



Gettysburg's Unknown Soldier: The Life, Death, and Celebrity of Amos Humiston

Mark H. Dunkelman

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He was found dead on the battlefield at Gettysburg, an unknown soldier with nothing to identify him but an ambrotype of his three children, clutched in his fingers. With the photograph as the single, sad clue to his identity, a publicity campaign to locate his family swept the North. Within a month, the bereaved widow and children were located in Portville, New York, and the devoted father was revealed to be Sergeant Amos Humiston of the 154th New York Volunteers. Using many previously untapped sources, this book tells the tale of 19th-century war, sentiment, and popular culture in greater detail than ever before.

The Humiston story touched deep emotions in Civil War America, and inspired a flood of heartfelt prose, poetry, and song. Amid a vast outpouring of public sympathy, a charitable drive evolved to assist the bereft family. At the end of the war, the crusade was expanded to establish a home at Gettysburg for orphans of deceased soldiers. The first residents of the institution were Amos Humiston's widow Philinda and her three children: Franklin, Alice, and Frederick. In this extensive account, a full portrait emerges of Amos Humiston, the loving husband and father destined to be remembered for his death tableau, and his family, the widow and orphans who struggled for the rest of their lives with celebrity born of tragedy.

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