

Confederate Roll of Honor



The Civil War, horrific as it was, was also home to incredible feats of bravery and heroism. So much so that, in 1861, the United States created the Medal of Honor, which remains the highest award the nation can bestow for members of the armed forces who distinguish themselves through acts of valor.

Lesser known, in 1862, the Confederate States of America also planned their own Medal of Honor but due to difficulties in procuring them, instead instituted a Roll of Honor to commemorate their soldiers. After a battle, men in each company would nominate who they thought would be worthy of inclusion and voted to select who would receive the honor. The names would then be included in battle reports, read aloud to the regiments and published in Confederate newspapers. Bestowing an honor by a vote of common soldiers was virtually unprecedented.

After the battle of Gettysburg, the name of Chelsey Alderman, the brother-in-law of my 2nd great grand-aunt, was added to the Roll of Honor. A member of Toombs' Guards of the 9th Georgia Infantry, he was wounded in the finger on the first day of the Gettysburg Battle. Unable to load and fire his weapon, he then volunteered to drive the ambulance wagon. He would have been very busy for on the 2nd day of fighting, his regiment lost 56% of its men. It is unknown how many men were saved due to his actions.

On the third day, Chelsey was shot in the leg and captured by

Union soldiers. He was taken to a field hospital where a northern doctor amputated his leg. He died two weeks later from his injury. His burial site remains unknown. Three months later, his fellow soldiers selected him to be included to the Roll of Honor... not for his fighting prowess but for his life-saving efforts. He was 23 years old.

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