

CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS CONSERVATION PROJECT

The Medina County Historical Society is very fortunate to have in its museum an amazing artifact. It is a collection Civil War soldier ambrotypes and tintypes framed together. There are 94 images in total, which are ambrotypes (images on glass) and 28 tintypes. Where did they come from and who donated them to the MCHS? We wish we knew.

The Historical Society was organized in 1922, and for 34 years members took artifacts from local donors and held on to them until they acquired their first museum, the Munson House in 1956. Unfortunately, they did not leave any written information about these artifacts, ie. donor, age, etc. So it is a mystery; there is no record of when and how the Civil War soldiers came to the MCHS. The second mystery is who are these guys? Are they members of a GAR post? Are they from one regiment? Is it a Civil War reunion commemorative piece?

We do not know, but we have an excellent team of Civil War experts who are looking. After some research, we discovered Edward Rettig of Medina a member of Company H of the 8th Ohio Volunteer Infantry is included. The identical image appears in the printed history of the 8th O.V.I. along with the note that he died in 1861. As far as the other 93 soldiers, we do not know. It appears that three other men have an H on their kepi (cap) so this may be an infantry company, which usually numbered 100. We also know that the majority of men are wearing uniforms issued early in the war because they have more buttons on their coats. Initially, the 8th O.V.I. was organized on May 2nd, 1861 when President Abraham Lincoln called for each state to recruit men to serve for three months. Everyone anticipated the war would soon be over. When the term of the 90-day-men expired, the 8th O.V.I. recruited an additional force for three years. Many of those who served the 90-day term and survived disease and warfare, signed up once again. Edward Rettig did not survive, and that may be the case with other soldiers in the collection.

Now this is where you, the readers, come in. Included in this message is the entire collection in vivid color. As you can see, they are in various stages of deterioration, which is exactly why the MCHS wants to step forward and see to its conservation and restoration, but first of all we need to be able to identify more of the men. We are asking anyone who may have a family photograph or information of a family member who served in the Civil War and enlisted from Medina County, to please contact us at 330-722-1341 or mchs@zoominternet.net. Your ancestor need not have been a part of the 8th O.V.I. It has not been determined that this in fact a grouping from that regiment. Other regiments included Medina County men: the 42nd. O.V.I.; 72nd O.V.I.; 103rd O.V.I. ; 2nd Ohio Cavalry, and others. We would also appreciate any special insights you might have of the men in this incredible collection in terms of their uniforms, etc. We would like to tap into any knowledge there is out there. We thank you for your assistance. Joann King, President