

CW/VFM-9: Francis J. Bourns and the Humiston File – Children of the Battlefield

One souvenir photo-card, transcript of its text, and modern articles printed from websites on the subject of the photo-card. Photo 1 pp, TMS 1 pp, Printed Articles 6pp.

The souvenir photo-card has on one side a copy of the ambrotype of popularly known as “The Children of the Battlefield”. The photo was found on the unidentified body of a Union soldier in the brickyard after the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg. Dr. John Francis Bourns, a volunteer physician helping the wounded at the battlefield, was touched by the story and sent out descriptions of the photograph to many of the nations’ major newspapers. Thus, the body of Sgt. Amos Humiston of the 154th New York was identified, along with the now nationally famous faces of his children, Frank, Frederick, and Alice. The national outpouring of sympathy was so great that Bourns began to collect donations, and in October 1866 he opened an orphanage in Gettysburg for the children of fallen Union soldiers, with Mrs. Humiston as the first matron. The orphanage closed 12 years later under pressure from two major scandals—that Bourns was embezzling large sums and that the current matron, Rosa Carmichael, was abusing the children.

Photo-card inscribed on the back: “The Children of the Battlefield.” This is a copy of the Ferrotype found in the hands of Sergeant Humiston of the 154th N.Y. Volunteers as he lay dead on the Battle Field of Gettysburg.

The copies are sold in furtherance of the Nation Sabbath School effort to found in Pennsylvania an Asylum for dependent Orphans of Soldiers; in memorials of our Perpetuated Union. Wenderoth, Taylor & Brown 912-914 Chestnut Street Philadelphia. This Picture is private property and can not be copied without wronging the Soldiers Orphans for whom it is published. Philadelphia, Sept. 23rd 1865. J. Francis Bourns. Handwritten note on the back: Presented by—Mrs. J. F. Andrews. 935 Washington St. Easton, Pa.

Keywords: Gettysburg – Town; Pictures – Engravings

Location: Civil War Vertical File Manuscripts, Special Collections & College Archives, Musselman Library at Gettysburg College.

See also: [Civil War Sources in Special Collections](#)