

= Oliver Bosbyshell =

Oliver Christian Bosbyshell (January 3 , 1839 ? August 1 , 1921) was Superintendent of the United States Mint at Philadelphia from 1889 to 1894 . He also claimed to have been the first Union soldier wounded by enemy action in the Civil War , stating that he received a bruise on the forehead from an object thrown by a Confederate sympathizer while his unit was marching through Baltimore in April 1861 .

Bosbyshell was born in Mississippi . His parents were of old Philadelphia stock , and he was raised in Schuylkill County , Pennsylvania . After briefly working on the railroad and then studying law , Bosbyshell enlisted in the Union cause on the outbreak of war . Following a brief period of service in the 25th Pennsylvania Volunteer Regiment , he joined the 48th Pennsylvania , remaining in that regiment for three years . He saw action in such battles as Second Bull Run and Antietam . He rose to the rank of major and led his regiment , but was mustered out upon the expiration of his term of service in October 1864 , having been refused a leave of absence .

After leaving the army , Bosbyshell returned to Pennsylvania and worked in two unsuccessful businesses ; he also involved himself in Republican politics and in the activities of the Grand Army of the Republic , a veterans ' group . He was appointed to a post at the Philadelphia Mint in 1869 , and became chief coiner in 1876 and superintendent in 1889 , serving for four years . One of Bosbyshell 's underlings at the mint stole gold bars and , as they were not all recovered when the culprit was arrested , Bosbyshell was held responsible for the loss by virtue of his office . He was absolved of this liability by act of Congress in 1899 . In his later years , he was an officer of an insurance company ; he died in 1921 .

= = Early life and Civil War = =

Oliver Christian Bosbyshell was born in Vicksburg , Mississippi , on January 3 , 1839 , the son of Oliver Christian and Mary Ann (Whitney) Bosbyshell . Both his parents were from old Philadelphia families ; the couple had taken up temporary residence in Vicksburg . The senior Oliver Bosbyshell was engaged in the commission business . He contracted bronchitis while fighting a fire that destroyed his warehouse , and died in Philadelphia after a sea voyage taken in the hope of recovering his health . Eight weeks later , his son was born , and Mary Bosbyshell returned from Mississippi with him to her father 's house in Schuylkill County , Pennsylvania . Young Oliver grew up there , and attended local public schools . At age 15 , he left school to become a telegraph messenger and for the next three years took various jobs in that field before deciding to pursue a career in the law . He first studied with attorney Francis W. Hugbee , then with his uncle , William Whitney ; both were in Pottsville . He was still engaged as a student in 1861 , when the Civil War broke out .

On April 15 , 1861 , President Abraham Lincoln called for 50 @, @ 000 volunteers to fight to preserve the Union . The following day , Bosbyshell joined the Washington Artillerists , a local militia company , which quickly set out for Washington . En route , the company had to march through the streets of Baltimore on April 17 . A hostile crowd of Confederate sympathizers gathered ; according to accounts in his lifetime , he was struck by a missile variously described as a stone or a brick . Although it gave him a large bruise and momentarily stunned him , the object drew no blood ; Private Bosbyshell was purportedly the first man wounded in the Union cause , while an African @- @ American servant , hit a few minutes later by a missile which broke the skin , was deemed the first man to have shed his blood for the Union . However , official records do not list Bosbyshell among the casualties of the Baltimore riots .

In Washington , the company was quartered in the Ladies ' Gallery of the Senate Chamber , in the Capitol . The 350 Pennsylvania troops who first reached Washington on April 18 became known as the First Defenders and , after the war , the survivors formed an association with that name . While they were lodged at the Capitol , President Lincoln , Secretary of State William H. Seward , and Secretary of War Simon Cameron visited . Bosbyshell recalled Lincoln , " yes , here , towering over all in the room was the great central figure of the war . I remember how I was impressed by the

kindliness of his face and awkward hanging of his arms and legs , his apparent bashfulness in the presence of these first soldiers of the Republic , and with it all a grave , rather mournful bearing in his attitude . "

The Washington Artillerists were redesignated as Company H of the 25th Pennsylvania Volunteers , and were sent down the Potomac River to Fort Washington , where the company spent three months strengthening the fortifications . Bosbyshell was offered a first lieutenancy in the regular Army , which he declined , stating that he preferred volunteer service . When the company 's term of enlistment expired , Bosbyshell rejoined Union forces as a second lieutenant in Company G , 48th Pennsylvania Volunteers , to serve a three @-@ year term from October 1 , 1861 .

For about a month after his re @-@ enlistment , Bosbyshell was regimental recruiting officer in Harrisburg , but on November 11 , sailed with his regiment from Fortress Monroe , Virginia , to Hatteras , North Carolina . There he served as acting adjutant of his regiment , and as judge advocate for courts @-@ martial . When General Ambrose Burnside launched an attack on New Bern , he took six companies of the 48th with him , as well as Bosbyshell , though Company G was not included among the Union forces . In April and May 1862 , Bosbyshell received successive promotions to first lieutenant and captain and was assigned to command his company , which he did at such battles as Second Bull Run , Antietam , and Fredericksburg . After Fredericksburg , he was again assigned to serve in courts @-@ martial ; when the regiment was moved west in early 1863 , Bosbyshell was assigned as provost marshal of Louisville , Kentucky . While stationed at Louisville , he returned home to Pennsylvania on leave of absence to marry Martha Stem , daughter of a minister .

When the regiment was ordered to Tennessee in September 1863 to take part in Union actions there , Bosbyshell was made Acting Assistant Adjutant @-@ General for the First Brigade of the Ninth Corps , of which the 48th was part . He fought at Blue Springs and Campbell 's Station , and took part in the siege of Knoxville . In 1864 , he returned to Pennsylvania again to help bring the regiment up to strength . Returning to his brigade post , he commanded African @-@ American troops in the Wilderness Campaign .

On July 10 , 1864 , Bosbyshell was promoted to major and ordered to command the 48th , though he remained at his brigade post temporarily . At this time , Union forces were besieging Petersburg , south of the Confederate capital , Richmond , Virginia . The acting commander of the 48th , Lieutenant Colonel Henry Pleasants , in civilian life a mining engineer , conceived the idea of digging under the Confederate lines and exploding a giant bomb . After weeks of preparation , the bomb was exploded on July 30 , creating a huge pit in the ground and a hole in the Confederate lines . After initial shock , the Confederates rallied and repulsed the attempt to break the lines , aided by Union bungling . Bosbyshell led African @-@ American troops into action in the Battle of the Crater ; they suffered over 400 casualties . With Pleasants promoted to General Robert B. Potter 's staff , Bosbyshell took command of the 48th on August 2 , 1864 .

Bosbyshell led his command at Globe Tavern and at Peebles 's Farm . In September 1864 , he sought leave of absence to return to Pennsylvania on personal business . When this was refused , and with his three @-@ year term of service having expired , he was mustered out on October 1 , 1864 .

= = Return to Pennsylvania = =

Having returned to Pottsville , Bosbyshell entered first the banking business , and then the book and stationary trade , each time with " disastrous " results . A Republican , he ran for prothonotary of Schuylkill County in 1866 , but was defeated .

Shortly after the war , the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) , a Union veteran 's group , was founded . During Bosbyshell 's campaign to become prothonotary , he was asked to organize the Schuylkill County branch , but declined because of his status as a candidate . The following year , however , he joined the GAR , organizing Post 24 in Pottsville . He became Schuylkill County district commander of the GAR soon after , and in 1869 was elected Pennsylvania 's GAR department commander .

In 1869 , Bosbyshell was hired as Register of Deposits of the Philadelphia Mint , and moved to that city . The Chief Coiner , A. Loudon Snowden , was impressed by Bosbyshell , and promoted him to Assistant Coiner in 1872 . When Snowden left the Mint to accept a position as postmaster in 1876 , President Ulysses Grant promoted Bosbyshell in his place . Grant nominated Bosbyshell on December 14 , 1876 ; he was confirmed by the Senate on December 26 . According to numismatic historian Q. David Bowers , Bosbyshell , while serving as Chief Coiner , used Mint facilities and out @-@ of @-@ date dies to strike rare three @-@ dollar pieces , including the 1873 , 1875 , and 1876 issues . During Bosbyshell 's tenure , quantities of pattern coins , restrikes , and pieces struck in different metals flowed to well @-@ connected collectors and dealers , and Bosbyshell sold a large personal collection of such pieces shortly after leaving office .

Bosbyshell served as Chief Coiner until early 1885 ; with the approaching advent of the first Cleveland administration , Democrats would be appointed as Mint officials , and Bosbyshell secured a position as chief clerk in the Philadelphia City Controller 's office . Bosbyshell was hired , despite the fact that he was a Republican in a Democratic @-@ run municipal administration , because of his friendship with Controller Robert Dechert .

Having maintained his involvement in the GAR , Bosbyshell was in charge of the committee on arrangements for the Tenth National Encampment of the GAR , at Philadelphia in 1876 . In 1879 , he was elected as commander of Post 2 in that city . He also joined the Second Regiment of the Pennsylvania National Guard , and was elected major in 1878 and lieutenant colonel in 1880 .

= = Mint superintendent (1889 ? 1894) = =

On October 17 , 1889 , President Benjamin Harrison commissioned Bosbyshell as superintendent of the Philadelphia Mint . As the Senate was not sitting , Bosbyshell received a recess appointment . Bosbyshell filed his oath of office on November 1 , 1889 . On his first day on the job , he was greeted with a bouquet of flowers and a large pile of mail from office @-@ seekers . He gave receipts for the Mint property he was now responsible for , and found no errors in the accounts of his predecessor . On December 16 , 1889 , with the Senate in session , Harrison nominated Bosbyshell . The following day , Vermont Senator Justin Morrill , on behalf of the Senate Finance Committee , to which Bosbyshell 's nomination had been referred , recommended that he be confirmed . The Senate did so on December 19 .

In 1890 , Bosbyshell deposited \$ 4 @, @ 200 of federal funds in the Keystone National Bank , which then went bankrupt . Bosbyshell was responsible for the debt , which was only \$ 300 less than his annual salary , and paid it off by stages , completing the payments in 1894 . In August 1890 , Bosbyshell was elected colonel of his National Guard regiment ; the vote was unexpectedly close , as he was disliked by some of his fellow officers . Following the Homestead Riots in July 1892 , Pennsylvania Governor Robert E. Pattison ordered militia to the strike @-@ torn town to restore order . Bosbyshell led his guard regiment to Homestead , where the strikers offered no resistance . In August 1893 , he resigned from the regiment .

Before Congress abolished the practice in 1873 , the government made silver legal tender alongside gold . This led to one of the great political controversies of the late 1800s , as many called for a return to pre @-@ 1873 laws , which would require the government to take all the silver offered it and then return it , struck into silver dollars . On January 3 , 1891 , two " free silver " advocates called at the Philadelphia Mint with a large ingot of silver , and asked for it to be coined . When the weighing clerk declined , they asked to see Bosbyshell , who received them , but refused their demand . He did , however , write at their request a letter stating that the laws forbade coinage of silver provided by the public .

Bosbyshell was Mint Superintendent while the Mint created new coin designs , including the Barber coinage , Columbian half dollar , and Isabella quarter . In the case of the quarter , issued in 1893 , Bosbyshell was involved in the consultations within the Mint over the design , and sent a letter to Caroline Peddle , who was initially hired to design the piece , requiring that the image of Queen Isabella on the coin not wear a crown . Soon after , Peddle withdrew from the project .

Cleveland was elected for a second non @-@ consecutive term in November 1892 . With the

Democrats in power again , new Mint Director Robert Preston in late March 1894 ordered Bosbyshell to turn over the Philadelphia Mint to his successor , Dr. Eugene Townsend . This required the counting of every coin in the facility , including cents and nickels . After consulting with the sureties on his bond as superintendent , Bosbyshell objected to resigning until the count (expected to take three months) was complete , but nevertheless left office as directed on March 31 , 1894 .

= = Later years , interests , and death = =

Bosbyshell had been elected vice @-@ president of the Fidelity National Life Insurance Company in February 1893 ; in December of that year he was elected treasurer instead , a post he still held as of 1908 . President McKinley appointed him a member of the 1898 Assay Commission .

In September 1893 , a major theft at the Philadelphia Mint had been discovered . Henry Cochran , weighing clerk , had been surreptitiously extracting gold bars from a vault sealed in 1887 , not with a solid door but with a latticed one that was somewhat loose . Bosbyshell , in taking custody of the Philadelphia Mint 's assets from his predecessor , Daniel Fox , had not asked for the gold to be weighed . When the gold was taken out to be converted into coin in 1893 , the shortage was discovered . Although some of the gold was recovered , there was still a shortage of \$ 12 @, @ 810 @.@ 82 , and the government brought suit against Bosbyshell after he left office in 1894 , securing judgment against him and the sureties on his bond . Bosbyshell appealed to the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit , which ruled against him . The district court had ruled for Bosbyshell on the matter of 733 silver dollars said to be missing , leaving only the question of the gold . Bosbyshell asked for review by the Supreme Court , but also sought legislative relief , and on February 2 , 1899 , Congress absolved him of the debt , making the court case moot .

With the outbreak of the Spanish ? American War in 1898 , Bosbyshell organized and served as colonel of the Nineteenth Pennsylvania National Guard Regiment , which was used for homeland defense . He remained in that capacity from August 1898 until November 1899 .

As well as the GAR , Bosbyshell had many interests and activities . An Episcopalian , he was a vestryman of the Church of the Savior in Philadelphia ; for many years he conducted the choir and involved himself in Sunday school work , often as superintendent . He memorialized his regiment 's wartime experiences with *The 48th in the War* , published in 1895 , and was a member of several other veterans societies . He was also chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University Lodge of Masons . Taking an interest in genealogy , around 1910 he published *Descendants of Christian and Elizabeth (Oliver) Bosbyshell 1782 ? 1910* .

Oliver Bosbyshell died on August 1 , 1921 , after suffering a stroke . He was survived by one of his children , Oliver , and by several grandchildren . He had four sons with his wife Martha , who died in 1914 ; their eldest son Nathan died in Los Angeles in 1888 at age 23 .