

BRIGADE SURGEON EDWIN BENTLEY'S PRESENTATION CASED L. POND REVOLVER (AND MORE!)

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Figure 1. The author in uniform wearing Brigade Surgeon Edwin Bentley's M1840 Medical Staff sword. (Surgeon General - Civil War Video lecture April 24th, 2021).

This small presentation served as an introduction video for the presentation section of our virtual ASAC Spring 2021 meeting. I am honored to have participated with this program. The talk was basically only a preamble to Mike Helm's presentation on Lucius Pond and his revolvers (see pages 37-43 of this volume).

This presentation came to being when I met Mike for the first time at the 2019 Spring ASAC meeting held in Springfield, MO. I told him about my presentation Pond revolver, and he was a wealth of knowledge concerning this pattern of pistol, and fellow Worcesterite himself – Lucius W. Pond. We therefore 'conspired' to develop a combined display and presentation for a future ASAC meeting. But COVID-19 has prevailed, meetings were necessarily cancelled, and thus we have performed these presentations virtually.

Now, just because I started off this discussion in uniform as the Surgeon General of the U.S. Army (Figure 1), and standing in front of my small shrine to Civil War Surgeons with various cased surgical sets, instruments, hospital equipmen, and an Abraham Lincoln signed Brigade Surgeon's commission (to Gen. G. C. Strong's brigade surgeon who cared for the 54th Mass. Regiment and the other battalions assaulting Ft. Wagner, S.C. in 1863), doesn't mean that I am doing yet another blasted presentation on Civil War Surgery! Yeah, right! Suckers! Captive audience indeed! By the way, there WILL be a test at the end! However, to tie all of this in and bring this back to topic, in the photograph, I am, in fact, wearing Brigade Surgeon Edwin Bentley's presentation Model 1840 Medical Staff sword, by Ames! More of a discussion on this will be forthcoming. Interestingly, for the Fall, 2022 meeting planned for Indianapolis, Mindy and I are preparing a full display of our presentation/identified Medical Staff/Surgeon's swords (about 16 or so), since it's just down the road (literally).

Please view the images of Bentley's cased presentation Pond revolver, complete with his spectacles in small tin case and field telescope. These, with their inscriptions/presentation will be discussed further on. So, the common thread of our presentations is the .32 caliber rimfire revolver patented by Lucius W. Pond, manufactured in Worcester, Mass. Until I met Mike Helms, I really had no major appreciation for this style of pistol, nor for his most interesting story of Pond, the manufacturer. It was purchased, back in the 1980's, from the gentleman who initially had found and sold to me Brigade Surgeon Edwin Bentley's Model 1840 Medical Staff sword manufactured by Ames. Fortunately, (or unfortunately as ever you might reconsider things - and price!) the cased Pond 'found' its way to me several years later. Kind of one of those 'must have' opportunities. Several of his Civil War signed documents and photographs came later. Civil War period photographs of Surgeon Edwin Bentley are very rare. The portrait included was originally from the Surgeon R. B. Bontecou album, a staff member who commanded U.S. Army Harewood Hospital in Washington, D.C. (Figure 2, left). Here, Bontecou was a pioneer of photographing wounded soldiers and documenting their clinical courses pictorially. Unfortunately, Bentley is not holding his sword in his image (nor his pond pistol)! A second, unpublished albumen image (until presently) was luckily purchased from EBAY several years ago. My auction search filter yielded this photo through the key words "Civil War Surgeon" which was triggered by the description: "Brigadier Surgeon Bentley"(?!). Once viewed, I identified the standing Major as Edwin Bentley (standing on the left; Figure 2, right) in this unknown group image of Brigadier General Daniel Butterfield.

In 1861. Bentley was commissioned as Surgeon for the First Connecticut Heavy Artillery but was fairly quickly re-commissioned Brigade Surgeon for General Daniel Butterfield. He saw major action during the Peninsular Campaign and the Seven Day's battles in front of Richmond. Like so many of his medical comrades, he stayed behind the lines caring for his patients and was

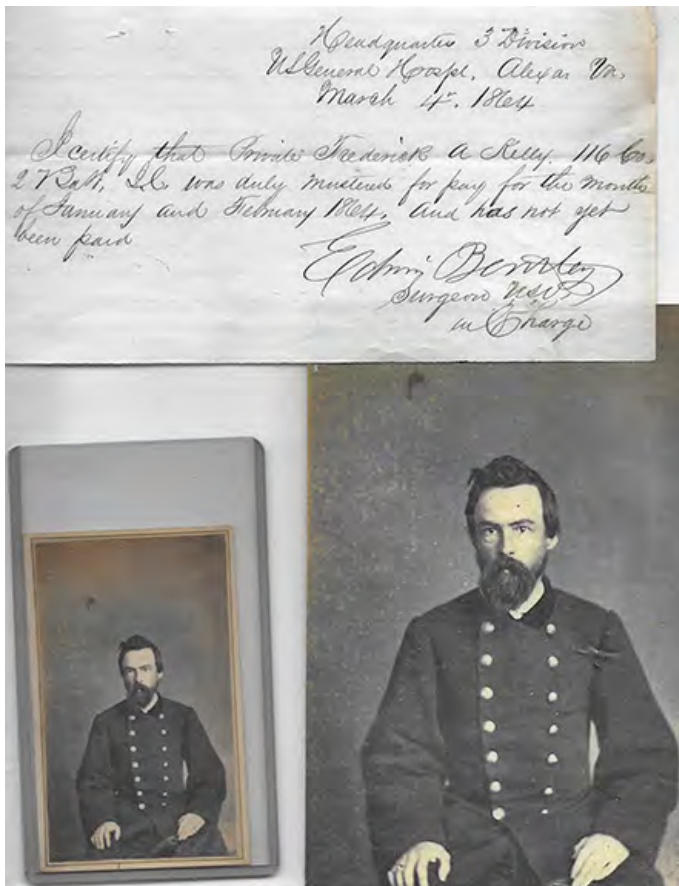


Figure 2. CDV portrait, with enlargement; and document signed by Surgeon Edwin Bentley (left). Unpublished albumen photo of Gen. Butterfield's staff (c 1862) showing Brigade Surgeon Edwin Bentley standing left. For some reason, he has pulled his belt plate to his right, yet is not wearing his sword (right).

captured at Savage Station. He was transferred to, and commanded the officer's hospital at Libby Prison in Richmond and may be considered to have been the highest ranked Surgeon captured during this campaign. He apparently had his belly full of front-line service, and also may have been suffering from a smoldering illness contracted at Libby Prison, for he declined a return to field service duty. Instead, he accepted command of all the U.S. Army Hospitals at Alexandria, Va, to include L'Overture Hospital - which treated African American soldiers and 'contraband' sick patients. His interest in the wellbeing of African Americans yielded in his involvement with Howard University, Washington, D.C. Here he served as its first Chairman of the Anatomy Department during its formation as a University for African Americans.

Post war, he remained in the Army Medical Corps, serving at many western Indian War theatres and forts. He served during the Modoc War and fell in love with his postings in Arkansas. Eventually, he became very involved with the University of Arkansas Medical School, serving as Chair of the Department of Surgery, and eventually Dean of the Medical School. He remained in Arkansas, which he considered his second home, and died in 1917, with his interment at Arlington National Cemetery. Of note, he is officially credited with the delivery of Douglas MacArthur, the future 5-star U.S. Army General! He was born at an Arkansas army post/fort. even though MacArthur always considered himself to be a Virginian by birth, he somewhat reluctantly acknowledged his Arkansas origins in later years! His father, with very pregnant wife following, was transferred from Virginia to Arkansas.

Bentley's Civil War service deserved special mention and is very well documented. He reported over 180 surgical cases for the post-war Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion. He was a prolific operator and explorer of medical care. Some of his outstanding contributions are: he performed the first successful blood transfusion (un-typed and un-crossmatched!) by taking the blood from a 'strong German' and infusing it into a very sick and volume depleted patient using 'Tiemann's syringe'; he successfully ligated the common carotid artery to ameliorate gunshot hemorrhage of the back of the neck. Remarkably, he successfully performed left hip disarticulation amputation (secondary) for Private George Lemon, whose specimen is shown (Figure 3). This was a very controversial procedure, with multiple contemporary surgeons decrying against this 'unsafe' operation. Because of the risk, and difficulty in controlling operative bleeding - in fact a type of large rigid clamp was usually utilized to compress the central abdominal aorta --Bentley discarded this and insisted on the assistant surgeon performing dynamic compression of the external iliac artery above the groin/pubis.

Surgeon Bentley's Ames Model 1840 Medical Staff sword is shown (Figure 4). Its presentation is engraved using several differing fonts and noted to have been presented by his friends from Norwich, Conn. (Figure 5). It is somewhat odd (and much more scarce) due to the ringlet swivels having been directly soldered to the scabbard and the lack of a drag and embracing molded fittings. One wonders if the 'friends' could not afford or find a top-drawer Ames example?



Figure 3. Bentley's successful hip disarticulation amputation - patient George Lemon - healing portrait and morbid specimen. (courtesy AFIP/Nat. Library Medicine)



Figure 4.. Bentley's presentation M1840 Medical Staff Sword made by Ames.

On the other hand, Bentley's cased, presentation revolver appears to be more ornate and expensive (Figures 6 and 7). It is a .32 caliber (rimfire) with a 5 inch barrel, and iron frame. The wonderfully carved ivory grip exhibits an eagle clutching an olive branch (Figure 8; no arrows of war?), Liberty, and rests on a federal shield. Lucius W. Pond, of Worcester, utilized bored through cylinders accessed by a top hinge differing from Smith and Wesson by locating this hinge further back towards the hammer. However, this revolver has no half-cock nor safety, with its hammer/firing pin resting upon the cartridge rim. Dropping this loaded pistol could yield an injurious situation! The top of the frame is engraved: "From Wm. Read & Sons Boston, USA" (Figure 7) – oddly not Boston, Mass.? It is not known if there was a personal connection between Bentley, or his friends, and the Boston firm, nor who contracted for this cased revolver? Research has been sadly fleeting in this area. It is cased with a similar ivory cleaning rod (or potential cartridge push ejector?) and contains apparently Bentley's spectacles in a tin case and field telescope. The lid of the case is incorrectly engraved: "Surgeon Edward Bentley 1st REG. H. ART. CT." over arrow. The designation of First Conn. Heavy Artillery would indicate an 1861 date for the presentation. However, stamped on the side of the barrel is noted: "Manufactured for Smith and Wesson" indicating a potential for an 1862 date – during or after Smith & Wesson's successful patent infringement lawsuit verses Pond in 1862.



Figure 5. EDWIN BENTLEY BRIGADE SURGEON U.S. Volunteers from his friends in Norwich, Connecticut"

I would now refer you all to the wonderful presentation by Mike Helms concerning Lucius W. Pond and his revolvers: "From Gunmaker to Fraudster - The Life of Lucius W. Pond, Worcester, Massachusetts." (see pages 32-38 in this volume).



Figure 6. Surgeon Bentley's cased presentation .32 cal rimfire Pond revolver with personal accessories.



Figure 7. Inscription on case lid plate- "Surgeon Edward (sic) Bentley 1st Reg. H. Art. Ct." (left). Presentation inscription on the Pond revolver- From William Read & Sons, Boston USA (right)



Figure 8. Close up of grip carving- Liberty, shield, eagle clutching olive branch.

