

# DIXON'S COIN FOUND

# The Post and Courier

Gold piece  
carried Shiloh  
inscription

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The Hunley's most romantic legend proved true late Wednesday: Sub commander Lt. George E. Dixon carried a gold coin everywhere — even to his grave.

Archaeologist Maria Jacobsen pulled the good luck piece from the sediment surrounding Dixon's body just as they were about to remove some textiles.

The warped 1860 U.S. \$20 eagle gold piece — easily the most coveted artifact of the lost submarine — was found where Dixon's left pants pocket would have been. It is nearly as shiny as the day it was minted.

The discovery of the fabled gold coin goes a long way toward validating the entire legend of the first successful attack submarine.

The story has it that the coin — a gift from his Mobile, Ala., sweetheart, Queenie Bennett — saved Dixon's life at the battle of Shiloh.

On a misty morning in April 1862, Dixon's 21st Alabama Infantry was among the Confederate troops that stormed through the rolling pastureland of Shiloh in west Tennessee. The Rebels had the upper hand, but the 21st Alabama took heavy casualties.

Dixon, troops in his regiment later wrote, was one of the first shot during the fighting — but his life was saved when the gold coin in his pocket stopped the Minie ball that had struck him.

From that moment on, legend has it, Dixon carried the coin everywhere — even on board the H.L. Hunley.

The impact of the bullet left Dixon with a limp. An engineer by trade, Dixon worked through his convalescence in a Mobile machine shop. There, he met Horace Lawson Hunley and James McClintock, two New Orleans men who had grand plans to build a fish-boat.

Dixon helped build and pilot two submarines, the latter christened H.L. Hunley. It sank Feb. 17, 1864, after sinking the Union Sloop Housatonic.

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FRIENDS OF THE HUNLEY

ABOVE: After the coin saved his life in the battle of Shiloh, Lt. George E. Dixon had the warped coin engraved with the inscription: "Shiloh April 6, 1862 My life Preserver G.E.D." The inscription was a surprise — no historical account of the coin mentions it.

RIGHT: Maria Jacobsen, chief archaeologist for the Hunley excavation, holds the gold coin moments after finding it around 9:30 Wednesday night. Jacobsen felt the coin beneath a layer of sediment-encrusted textiles, presumably submarine commander Lt. George Dixon's uniform.



