



# GLORIOUSLY BORNE

Army of Tennessee  
Depot Issued Flags

*By Shannon Prichard*

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*Unlike Richmond Depot flags that are mostly square, these Army of Tennessee depot flags are rectangular. Many Confederate flags were sent to the War Department in Washington after capture, but some were never relinquished by the Union soldiers that captured them and found their way north as trophies of war. Courtesy Old South Military Antiques.*

**J**acob Platt made the flags of this pattern on contract to the Augusta Depot in the winter of 1863. They became official after General Joseph Johnston took command of the Army of Tennessee in December 1863. They first appeared in the field in January of 1864. General Johnston had ordered that each of his regiments carry this pattern and this pattern alone. In order number 25, on February 19, 1864 he made it official.

The first units to get these flags in 1864 were the Kentucky troops of the Orphan Brigade (based on their brigade QM records). Major deliveries of the new



*General Joseph E. Johnston was given the unenviable task of rebuilding the shattered Army of Tennessee after their retreat from Missionary Ridge to Georgia. In a short time they would have to be ready to face Sherman's veterans in the Atlanta campaign and his leadership did much to restore the morale and pride of the men.*

rectangular version battle flag did not arrive until after the first week of February, 1864. During the second week of February at least 40 new battle flags were moving from Augusta, via Atlanta, to the Army of Tennessee encamped at Dalton, and at least one hundred were delivered in February alone. Others followed in early March. On 11 March 1864, Lieutenant-General Hood, commanding one of the



*Transplanted from the Virginia theater, John Bell Hood received a corps command in the early part of 1864. One of his first orders was "To avoid dangerous confusion in action, each regiment and battery will be required to bear the Confederate (Virginia) battle flag."*

two corps of the army commanded the chief quartermaster to take immediate steps to provide the command with these colors. The corps getting these flags at the

time were Hardee's and Hood's. Hood issued orders for the flags of his corps to get battle honors in March, 1864. Polk's Corps, the Army of Mississippi, did not get these flags at all. That corps did not arrive until May, 1864 after the Atlanta Campaign began. They brought with them their rectangular, Mobile Depot battle flags.

At least fifty-two battle flags associated with these three corps survive in public repositories throughout the country, but there are only a few remaining in private collections. This particular infantry sized Army of Tennessee flag remained with the descendents of it's captor until July of 2005 and is so documented. The family relates that the flag was handed down from their great-grandfather Charles H. Tompkins who had served in the War



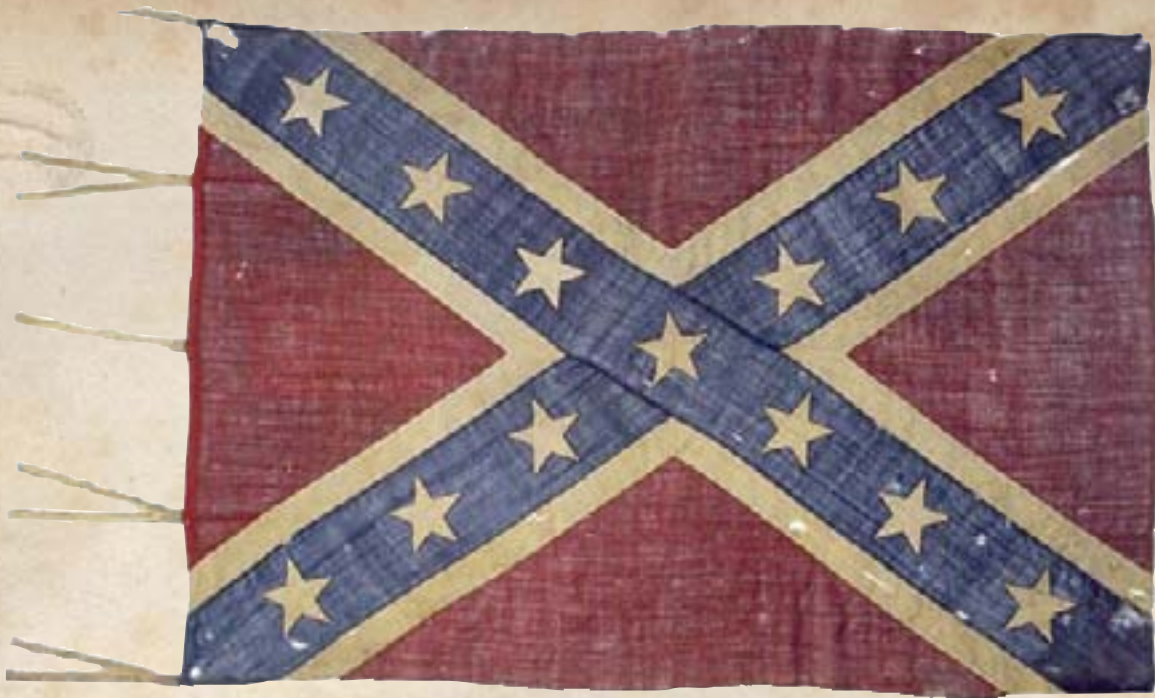
*Twill ties at the hoist edge of the flag provide a means of attachment to the staff. This is one of the key factors in identifying these flags. Army of Northern Virginia flags usually use three whipped overcast eyelets. Courtesy Old South Military Antiques.*



*These two Confederate veterans of the 65th Georgia Infantry stand proudly beside the tattered depot flag of their regiment. Taken in 1917 by Harris and Ewing photographers, the old fellow on the right is Private John Davis of Company D who picked up the flag after the first color bearer William Martin was killed at the Battle of Franklin. After the surrender John hid the flag in his boot and went home. Library of Congress.*



*The flag shows over 40 bullet holes and what possibly is the blood of color bearer Martin. After more than 145 years descendants of John Davis graciously donated the banner to the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History in Kennesaw.*



*This Flag is purportedly the last one carried by the 40th North Carolina/3rd Artillery. Its remarkable condition might be the result of its late issue prior to the Battle of Bentonville. The unit was originally used as cannoneers in several forts in the state, but in 1865 they were converted to infantry and assigned to Hagood's Brigade. The gunners received the nickname "Red Infantry" because of the scarlet artillery trim on their uniforms. Conforming to the standard Army of Tennessee depot flags, it might have been issued very late in the war as the unit did not serve with the army in Georgia when most of the flags were issued. At Bentonville the Red Infantry fought bravely but to no avail, their flag was taken by George W. Clute of the 14th Michigan Infantry who was almost killed when his own comrades fired on him while he carried the captured flag. Courtesy North Carolina Museum of History.*



*The 34th Alabama Infantry received this depot issued flag in the spring of 1864. Its size is somewhat smaller than the norm, conforming more closely to flags of this pattern made for artillery units. Courtesy Alabama Division of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.*



*The flags stars are neatly sewn to the banner using a whip stitch. This was a common method in the 19th century. Courtesy Old South Military Antiques.*

Between the States. According to the family, he was a New York cavalryman and the flag was captured at Fort Fisher, North Carolina. As is frequently the case, the family history is incorrect, neither their ancestor nor this flag could have been at Fort Fisher. The correct ancestor was Charles

A. Tompkins, 137th New York Infantry. The 137th fought at Averasboro and Bentonville, marched to Goldsboro, Raleigh and was in the vicinity of the surrender. It was almost certainly at one of these latter engagements that Sergeant Tompkins acquired this flag, and diligent research may reveal where and from whom.

The flat measures roughly 36 by 51 inches on the fly. It remains in excellent condition. All of the original staff ties remain and the colors remain brilliant; it is one of the most attractive and rare flags I have ever had. As expected the flag had some damage from use, but appears to have been very well taken care of. The restoration is non-invasive and was done by underlying the flags missing portions with original material taken from a period U.S. flag so that it would not only match color, but also match texture.

*Author Shannon Prichard is a lifelong collector, writer and historian of the War Between the States. His passion for all things Confederate led him to open Old South Military Antiques several years ago and he attends most of the major Civil War shows. Shannon can be reached for comment at [www. OldSouthAntiques.com](http://www.OldSouthAntiques.com)*

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