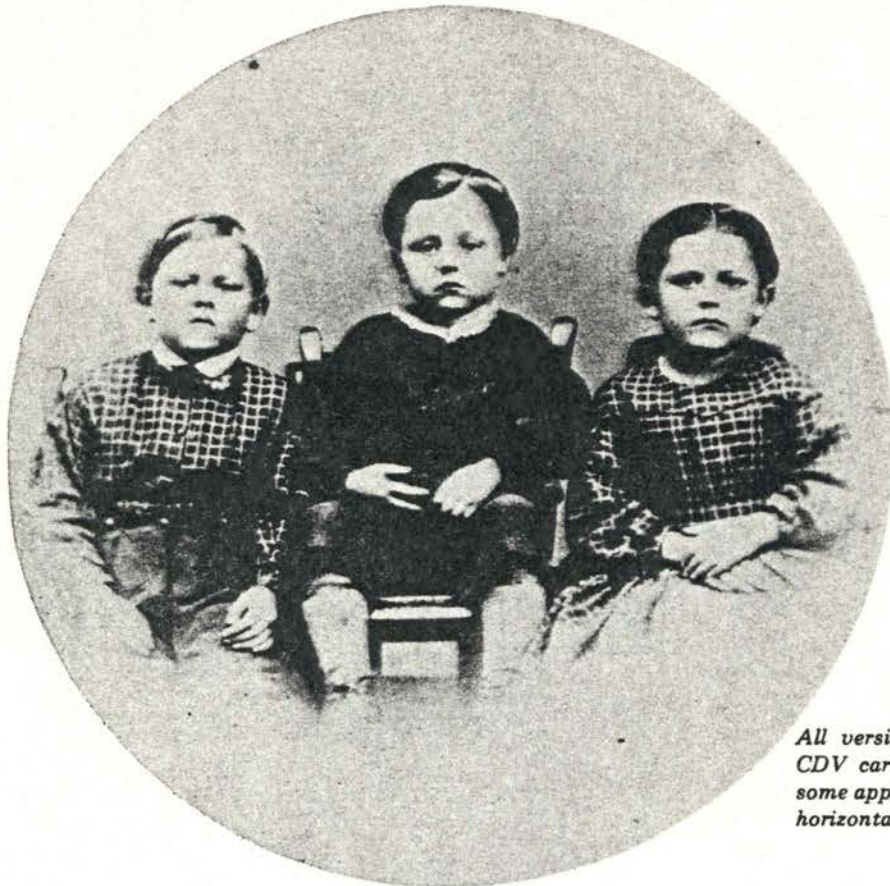


The Children of



All versions of the Humiston children CDV carried the same photo, although some appeared in vertical format, some in horizontal. Author's collection.

"THE SOLDIER'S CHILDREN"

by William Gladstone

William Gladstone is a free-lance writer who specializes in the photography of the Civil War period.

Following the great battle of July 1st, an unidentified Union sergeant was found dead on Stratton Street in Gettysburg. Clutched in his hand was a photograph of three children, presumably his own. The unknown soldier was buried near where he fell in the yard of Judge Russel and the unmarked photo was turned over to Dr. J. Francis Bourns.

The good doctor took the photograph and had thousands of cartes-de-visite reproduced from it and circulated to the public, hoping that the publicity might lead to the identification of the children and, through them, the dead soldier.

In November of 1863, Philinda S. Humiston, living in a little town on the Allegheny River in western New York, read an article in Philadelphia's *The American Presbyterian* about the dead soldier found holding a picture of his children. Mrs. Humiston asked for a copy of the photo—in it she recognized the children as her own and thus learned of the death of her husband on the previous July 1st.

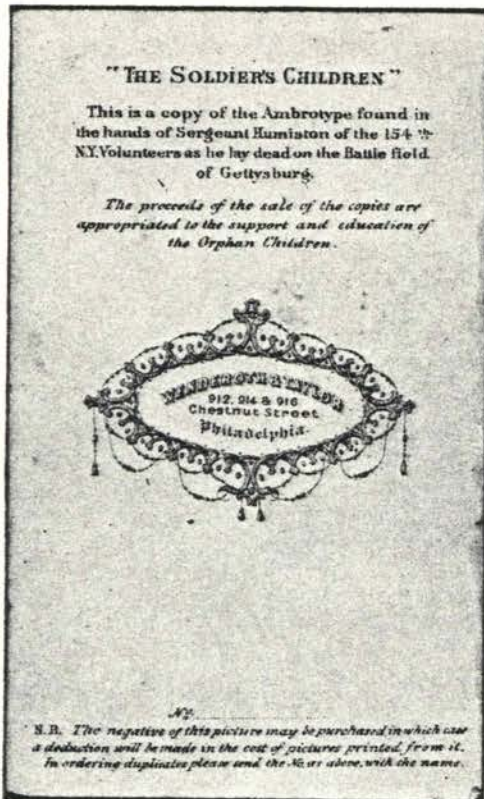
Once identified, Humiston was reburied in the National Cemetery at Gettysburg in grave 14, row B, of the New York section.

Sergeant Amos Humiston, 32 years old at the time of his death, had enlisted in Company C of the 154th New York on 26 July 1862 at Portville, New York. He rose through the ranks to corporal and then to orderly sergeant. Humiston had wanted to enlist at the beginning of the war, but had held back because of the responsibilities of his family. After the disasters on the Peninsula and at 2d Bull Run in the summer of 1862, President Lincoln called for 300,000 more volunteers and Humiston felt he must be one of them. When he received assurances from responsible citizens that his family would be cared for in his absence, he enlisted as a private.

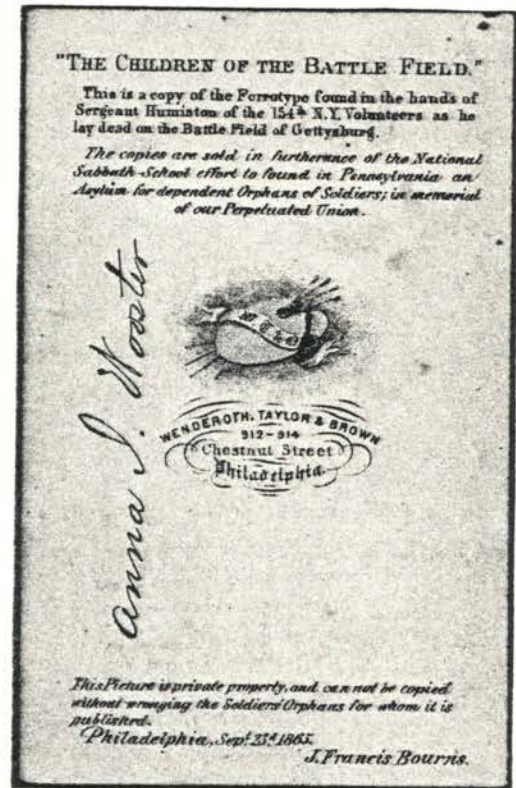
A harness maker by trade, Amos had married Philinda Smith in 1854. They had three children: Franklin, born 10 April 1855; Alice, 20 March 1857; and Frederick, 17 January 1859. Philinda had the photo taken and sent to Amos after he was away with the Army of the Potomac. It is of interest to note that Frederick was seated on a high chair between Frank and Alice, who are wearing clothes made from the same bolt of cloth, probably by their mother.

Following the identification of Sgt. Humiston's family, they were brought to the Soldiers Orphans Home in Gettysburg, where the children were to be educated and Philinda became the matron of the institution.

the Battle Field



Backmark of the fourth version of the Humiston carte-de-visite.



Backmark of the fifth and final version of the Humiston carte-de-visite.

The Photograph

There are at least five different cartes-de-visite of the Humiston children which the collector may encounter. Two of the five card photos, probably the earliest, have no title on the front. One is a vertical format made by Wenderoth & Taylor, Chestnut Street, Philadelphia. The second is a horizontal photo made by both the Wenderoth & Taylor firm and the company of H.C. Phillips & Bro., also of Chestnut Street.

These photos are probably those ordered by Doctor Bourns.

In December 1864, after the children were identified, CDV's were sold identifying the children as Frank, Frederick and Alice on the front, with the caption "The Children of the Battle Field" on the back. Also on the back was "This is a copy of the ambrotype found in the hands of Sergeant Humiston of the 154th N.Y. Volunteers as he lay dead on the Battle Field of Gettysburg." It further states that "The proceeds of the sale of the copies are appropriated in the support and education of the Orphan children." Evidently the photo business was expanding, for the new edition was printed by the firm of Wenderoth & Taylor & Brown. On the bottom of the photo is "This picture is private property and can not be copied without wronging the

soldier's orphans for whom it is published. Philadelphia, Dec. 3, 1864. J. Francis Bourns."

The fourth version was similar to the third except that the front was labeled "The Soldier's Children" rather than with the children's names.

The fifth (and perhaps final) version of the photo was generated by the Wenderoth, Taylor & Brown firm in September of 1865. In the descriptive paragraph on the back, it claimed that the original found in Sgt. Humiston's hands was a ferrotype (tintype) rather than an ambrotype. It further stated that "The copies are sold in furtherance of the National Sabbath School effort to found in Pennsylvania an Asylum for Dependent Orphans of Soldiers in memorial of our Perpetuated Union." Presumably this is the orphanage which ultimately sheltered Mrs. Humiston and the children.

As a final note on the Humiston story, the Sanitary Commission of Philadelphia offered a prize for the best poem about the affair. The prize was won by James G. Clark of Dansville, New York. Entitled "The Children of the Battle Field," Clark's poem was set to music by him and published in 1864, with net proceeds of the sale of the music going to the support of the orphans.

Commenting on William Gladstone's article, "The Children of the Battlefield," I should like to suggest there is at least one additional version of the carte-de-visite. One in my possession has the youngsters named on the front. The lower half of the reverse side includes the exact inscription found on the top of Mr. Gladstone's "fourth" version, but includes no statement of ownership. The picture was published by the well known Civil War era photographer, F. Gutekunst, 704 and 706 Arch Street, Philadelphia. Incidentally, a companion CDV of Sergeant Amos Humiston in uniform also was sold by Gutekunst.

We look forward to the day when *MI* becomes a monthly--two months is just too long between issues.

Robert Gormley
Newtown, Pennsylvania

Front and back of Robert Gormley's CDV of Sgt. Amos Humiston by Gutekunst.



F. GUTEKUNST.
704 & 706 Arch St.
PHILADELPHIA

SERGEANT HUMISTON fell in the first day's struggle at Gettysburg. When found, he could not be recognized, and was buried among the unknown dead; but the picture his brave hand grasped in death,—the portrait of his three little children,—months afterward led to his identification. After the discovery of his family, who reside at Portville, N. Y., the original of this photograph was obtained; and the copies are sold for the assistance of the dependent orphans.

I am enclosing photos of the obverse and reverse of a carte-de-visite recently purchased at a flea market by a friend of mine, Les Turner of Wilmington, Massachusetts. It is a portrait of Sgt. Humiston, father of the orphans. Because there is no mention of this fact in the advertising on the back of the carte, I suspect that this carte-de-visite predates the publicity of the orphan carte. It seems to be a very unique find and one I think should be shared with *MI*'s readers.

Robert C. Marcotte
Peabody, Massachusetts

Compare closely the eyes and the lighting on the hair in both photos. It becomes obvious that Gutekunst retouched the Otis CDV, adding the beard and the military jacket.

Front and back of the Turner/Marcotte CDV of Sgt. Humiston by Otis.



*A. Humiston
Company*
154 N.Y.

MATSON OTIS,
Ambrotype & Photographic
ARTIST.

In his new building erected by himself with special reference for a Picture Gallery, south side Main street, over Friendly's Store. Entrance first door west of Ira Clibbe's "Bazaar Store," nearly opposite the new Bank.

W. VA. ALLEGANY COUNTY, NEW YORK

I was deeply moved by the letters of Harley J. Hilborn in Vol. II, Number 5. It was one of the best pieces in the magazine to date.

Marianne Gill
Gordonsville, Virginia

We agree and so did the readers. The Hilborn letters drew more mail and comment than anything else published in *MI* so far. A tip of the kepi to Editor Eileen Conklin.

Editor:

The first photo in the amusing "Military Monkey Business" article shows six sailors and a Marine drinking in Japan. The Marine is wearing a decoration that is identified as "perhaps the West Indies or Spanish Campaign Medal on the odd ribbon authorized between 1908 and 1913." As a collector of medals, I can tell you that the medal illustrated is far too large to be a Marine Corps campaign medal. With a top bar and a suspension bar (note the squared off ribbon), plus a horizontal line across the bottom quarter of the planchet, this is almost certainly the Citizens of Brooklyn Medal to the Crew of the U.S.S. *Brooklyn*. A handsome bronze medal awarded for service at the naval battle of Santiago de Cuba on 3 July 1898, it is 51mm in size, while standard campaign medals were only 33mm. The original ribbon on the "Brooklyn Medal" is half green and half white; the ribbon in the photo is either unclear or has been switched by the Marine. Either way, it's a great photo.

On another note, I would like to comment on the article "American Eagles of the Great War" (Vol. II, No. 4), in which it is claimed that the first Medal of Honor awarded to an aviator went to Luke posthumously, while Rickenbacker, from a chronological standpoint, earned the earliest one (25 September 1918). Actually, the first Medal of Honor earned by an American aviator was a Navy award to Ensign Charles Hammann, USNRF, for action on 21 August 1918. This date is incorrectly listed as 1919 in most government publications on Navy Medals of Honor. However, it is correct in the G.P.O.'s book, *United States Naval Aviation, 1910-1970*.

George Harris
Alfred, New York

Your comments are much appreciated. A close examination of the hat bands on the sailors reveals them to be from the crew of U.S.S. *Brooklyn*, further reinforcing your suppositions about the medal worn by the pie-eyed Marine.

Editor:

...very pleased with *MI*'s articles, photographs, and overall professionalism. We recommend it to collectors, dealers, and the public as an informative journal of American culture as well as military history. Do continue!

M.C. Grove
Spring Hill Farm Antiques
Madison, Virginia

Editor:

...superb magazine. I'm especially interested in pre-Civil War material.

Howard R. McManus
Roanoke, Virginia
See Mike Winey's article in this issue.