

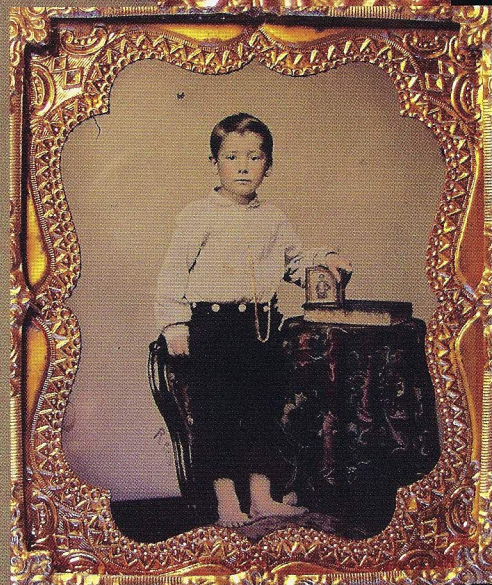
# North South Trader's CIVIL WAR

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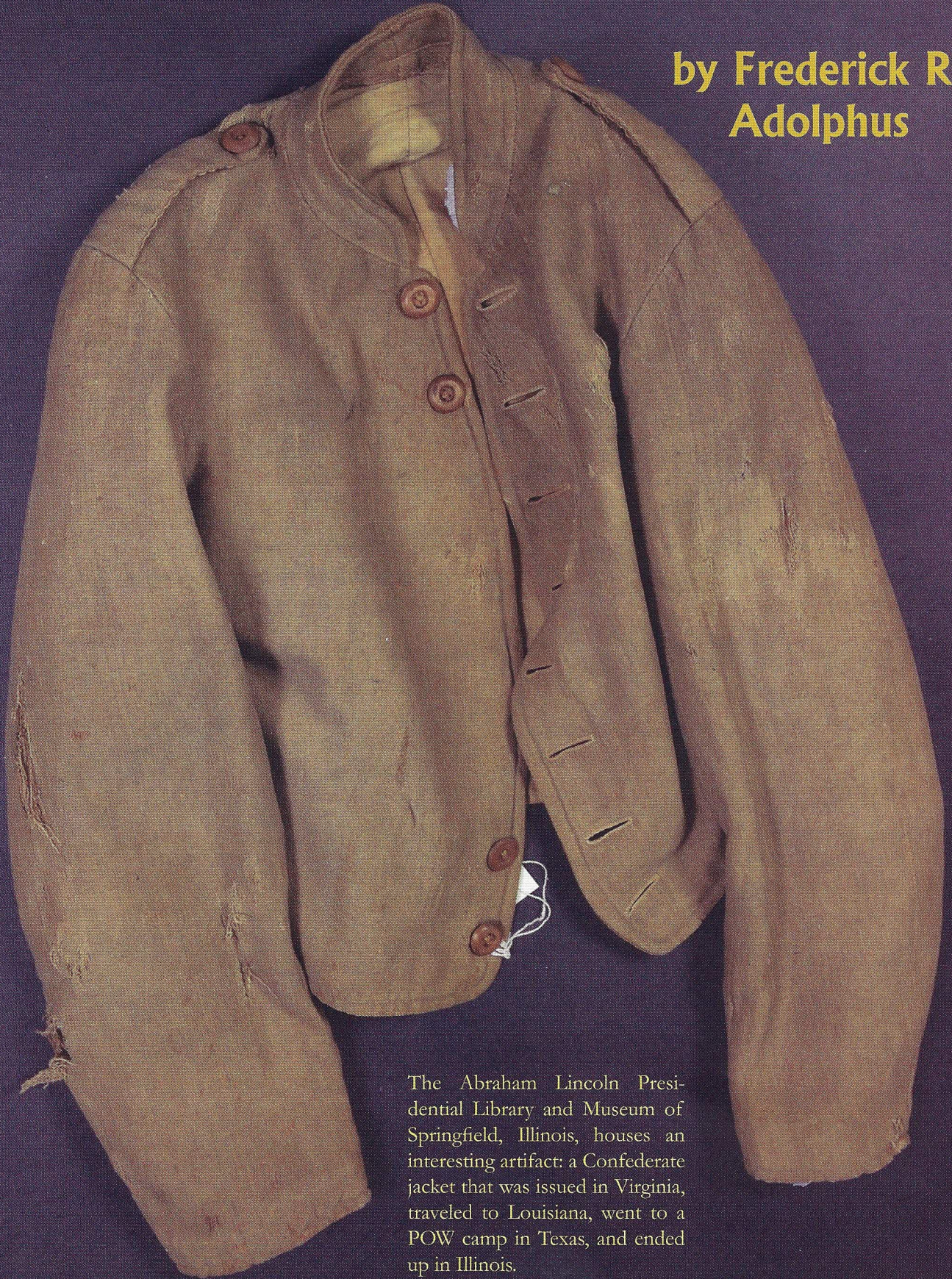
**The lens of  
Richmond's  
C.R. Rees**





# Journey of a Rebel Jacket

by Frederick R.  
Adolphus



The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum of Springfield, Illinois, houses an interesting artifact: a Confederate jacket that was issued in Virginia, traveled to Louisiana, went to a POW camp in Texas, and ended up in Illinois.





*These men were among the Northern officers—in this case from the 19th Iowa Infantry—who were prisoners of war at Tyler, Texas, and were exchanged at New Orleans, where this photograph was taken upon their arrival. Their garb hardly looks like the proud Yankee uniforms they once wore, and one wonders how many Southern threads were in their seams at that point.*

The jacket is a Richmond Depot Type II jacket. It has shoulder straps, eight buttonholes on the front, and wooden buttons. The unbleached white osnaburg lining has an inside left breast pocket. The cotton warp is tan in color, and the woolen weft is gray, giving the jacket an overall tan-nish color.

The wooden buttons are attributed to W.C. Allen's button company in Prattville, Alabama. Such buttons are usually associated with uniforms from the Deep South but have occasionally been noted on Richmond jackets. While the eight-button front of this jacket differs from the usual nine-button front encountered in most Richmond jackets, it is worth noting that some Richmond jackets had differing numbers of buttonholes on the front.

Based on its typology and provenance, employees of the Richmond Depot clothing bureau made and issued the jacket in late 1862 or early 1863. The soldier who received it may have been from Louisiana because its provenance dates to the fall of 1863 in Shreveport. There a Confederate lady gave it to a Union prisoner of war who was in jail following his capture in Arkansas. The prisoner was Capt. Thomas D. Vredenburg of the 10th Illinois Cavalry.

**V**redenburg's regiment had been engaged with Confederate forces in Arkansas from August to October 1863. The 10th Illinois had participated in the capture of Little Rock, and Vredenburg had been promoted from lieutenant to captain on September 14, 1863. He was captured shortly thereafter and temporarily lodged in the

Shreveport jail while en route to the Confederate prisoner of war stockade in Camp Ford at Tyler, Texas.

During this short stay, he acquired the Richmond jacket. Perhaps the jacket's original owner, a soldier in the Army of Northern Virginia, had worn it home and died in Shreveport. The Shreveport lady who gave the jacket to Vredenburg may have been a relative of that soldier; that much remains conjecture.

What is known is that Vredenburg wore the Rebel jacket during his internment at Camp Ford. Upon his exchange, Vredenburg took the jacket back to his hometown of Springfield and saved it as a memento. His descendants donated the jacket to the Lincoln Museum sometime in the 1940s or '50s.

The *Vicksburg Daily Herald* carried a story on July 30, 1864:

Exchange of Prisoners—Arrival in New Orleans —  
About ten o'clock this morning, the steamer Nebraska, which took about one thousand Confederate prisoners to the north of Red river for exchange, on Thursday last, returned with about that number of Union prisoners, from Camp Ford, near Tyler, Texas. The officers numbered about one hundred, the remainder being non-commissioned officers and privates. The exchanged prisoners were mostly those captured at Galveston, Sabine Pass, Brashear City and Morganza, only about one hundred of those captured in the late Red river campaign being among them. Many of the



poor fellows had been in captivity eighteen months, and during this time were unable to procure any clothing except that on their backs. As they marched through the streets yesterday morning, nearly all without shoes, and their clothes torn and worn to rags, they presented a shocking spectacle.

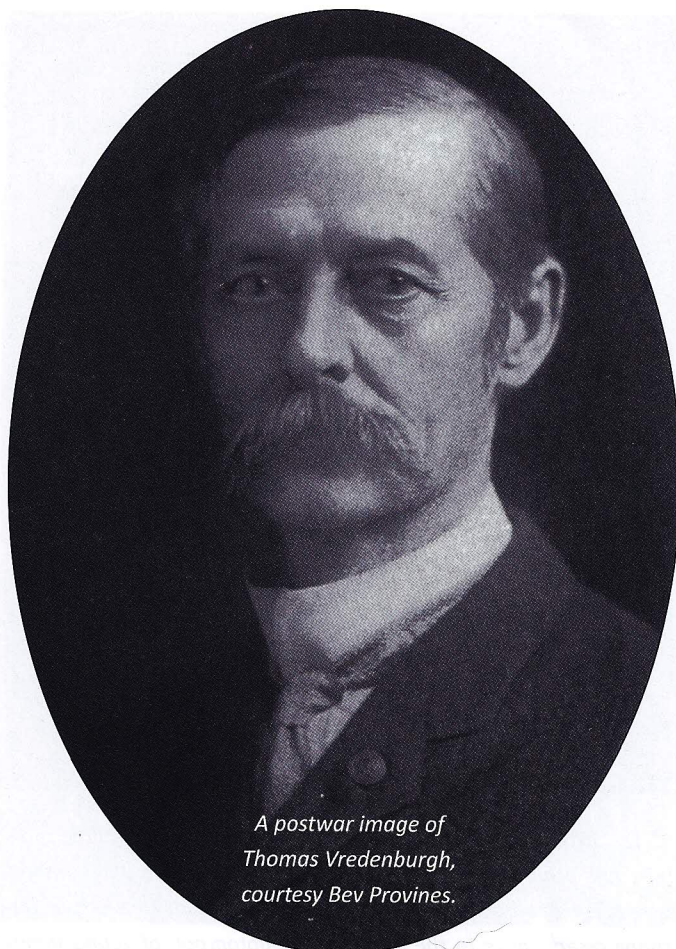
Perhaps the most important part of the news account as regards Vredenburgh is this:

The majority of the poor fellows wore the rebel uniform in lieu of that in which they were captured, and which had been worn out long ago.

**F**ew Confederate jackets have such well-documented provenance as the Vredenburgh jacket—nor one so unusual. The sound care afforded this artifact by the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum has left us with an interesting legacy to ponder today. NSTCW

*The author extends thanks to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum of Springfield, Illinois, for access to the Vredenburgh uniform jacket.*

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*A postwar image of Thomas Vredenburgh, courtesy Bev Provines.*

Nothing is known of the original owner of the uniform nor the kind benefactor who gave it to imprisoned Union officer Thomas Doremus Vredenburgh.

But Vredenburgh's history is easier to trace.

Born in 1841, Vredenburgh was the son of a successful lumberman. Under his father's tutelage, he already knew a bit about commercial enterprise before the war.

He was commissioned on December 30, 1861, as a second lieutenant in Company L, 10th Illinois Cavalry. He rose through the ranks, becoming a captain, then a major on New Year's Eve in 1864, and a lieutenant colonel in October 1865. He was mustered out of service in November 1865 in Texas—the state of his one-time incarceration at Camp Ford, seen in a *Harper's Weekly* sketch at center.

*Portrait & Biographical Album of Sangamon County, Illinois* states:

While in the service our subject took part in many severe and bloody conflicts and he also endured the trials of prison life dur-

ing a period of fourteen months. He was captured at the siege of Vicksburg and learned the peculiarities of different places of captivity until his release in 1864, at which time he was confined

in the county jail at Shreveport, La. In 1864-65 he was Judge Advocate on Gen. West's staff. His record as a soldier was that of a man obedient to every command and brave in battle, while as an officer his bravery was not lessened but shown with greater brilliancy when he led his troops to the battle's front.

His younger brother John also served in the 10th Illinois from 1862 to 1865. He rose to captain and resigned from service in October 1865.

Postwar, Thomas became a banker and grain dealer in Illinois. He married Maria Reynolds, who, interestingly, had been born in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Their son William followed his father into the lumber business.

Maria died in 1901 and Thomas joined her in 1922. They are interred at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield, Illinois.

