

Save 29 Acres of Williamsburg Battlefield!

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[illegible]

This land is zoned for commercial development and valued at over \$2.7 million dollars. Thanks to a \$220-to-\$1 matching grant, only \$12,500 is needed to preserve this pristine battlefield land. To help protect these critical acres, donate at [Save the Williamsburg Battlefield](#).

Edwin Brown- 1st Mass Vol Infantry

Education & Preservation

“They Talk - I Listen”



*Following is an edited and abridged excerpt from a Feb. 2, 2020 post of the same title on the blog **I Like To Write Junk** reprinted by permission of the author, Michael Hankins.*

I’ve been an antique *aficionado* going way back. Mom said as a child I drove her and my grandparents crazy asking questions about this and that. I wanted to know anything and everything there was to know about “old things”. I believe all surviving relics have a story to tell. Vintage long arms and pistols talk to me the most. I don’t mean they speak in a vocal fashion. It’s more of a sensual, braille like dialogue. For the most part, all antiques have something to say. You just have to take time and listen.

“Each time I handle this artifact, I sense an aura of death.”

Perhaps the one item I stumbled across that speaks to me loudest is an 1861 Springfield Civil War musket. Spotting it in an antique shop, I traded a pristine condition Model 1816 Springfield musket for the treasure. This pristine musket evidently spent its early years in some government arsenal never seeing action. Because of this pampered life, it didn’t have anything exciting to say. The 1861 Springfield incurred a much harsher life. It was excavated at the site of The Battle of Williamsburg in Virginia. An old, handwritten tag attached with yellowed string reads as follows:

This “Civil War Musket” was unearthed in 1872 – 10 years after the battle at Williamsburg, VA. The bayonet is rusted solid to the barrel and it can be noted that shrapnel tore into it and the hammer and lock plate.

[It is] an imposing weapon at 74” long with bayonet. Several



Photos by Michael Hankins

times I’ve looked down the barrel using a bore scope. It appears a mini ball is still wedged inside. Note the indentation in [the] metal barrel just under the USA flag to the left. It took a terrific explosion to leave that mark in hardened steel. I believe the soldier most likely was on the move, charging forward with gun to hip. The only way shrapnel could’ve struck the barrel in that location was if the Springfield was perpendicular to the soldier’s body. If that [was] the case, he too would’ve [suffered] serious wounds from the explosion. Each time I handle this artifact, I sense an aura of death. It’s easy to visualize the broken weapon lying on blood stained ground with the unfortunate infantryman nearby along with others, Confederate and Union.

My relic once belonged to famous artist Otto Walter Beck. [He was an American artist who painted a series of portraits] of surviving war veterans. Walter Beck’s excavated Springfield, along with tintype and daguerreotype photos procured from war survivors, were part of his Washington D.C. Civil War display during the early 1900’s. Some of Beck’s military paintings still reside within the Smithsonian.