

CAPT. MARMADUKE NORFLEET COX

NASHVILLE: Laid to rest and long forgotten in an unmarked grave, a Nashville veteran finally received the headstone and military honors he was due.



Capt. Marmaduke Norfleet Cox was a prosperous, 35-year-old attorney from Nashville who abandoned his practice to enlist in the 20th Confederate Infantry almost a century and a half ago.

He died a prisoner of war, far from home and friends; his body shipped back for a hasty, no-frills interment. Like countless others who fell during the Civil War there was no headstone, no military funeral, nothing to commemorate his life or his sacrifice.

But this grave, at least, is unmarked no longer. A smooth marble headstone, courtesy of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, marks his resting place in the **Cox family burial plot in Mt. Olivet Cemetery.**

More than 100 people turned out on Sunday, the 145th anniversary of his death, to watch costumed re-enactors eulogize M.N. Cox, and by proxy, thousands of other young soldiers who still rest in unmarked graves.

"We honor the life of an American soldier, a brother," said Paul White, camp commander of the Gen. Joseph E. Johnston Camp No. 28 of the Nashville-based Sons of Confederate Veterans. "He was buried under cover of darkness, without fanfare, without honor."

A dozen members of the camp, dressed in Confederate uniforms, fired musket volleys over his grave, while women stood by in black mourning gowns and children scattered rose petals over the fresh headstone.

"We give them the honor they deserve," said Virginia Watson, honorary state president of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. "It's just a way to honor their service and to honor them."

At a time when there have been public efforts in Tennessee to strip the names of Confederate generals from buildings and move Confederate memorials to less public sites, members of these groups took a deep satisfaction in erecting a new memorial.

Some people want the Confederate memorials "out of view and out of the consciousness of the public" White said. "They would alter the history of America to fit into their view of what is politically correct."

For Sunday's service, the headstone was a chance to memorialize what chaplain Paul Duty called the Confederacy's "pure history of virtue, honor and sacrifice."

But it was also a chance to celebrate the relatively short life of one Marmaduke Norfleet Cox. Duty read the eulogy one of Cox's fellow prisoners had written for him after his death in an Ohio prisoner of war camp.

Cox's eulogy read

"Home again! Yes, home again, bear me to my native home and lay me beneath the shades of my own Mount Olive," began Lt. W.H. Tindall's eulogy for his friend. The Cox his friends knew had a frank, open smile and was known for his cordial treatment of everyone he met, "rich and lowly" alike.

He was one of Morgan's Raiders, an elite guerrilla strike force under Gen. John Hunt Morgan, who led a series of raids into Union territory.

In 1863, Morgan led his cavalry into Ohio where the outnumbered raiders were surrounded and captured in the northern-most engagement of the Civil War.

Cox was sent to Johnson's Island, a prisoner of war camp on Lake Erie. He died four months into his captivity, on March 8, 1864. His body was shipped home to be buried in relative anonymity. The anonymity lasted more than a century, until local historian Jan Cain arrived on the scene.

Cain was investigating the history of the Nashville enclave of Una — land that included the former Cox family estates. Intrigued by the mystery of what had happened to M.N. Cox, the son lost during the war, she visited the family plot with a hand-drawn map and was startled to learn he had been here in Nashville all along.

Looking at the grass that covered his grave, she decided, "It didn't seem like enough for a man who fought for his country."

"After that, one thing led to another and here we are today, to finally do the right thing for Capt. Marmaduke Norfleet Cox."

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