



Staff photo by Damien A. Guarnieri

Brothers Larry Blair, left, of Marietta and Ronald Blair of Smyrna use a map to locate an old Civil War trench at Kennesaw Mountain on Thursday afternoon. The two are looking for the trench in which a Confederate

soldier caught a Union shell and saved his comrades. That soldier, Sgt. Isaac Peter Collier, was nominated for a Confederate Medal of Honor by a local chapter of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, but was denied.

# Fight for honor

By Karen Hillenbrand  
Neighbor Staff Writer

**MARIETTA** — Local historian Larry Blair says a man who performed a little-known act of heroism during the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain deserves a Confederate Medal of Honor.

However, the national chapter of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, which awards the medals, does not agree.

The Kennesaw Battlefield Camp of SCV, based in Marietta, nominated Sgt. Isaac Peter Collier for the honor this summer but recently learned the nomination had been declined.

"They did not tell us why," said Blair, the first lieutenant commander for the Kennesaw Battlefield SCV camp. "They don't have to tell us why. We were very disappointed."

Through extensive research, Blair, along with Stone Mountain SCV member Chris Davis, uncovered the little-known story of Collier, who served in the 5th Regiment Georgia Volunteer Infantry of the Confederate Army.

Collier, an Upson County resident who died around 1887, saved the lives of about seven of his company mates and himself by picking up a 12-pound explosive shell that had flown into his trench. He threw it into a pile of water, where it extinguished itself.

The incident took place June 21, 1864; near the present-day intersection of Burnt Hickory and Old Mountain roads.

During heavy fire, the explosive fell among the men in the trench, and Collier picked up the explosive, with its fuse still burning, while others ran for cover.



A wood engraving by artist William L. Shepperd immortalized Collier's heroic act.

"In any field of battle these days, anyone who did that would get a medal," Blair said.

However, the Confederate Army never awarded medals during the Civil War, Blair said.

"They needed all their metal for other purposes," he said.

Since the war, the Sons of Confederate Veterans has awarded only 46 medals of honor.

"They seem to be quite pleased with the low number," Blair said.

But just because Collier didn't die while performing his heroic act does not mean he doesn't deserve a medal, according to Blair.

Blair, retired from BellSouth, said he decided to champion Collier's

cause partly because he fought at Kennesaw Mountain but also because he was inspired by his brave act.

Blair has uncovered extensive documentation that says Collier's general, John King Jackson, offered him a battlefield promotion after witnessing the act, but Collier declined.

"He refused to accept it because he didn't want to leave his company mates," Blair said.

Several of Collier's comrades as well as General Jackson wrote about the incident.

Artist William L. Shepperd even immortalized the event through a wood engraving.

According to the SCV, recipients of the Confederate Medal of Honor "must have distinguished himself/herself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in action against the enemy of the Confederate States of America."

The act of bravery must be proven incontestably and must distinguish the individual above his comrades, according to the SCV.

Several years ago, Davis, of the Stone Mountain SCV, also nominated Collier for the medal. At that time, the national SCV cast a tie vote on the nomination and recommended that it be re-filed at a later date.

Blair took up the cause this year.

Since Collier won't be recognized with the medal, Blair said he just wants to get Collier some local recognition and possibly a display at the new Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park visitors center.

Local men wage battle to get Civil War hero awarded Confederate Medal of Honor

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