

American Battlefield Trust "Twilight Tour" Raymond Battlefield

Friends of Raymond (FOR) conducted its second Twilight Tour of the Raymond battlefield on Friday, July 30, 2021, as part of the American Battlefield Trust's initiative to get its members back out and into the fields. The lectures and walk began at 6:30 pm despite an "excessive heat warning," and of course there was plenty of cold water and Gatorade on hand, along with a cooler full of wet, ice-cold, facecloths to cool the participants down.

Parker Hills, a retired Army brigadier general, led the tour, which included an artillery exercise, followed by a hike through the cotton fields which featured white and pink flowers in full bloom. The battle actions were discussed, and red helium balloons on 50 foot strings were tethered to markers that were too distant for the allotted walking time. The balloons served the purpose well as reference points.

Because of high interest and excellent questions poised during the earlier Twilight Tour of July 2, the archaeological aspects of battlefield interpretation were expanded for this tour. The resulting number and quality of questions proved the validity of this concept, such as, "How deep were most of the artifacts found?" The answer was just over three inches, and that was because the dead leaves and grass in this part of the country form about one inch of soil every 50 years, and of course the battle was fought just over 150 years ago.

One of the artifacts, which had been brought out of storage for the tour, told a story that resonated with the group. It was a strangely deformed .58 caliber Minié ball that had been discovered by FOR's archaeological team in January 2012 during its four-year study of the Raymond battlefield. The Minié ball had the unmistakable "cup" marking on the nose caused when a .58 caliber Springfield Minié ball was "hard-rammed" by a .577 caliber Enfield ramrod.



In fact, Colonel Hiram B. Granbury of the 7th Texas wrote, "I held the position on the bluff of the creek until the men had exhausted their own ammunition and emptied the cartridge boxes of the dead of the enemy and of our own killed and wounded." This bullet had been taken from a the cartridge box of a downed Federal soldier; hard-rammed into the slightly smaller rifle-musket barrel of a .577 caliber Enfield of a Texas soldier, and fired into the Union line posted along a worm rail fence in the Upper Field.

Yet this bullet looked as though it had been cut in half, perhaps by a modern plow blade. This theory was quickly disproved when the bullet was placed on a scale, showing that it weighed as much as a whole projectile. The smooth, flat areas and associated ridges down the side of the

bullet were eventually interpreted when the burial location of the bullet was reviewed five years later. This bullet was found 180 yards south of what was identified in 2017 as the site of the right cannon of Captain Samuel De Golyer's 8th Battery, Michigan Light Artillery. By placing the flattened side of the bullet to one of the cannon wheels, the clear line of the iron "tire" on the wooden wheel could be seen. The bullet molded to the side of the wheel perfectly, and it is believed that this Federal bullet, probably from an Ohio soldier, was captured by a Texan and fired back at a Michigan artilleryman. It struck the cannon wheel and tumbled for another 180 yards behind the gun.

One of the tour participants, Marshall Bennett, former treasurer of the State of Mississippi and former president of the Mississippi Historical Society, upon hearing this interpretation of a tiny slice of Raymond's colorful history, said to General Hills, "You are either the luckiest man or the most thorough man alive." Indeed, anyone who has had the privilege of studying the Raymond battlefield has to be considered lucky.



The right-most of the six cannon of De Golyer's 8th Michigan Light Artillery. A rail fence, used as scant cover by the soldiers of the 20th Ohio and 20th Illinois infantry regiments, is seen in the background. Archaeological investigation from 2011 to 2015 determined the location of both the fence and the 12-pounder James rifle.

Google Earth view of Raymond's Upper Field, with Fourteenmile Creek in the trees at the top and modern Hwy 18 to the left. The probable trajectory of the deformed Minié is shown in red.

