

May is the month when we Americans pay tribute to our nations honored dead. Memorial Day is the focal point for our celebrations of remembrance. Each May with the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, of which I am a member, and Co. A, Eighth Kansas I participate in several remembrance ceremonies throughout Kansas. I'm greatly honored, to in some small part; honor the Soldiers and Sailors of the Grand Army of the Republic. It was from their sacrifices we inherited one nation united, strong, and free. I don't know to whom to credit this quote but "Freedom Isn't Free". American Soldiers throughout the history of the Armed Forces of the United States have sacrificed their lives to keep our nation free. Currently our Armed Forces are engaged in Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Global War on Terrorism. Just as the Grand Army of the Republic kept our nation free, so shall today's Soldiers, Sailors, Airman, Marines and Coast Guardsman. They are truly "Guardians of the Republic" - Eric Fisher. Please honor their sacrifices and keep them in your thoughts and prayers.

A few years ago I was engaged in the genealogical search to find an ancestor who may have fought in the Civil War. In May of 2004 I was finally able to make the connection with my Civil War Ancestor. This search would not have been possible with out the help, guidance, and dogged determination of my good friend and pard Ken Spurgeon. It was because of his efforts I am writing this today. He has given back my family part of its heritage which was lost for 142 years. Words can not truly express our gratitude. Let me tell you about my great, great, great, grandfather.

**Jim Scheidel's Ancestor**

*Otto Becker, Co. C 54th New York Volunteer Infantry*

Private Otto Becker served with Companies B and C of the 54th New York Infantry also known as "Barney's Black Rifles". The regiment was composed mostly of men of German origin from New York City and Brooklyn. The Regiment was also known in the German tongue as the "Schwarze Jaeger" or Black Hunters. When Otto Becker enlisted for 3 years on Sept 5, 1861 he was 30 years old, 5'2" tall with a fair complexion, blue eyes and light hair. In civilian life he was a shoemaker. He served with the 54th not quite a year as he was killed in action on August 29, 1862 at the Battle of 2nd Bull Run.

My current mission is to find his final resting place. As the Federal Forces left area of Manassas Virginia very quickly after their defeat it is very likely he was buried by Confederate Forces in an unmarked grave. I have visited Manassas NMP and have been told that many of the Federal dead were later moved to Arlington National Cemetery. Private Otto Becker's name does not appear on the list of Civil War soldiers buried at Arlington. Could some of his remains have been placed in the Tomb of Civil War Unknowns on the grounds of Arlington House? Finding Otto Beckers final resting place may prove to be my greatest search. Until then this will be his memorial.

**In Memory of Private Otto Becker (1832-1862)**

**"Guardian of the Republic"**

**You are not forgotten**