

CONSERVATION REPORT
Battle Flag of the
7th Texas Infantry



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Flag:

This rectangular Southern Cross Confederate Battle Flag is in the pattern of the Army of Tennessee, measuring 49" on the hoist by 66" on the fly. It is a double-sided, single piece flag sporting 15 single-applique cut-out stars on each side. The unit designation "7th Txs" is applied with sewn polished cotton on both sides. The battle honors are applied on the obverse side only, including Ft. Donelson, Ramon [sic], Chickamauga, Tunnel Hill and Ringgold Gap (see below for further details).

Provenance:

The flag was retained by Capt. Charles Hartung, 24th Wisconsin Infantry of Green Bay, WI. Anecdotal evidence places its capture at the Battle of Franklin, the only place the 24th and the 7th Texas are known to have faced each other.

The flag was on display for several years at the Carter House visitor center in Franklin, TN.

Fabrics/Threads/Construction:

The **red** ground is a wool/cotton 2:1 twill blend at 88 red wool Z-twist single-ply weft yarns to the inch and 96 tan cotton single-ply Z-twist warp yarns to the inch.

The 6 1/2" wide **blue** saltire is a plain woven wool/cotton blend 80 warps and 88 wefts to the inch.

The **white** stars are plain woven cotton gauze 64 warp/64 weft to the inch. On the obverse the stars are 6 1/2" across and the saltire and ground are cut out on the reverse, revealing stars that are 5" across.

The fine linen hoist (on the reverse side only) is plain woven and 80 warp/80 weft to the inch.

The red ground has a loom width of 37", the bottom of the flag being a selvage edge and the top edge of this loom width is the seam just below the honor "Tunnel Hill." Another piece of fabric 12" wide was sewn to the

top of the first to extend the width to 49" using a tan 3S cotton thread. The top edge of the flag is the selvage edge of this extension piece.

After joining the ground pieces, the blue saltire was face-sewn to the ground, one arm at a time. Nine different pieces of blue fabric scraps were used to compile the complete cross. The first arm was sewn with a treadle machine using white 3S cotton thread. *This is the only machine sewing found on the entire flag.* Apparently the machine failed, and the second arm was sewn over the first by hand with brown 3S linen thread.

After the cross was applied, the 15 gauze stars were hand sewn on the obverse side with folded finished edges using 3S white cotton thread. The flag was then flipped and the ground and cross were cut out from the reverse inside the stitching of the stars. The cut edges of the ground and cross were folded and sewn with brown 3S linen, thus revealing the stars on the reverse side.

A fine linen strip 3/4" wide was sewn to the reverse hoist end only, for added support, and three hand sewn grommets were added to the hoist corners and center. Three rawhide ties remain in the grommets.

The unit designation "7th Txs" was applied with polished cotton numbers and letters, sewn using 2S silk thread. It is applied to the obverse top quadrant and the reverse hoist and fly quadrants. The Battle Honor "Ft. Donelson" is also applied in the same manner and materials to the lower quadrant, and apparently at the same time as the unit designation.

The Honors "Ramond" and "Chickamauga" were first painted on canvas cloth strips using red (now brown) and black paint. The strips were sewn to the hoist and fly quadrants with 3S linen thread.

The Honors "Tunnel Hill" and "Ringgold Gap" were applied to the upper and lower quadrants with white paint. A crossed-cannons emblem was painted in the lower quadrant with black paint.

Condition:

The flag remains in overall very good condition with no issues regarding age, deterioration of fibers, poor storage or poor treatment. Extensive blood stains remain along the reverse hoist edge, the obverse and reverse saltire in the hoist quadrant, and several stars nearer the hoist. The blood has caused degradation of the cotton gauze of several stars.

The fly quadrant is worn and tattered with several small tears and one large tear running the full width of the flag. The fibers of the fly quadrant are

worn and faded commensurate with considerable use/flapping of the flag. The extreme fly edge stars and cross suffer some loss from this wear.

A number of projectile holes are scattered about the flag. Some paint loss of the honors is noted, especially that on the sewn cloth (Ramond, Chickamauga).

Previous Treatments:

No previous treatments are noted.

Observations:

The fabric of the red ground is a unique and crude fabric of domestic manufacture, likely in the 1850's. Its 2:1 twill weave of tan and red give it an overall orange hue, and I thus refer to it as Orange Bunting. I have noted this bunting only on flags of the Western Theater. The flag of the 50th TN (TN State Museum) is not only made from this bunting, but is identical to this flag in every way, including the 15 see-through stars and blue saltire only on the obverse side, same dimensions and construction techniques. Without doubt the flags of the 50th TN and 7th TX were made by the same hands. Both units were in Gregg's Brigade, and other units of the brigade perhaps received the same flags in the Vicksburg campaign. Other units of Gregg's Brigade that possibly received these flags include the 3rd, 10th, 30th and 41st TN Regiments, though as yet, *no* flags from these units have turned up.

Other flags I have noted made of the same Orange Bunting include the 42nd GA (Fowler Guards, private), the Cypress Guards (Texas Civil War Museum), and WD 468 (Museum of the Confederacy Collection, Macon, GA capture).

It should be noted that the 42nd GA flag is also a 15 star flag, though there is no known connection to Gregg's Brigade. This flag was captured at Champion Hill in the Vicksburg Campaign, and so was in the same region at the same time. Fifteen star flags are quite scarce, and also seem restricted to the Western Theater.

The blue fabric used in the Gregg's Brigade flags was evidently scarce to the maker, as both the 7th TX and 50th TN saltires were pieced from scraps (9 pieces and 11 pieces, respectively), and neither has the

blue cross on the reverse side (though the 15 stars show through on the reverse).

The extensive blood stains found on the 7th TX flag (primarily on the blue cross and the reverse side hoist) are restricted to the hoist edge, both top and bottom. The color bearer, Ira Sadler, had his thumb amputated by a shot in the Battle of Atlanta and this may account for the blood on the hoist edge. He was also shot (and survived) in the side on the parapets in the Battle of Franklin and dropped the flag.

The use of an open weave cotton gauze fabric is also unusual and unique to the Gregg's Brigade flags. This fabric is not durable and was easily degraded by wear. In fact, very little of the gauze remains on the 50th TN flag.

The wear on the 7th TX flag is consistent with moderate but not extensive use. The red dye was 50% "beaten out" of the fly end from flapping, and some tearing is noted of the weaker cotton tan yarns. This flag seems to have been used months rather than years, and the 7th TX may have had other flags to share the burden.

Dye Analysis:

Two samples of yarns were taken and sent to a lab, one of the red wool yarns and one of the blue yarns from the saltire. The results tested Cochineal for the red and Prussian Blue for the blue. Both of these are period natural dyes.

Conclusion:

All of the materials and construction techniques used to make this flag are consistent with those from the Civil War. This flag is without doubt an authentic flag of the Confederacy and is perhaps a previously undocumented pattern; the 15 star flags of the 50th TN and 7th TX are unique and suggest a newly discovered pattern of Confederate Battle Flag. Another flag or two from Gregg's Brigade need to turn up to fully establish this pattern.



Flag before conservation



Reverse of flag

Current Treatments:

The flag was relatively clean and free from soiling; a wet cleaning was deemed unnecessary and potentially hazardous to the painted devices on the flag. The flag was vacuumed through a screen, obverse and reverse, both before and after mounting.

The tears on the fly edge were stabilized from the reverse side. The paint was stabilized with Lascaux consolidant.

A mounting board of corrugated Hexamount was prepared and covered with graduated layers of polyfill batting, all covered in unbleached cotton muslin. The flag was placed on the mount and perimeter stitched. The whole was pressure mounted in an archival welded aluminum frame using 3/16 OP3 UV protective acrylic.

- █ White 35 cotton
- █ Brown 35 linen
- █ White 35 linen
- █ Tan 35 cotton
- █ Projective hole
- █ Blood stain



