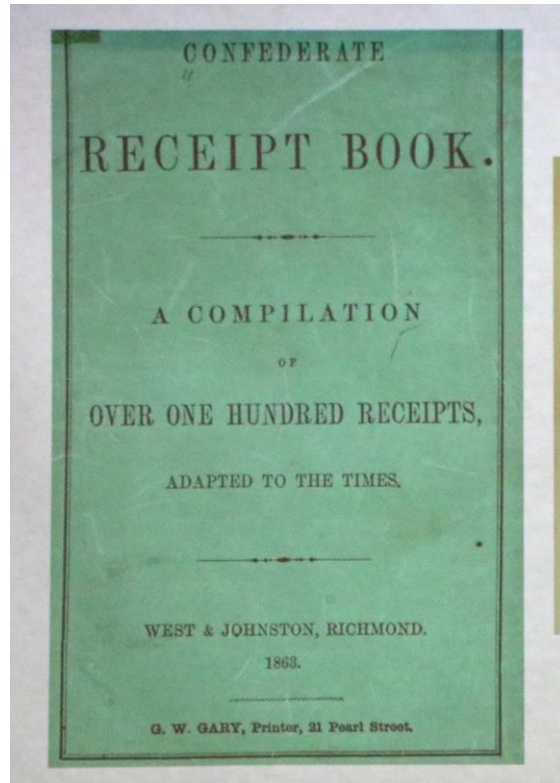
CHECKOUT THIS SYMPOSIUM ARTICLE FROM THE LITCHFIELD PAPER:

“Civil War Symposium is headed to Litchfield”

Link to the article:

https://www.crowrivermedia.com/independentreview/news/local/civil-war-symposium-is-headed-to-litchfield/article_e789e24e-dc9f-11ee-a261-877668316588.html

HERE'S A LOOK BACK AT MARCH'S PRESENTATION:



Photos by Dave Greener

Link to the presentation:

<https://youtu.be/Zo3GvuaXGts>

CONTACT US:

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table

info@tccwrt.com

<https://tccwrt.com/>

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: earlofbuce@hotmail.com