

Post-Mortem Photo of Civil War Soldier

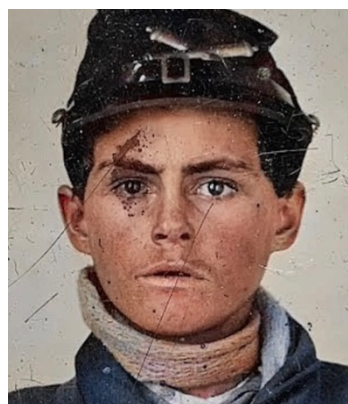
By Rusty Edwards

In 2022, I acquired this original tintype photograph of a young Union soldier on eBay. The man appears to be a private in his early 20s, or possibly younger. His cap device indicates he was assigned to the artillery branch. He's armed with a Colt Model 1860 .44 caliber revolver, a firearm typically reserved for officers and members of the cavalry.

The man has a unique mark above one eye. After a thorough examination, I concluded the blemish was part of the image and not on the thin protective coating applied by the photographer to prevent scratches. To ascertain the probable color of the mark, I used the Photomyne app to colorize the image. This program uses an algorithm to convert shades of grey to their respective colors. This revealed the mark was probably red.



This soldier was likely deceased when this photo was taken.



The mark over the man's eye appears to be a blood stain

I showed the tintype to Maureen Taylor, an expert in photo identification and analysis. She is the author of *"Family Photo Detective,"* has appeared on various TV programs, and frequently serves as a subject-matter expert and podcast host on matters related to photo analysis and identification.

Ms. Taylor concluded this is likely a post-mortem photograph, taken after the man's death. Her assessment was based on several factors, including the man's blank expression, the strong possibility of blood over a bloodshot eye, and the likelihood that the scarf around his throat was there to hide a neck brace.

During the American Civil War, post-mortem photography was a common practice, especially for soldiers who died in battle. The photographs were often taken as a way for families to remember their loved ones and were sometimes the only visual record they had of the deceased.

In some cases, the bodies were posed to make the soldier appear as if they were still alive. This was achieved through various techniques such as propping the body up, sewing the eyes open, and using braces to keep the body in a natural position.



Bodies were often posed to appear alive.

The practice of post-mortem photography, including the posing of the deceased, reflected the prevailing attitudes towards death and mourning during the 19th century. It was a way for families to cope with the loss of a loved one and to create a lasting memory of them. While it may seem unusual by today's standards, post-mortem photography was a common practice during the 19th and early 20th centuries. It's a fascinating and often poignant aspect of social history, shedding light on the ways in which people dealt with death and bereavement in the past.