

A Hunter's Tale ...

by

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I've been hunting in Middle Tennessee for almost 25 years now, but last week I happened across something I had never found before: a cartridge-box bullet spill!

I was hunting a yard near the battle lines in Nashville, and, although the yard had apparently been hunted before, I hoped it might still give up an overlooked bullet or two. After hunting for about 20 minutes and finding nothing at all, I was beginning to think that maybe this yard had indeed been cleaned out, if it had ever held anything. So, I was pleased to finally get a signal that sounded very much like a bullet. And it was: a nice dropped Williams Regulation* three-ringer. I recovered the bullet, filled the hole, stamped it down, and automatically swept my coil back over the hole as I started to step away. Surprise, another signal, much like the first, and another dropped Williams Regulation popped out. This time I stuck my hand probe down into the bottom of the hole before I filled it and yes, got yet another signal for a bullet. Then I knew what I had – a bullet spill. I recovered bullet after bullet, some simply dug out with my fingers from the sides and bottom of the hole. I ended up with 10 Williams Regulation three-ringers, 1 Enfield, and 4 normal three-ringers out of the main hole, with one more Williams Regulation found about 1 1/2 ft. away (which I believe was from the same spill) for a total of 16 bullets. Moreover, it was not a very big hole: about 10 inches in diameter, with bullets found from about 4 to 8 inches in depth. Interestingly, I found a brass cartridge-box finial about 6 ft. from the spill. Is the finial from the spilled cartridge box? It seems almost too coincidental not to be. Confederate or Yankee? The presence of an Enfield in the spill certainly suggests CSA to me, although I guess a Yankee could have had an Enfield in his pouch. Besides, if Yankee, there might have been a cartridge-box plate nearby (and believe me, I really, really looked, just in case☺). Finally, did I find anything else in the yard? Well, a little: one fired Enfield, 3 dropped three-ringers, 2 fired three-ringers, and a curious small brass “latch” (unidentified, but looks period).

**A note on Williams Regulation bullets*

When I began digging around Nashville years ago, I started finding quite a few of these bullets. I carefully matched them to the picture in my newly-purchased McKee & Mason bullet book, and saw that they were called “Pistol Carbine” bullets by M & M. I called them that for several years, but gradually saw other sources calling them “Williams Regulation Pistol Carbine” bullets, “Harpers Ferry” bullets, “Harpers Ferry Pistol Carbine” bullets, and sometimes “Williams Regulation Harpers Ferry Pistol Carbine” bullets, apparently in order to touch all the bases. Confused? So was I. The consensus name these days is simply “Williams Regulation” bullets, which makes a lot of sense. The “Regulation” bullets differ from “normal” 3-ring concavity bullets by having shallow, square grooves, flattened ridges, and a distinctly flat-cap nose (see picture below).



Left: "Normal" 3-ringer from the bullet spill
Center: Williams Regulation from the bullet spill
Right: Williams Cleaner (*not* from the bullet spill)

In short, the main part of the body (not the base of course) looks like the body of a "Williams Cleaner" bullet. There is a good reason for that. Both the "Regulation" and the "Cleaner" bullets were designed and manufactured by the same man: old Elijah Williams of Philadelphia. Why they were ever called "Pistol Carbine" bullets is something of a mystery, as they were never designed for use in anything but a .58 rifle musket. Finally, although the Williams Regulation was a USA manufactured bullet, we all know of the wide use by Confederates of captured Yankee armaments, especially late in the war. This may be why I found them together with an Enfield in the spill.