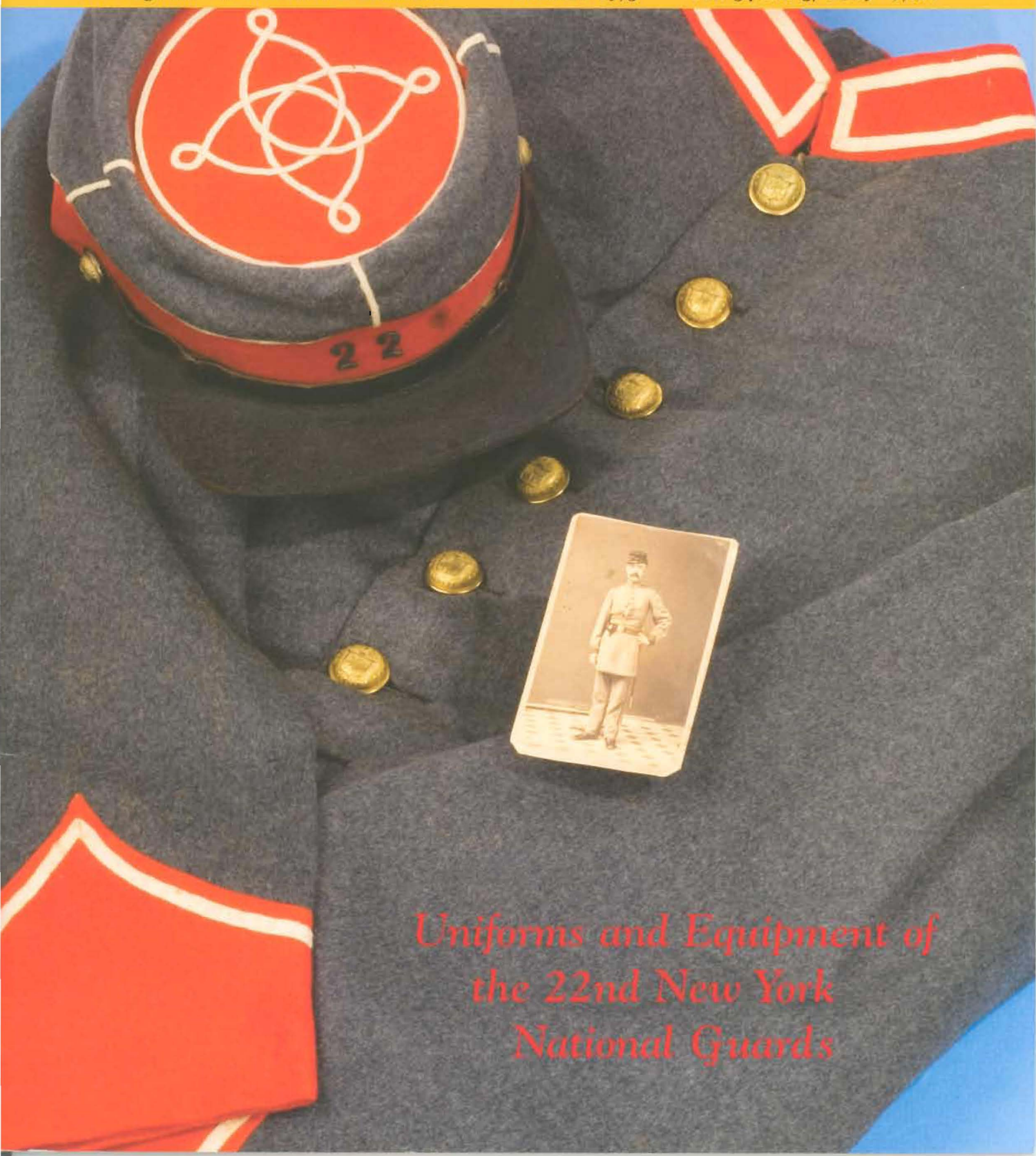


North South Trader's CIVIL WAR

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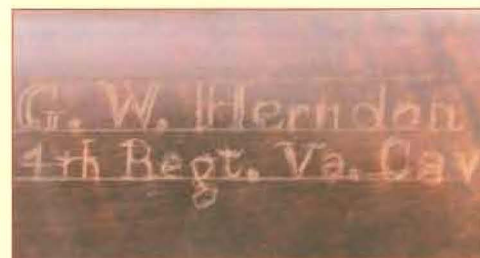
*Uniforms and Equipment of
the 22nd New York
National Guards*

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Photography by Jack W. Melton, Jr.; design by Jack W. Melton, Jr., and Stephen W. Sylvia; artifact courtesy the Jan Gordon Collection. See the cover story by Jan Gordon on p. 34.

Valverde Battery Mementos

Sgt. John
Sterns,
12th Texas
Field Artillery,
CSA

A remarkable collection of Confederate artillery artifacts has recently become known in a private collection in Texas. These are the wartime mementos of Quartermaster Sgt. John Sterns of the famous Valverde Battery, also known as the Val Verde Battery and—officially—the 12th Field Battery, Texas Light Artillery, CSA.

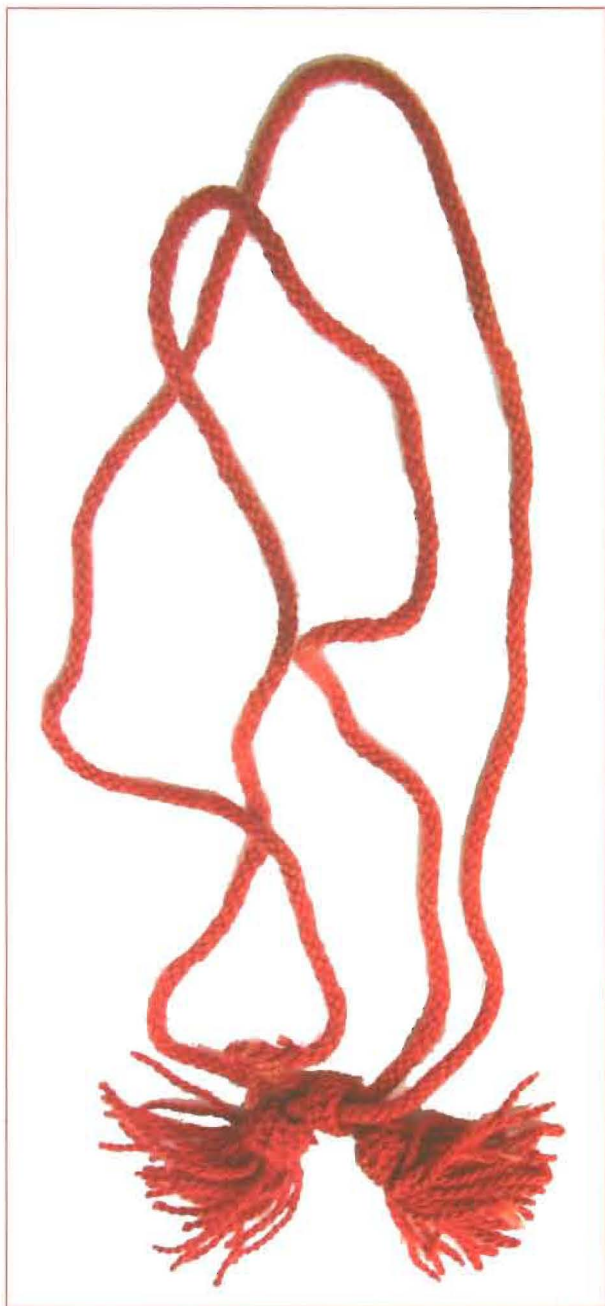
Sterns served as the battery quartermaster sergeant and kept certain battery implements and other items at the war's end. These artifacts remained in Sterns' family until recently, when his great-great-grandson, John Howard, sold the grouping and attested to its provenance.

The Valverde Battery acquired its name during Gen. Henry H. Sibley's New Mexico campaign of 1861 and 1862. At the Battle of Valverde on February 21,



by Frederick R.
Adolphus

At the close of the war, the Valverde Battery's guns were buried to keep them out of the hands of the conquering Northern forces. Above is one of the Valverde Battery's two 3-inch rifles exhumed at the end of Reconstruction. This one is on display at the Freestone County Courthouse in Fairfield, Texas.



Insignia in Sterns' collection include brass crossed-cannon (above) and a red, worsted-wool hat cord with tassels (left). Both of these items were commonly worn on the Union artillery Hardee hat, but would have been correct for use by a Confederate artilleryman as well.

pounder gun was also buried during the retreat, either by the Valverde Battery or by Teel's Battery.

In any case, the Valverde Battery arrived in San Antonio with reduced armaments: one 12-pounder howitzer and one or two 6-pounder guns.

During the course of the war, the battery managed to replace its lost cannon. In the Red River Campaign the battery obtained two 3-inch ordnance rifles, captured from the defeated Federals. The addition of the 3-inch rifles enabled the Valverde Battery to replace its 12-pounder howitzer. The battery utilized the two

1862, the Confederates captured five guns from Capt. Alexander McRae's battery. These included three six-pounder guns and two twelve-pounder howitzers. These five captured Union guns formed the basis for the new "Valverde" Battery.

Shortly thereafter, the battery used these captured guns at the Battle of Glorietta Pass in March. However, during the Confederate retreat following the Battle of Glorietta, the Valverde Battery was compelled to bury at least two of its guns. The gunners buried a six-pounder gun in Socorro and a twelve-pounder howitzer elsewhere along the line of retreat. Another six-



An artilleryman's lanyard.



This fuze setter, marked "US," was the wrench used to set fuze plugs in projectiles. The handle is about 6 1/8" long, and the wrench about 4 3/4" long.

new rifles for the rest of its service and fired its last shots in action at Mansura in the spring of 1865. It then returned to Texas and disbanded.

At the end of the war, the battery reported having four guns, as indicated in a report given to Federal authorities on June 1, 1865. The report stated that the 12th Texas Field Battery ended the war under the command of Capt. T.D. Nettles, part of Maj. O.J. Semmes' 1st Battalion Field Artillery (Horse). The battery's cannon

The implements shown on this page are all from Sterns' collection and are all Union, probably captured at the Battle of Valverde.

Below right, iron tow hook measuring 15" long and consisting of a handle with a hook on one end and a hammer on the other. It was used to pry open ammunition boxes, hammer sabot straps in place, and pull the gun.



Gunner's gimlet marked with a "US" and anchor, and measuring 12 1/2" long. It was used to bore out obstructions in the vent.

Shot gauge marked "US," used to test the diameter of a six-pounder cannonball.

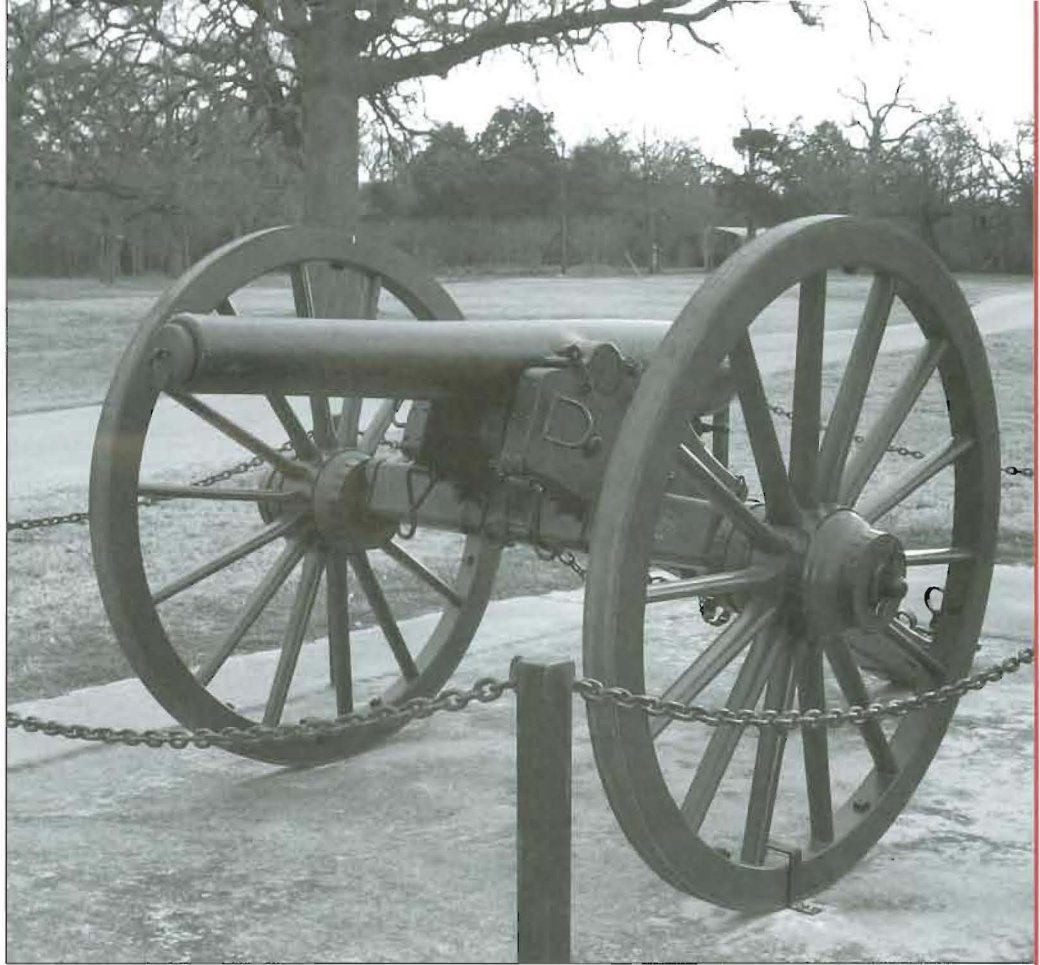


Right, the gun at the the Confederate Reunion Grounds outside Mexia, Texas. Used to summon attendees to the various activities at reunions, it was fired by Confederate veterans for many years after the war.

included two 3-inch ordnance rifles and two 6-pounder guns.

After the surrender, the battery took its cannon back to the vicinity of Fairfield in east Texas. There Capt. Nettles buried the battery's guns under a buggy house rather than turn the cherished cannon over to occupying Union troops. The cannon remained there until the 1884 election of Democrat Grover Cleveland as president, which helped convince Texans that Reconstruction was truly over. At that time, all of the guns were exhumed.

The 6-pounders had deteriorated so badly that they were sold for scrap.

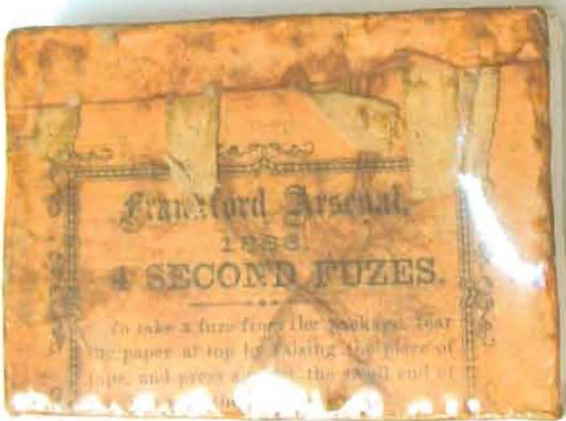


Confederate-made leather tube pouch used to carry friction primers, measuring roughly $4 \frac{3}{4}'' \times 4 \frac{3}{4}''$. Its flap has a tab at the bottom with a buttonhole intended to fasten to a finial that is now missing. The back of the pouch has a single large belt loop with a $2 \frac{3}{8}''$ opening. Six loose friction primers accompanied the collection as well.

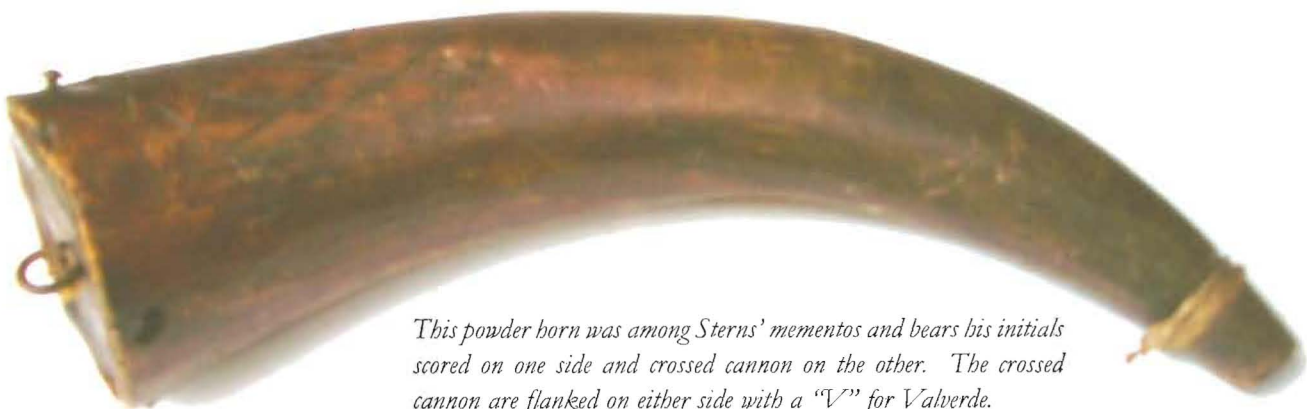




Arsenal-packed fuzes.



Wooden-handled, Confederate-made fuze cutter measuring 3 7/8" long.



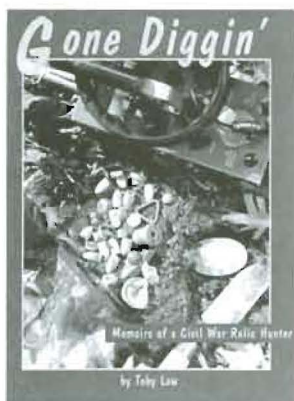
This powder horn was among Sterns' mementos and bears his initials scored on one side and crossed cannon on the other. The crossed cannon are flanked on either side with a "V" for Valverde.

Sterns' personal effects included a hand-forged bowie knife measuring 14 7/8" long overall. The blade has a sharpened clip point and is 10 1/8" long, and the wooden grips are protected by a 4 7/8" crossguard. The piece is very representative of Confederate bowies.



The gunner's haversack is a makeshift item fashioned from a Southern saddlebag. Awl holes on each side of the top of the satchel indicate that a carrying strap, now missing, had been sewn on at one time. The satchel's dimensions in the front are approximately 11 3/8" deep and 13 7/16" across the top. The gusset is marked with awl holes in the shape of a "J" and an "S," apparently for John Sterns. The satchel is fully lined with cotton material.





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The two 3-inch rifles were in fair shape, though, and were cleaned and remounted. One was placed on display at the Freestone County Courthouse in Fairfield, Texas. The other was housed at the Confederate Reunion Grounds outside Mexia, Texas, not far from Fairfield. The gun at Mexia was used to summon attendees to the various activities at reunions, and was fired by Confederate veterans for many years after the war.

Fortunately, the two surviving Valverde guns are still well maintained in Freestone County, Texas. Both guns have been refurbished by conservation specialists and mounted on authentically made, replica carriages. The gun at the Fairfield courthouse has serial number 528, and the gun at the Confederate Reunion Grounds in Mexia has serial number 492. Both guns were cast in 1862 by the Phoenix Iron Works of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania.

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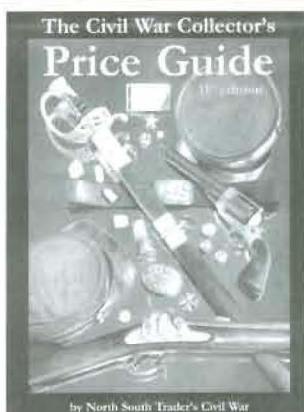
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John Sterns' mementos complement the existing artifacts and history of the Valverde Battery. The items include personal items as well as a selection of artillery implements that were apparently used with one of the 6-pounder guns.

While the Sterns relics have sound provenance to the Valverde Battery, the exact time of their acquisition is uncertain. Sterns could well have taken several of the items at the Valverde, while others may have been acquired later. In any event, Sterns mementos include a fine range of artifacts that serve as a testimony to his faithful service and document the equipment used by Confederate field batteries during the war. **NSTCW**

The author, who is originally from Houston, has been interested in the Civil War since he was a young boy. He has written numerous articles about Confederate uniforms and equipment for Military Collector & Historian and Confederate Veteran. This is a first-time contribution to NSTCW.

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