

Jack Hinson's One Man War

WINNER of the General Nathan Bedford Forrest Southern History Award
AWARD-WINNING FINALIST, History, National Best Books Awards, USA Book News

Jack Hinson never planned to become a deadly sniper. A prosperous and influential plantation owner in the 1850s, Hinson was devoted to raising his growing family and working his land. Though a slave-owner, Hinson was opposed to secession. But after a unit of Union occupation troops moved in on his land and summarily captured, executed, and placed the decapitated heads of his sons on his gateposts, Hinson abandoned his quiet life for one of revenge.

Equipped with a rifle he had specially made for long-range accuracy, Hinson became a dreaded enemy to the occupying army. By 1865, Hinson had likely killed more than one hundred men and had single-handedly taken down an armed Union transport in his one-man war against Grant's army and navy. By the end of the War Between the States, the Union had committed infantry and cavalry from nine regiments and a specially equipped amphibious task force of marines to capture Hinson, who was by that time nearly sixty years old. They never caught him. Since then, the story of Jack Hinson has evaded astute historians, and until now, he has remained invisible in the history of sniper warfare.

In this new biography, Jack Hinson's One Man War ([Pelican Publishing](#), 2009), Lt. Col. Tom C. McKenney masterfully recounts Hinson's extraordinary feats as a lone Confederate sniper.

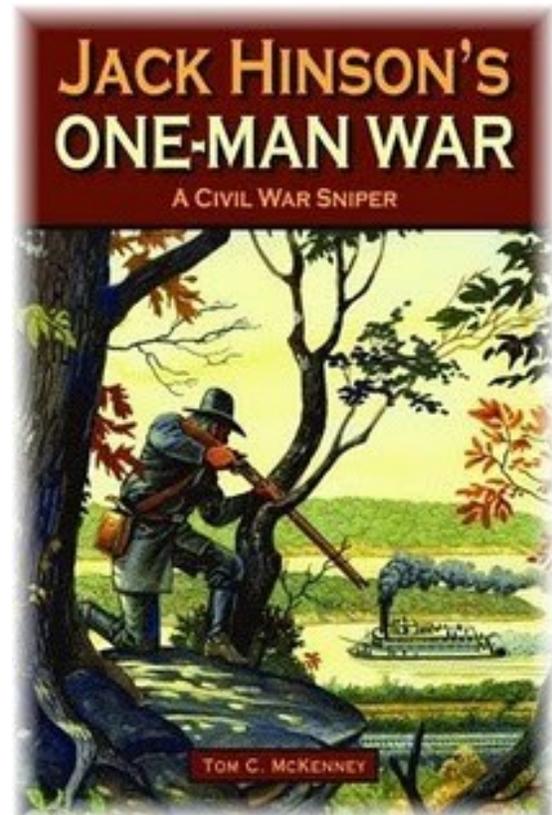
I recently had the opportunity to interview Mr. McKenney . . .

RW: First of all Colonel, tell us a little bit about yourself, where are you from, family, schooling, etc.

TM: I was born and reared in Lexington, Ky. Graduated from the University of Kentucky and the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill). My ancestors came to KY in the late 18th century from Virginia and South Carolina. I am a retired Marine, Korea, Vietnam, infantry, parachutist, and special operations. I'm retired for a disability incurred in Vietnam.

RW: What drew you to the story about Jack Hinson and how did you first become aware of it?

TM: I love history and read all historical markers. About 1965 I stopped to read a marker at the site of Golden Pond in the Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area (on the TN & KY border & depopulated by the United States Government in the 1940s). It spoke of a Confederate sniper whose sons were murdered by Union troops, causing him to seek vengeance. I never forgot that, and never lost the desire to pursue the story, but was unable to do so until about 15 years ago.



The true story of one man's reluctant but relentless war against the invaders of his country. A quiet, wealthy plantation owner, Jack Hinson watched the start of the Civil War with disinterest. Opposed to secession and a friend to Union and Confederate commanders alike, he did not want a war. After Union soldiers seized and murdered his sons, placing their decapitated heads on the gateposts of his estate, Hinson could remain indifferent no longer. He commissioned a special rifle for long-range accuracy, he took to the woods, and he set out for revenge. This remarkable biography presents the story of Jack Hinson, a lone Confederate sniper who, at the age of 57, waged a personal war on Grant's army and navy. The result of 15 years of scholarship, this meticulously researched and beautifully written work is the only account of Hinson's life ever recorded and involves an unbelievable cast of characters, including the Earp brothers, Jesse James, and Nathan Bedford Forrest.



RW: What was the most intriguing thing about Jack Hinson?

TM: Jack Hinson was an amazing man. Perhaps the most interesting thing about him is the combination of his unique neutrality as a peace-maker before the murder and mutilation of his sons, and the relentless, expert, killing machine that he became after that. My original title for the book was "Reluctant Warrior, One Man's War against Grant's Army and Navy."

RW: What were your primary sources?

TM: At first, my only resource was that historical marker at Golden Pond. I went back there and noted the serial number. Then I drove to Frankfort, KY the State Archives, and read the file on that marker. It was a huge disappointment--there was almost nothing in that folder but some correspondence. Eventually I attended reunions of vanished communities in the LBLNRA, ran ads in county newspapers asking for information, and made the rounds of county libraries, combing their collections. Informal, privately published county histories had little about Hinson. One 19th Century history of the Army of Tennessee had a paragraph with a physical description of Hinson and the only quotation of a statement known to exist. The rest came from digging, travelling and asking a lot of questions. I found the [sniper] rifle and developed a chain of possession. Then I spent hundreds of hours in rare book and document collections at Duke, Chapel Hill, the Filson collection, the TN and KY archives and the National Archives. I would have to say that there were no "primary sources"; my primary sources were all of the above. It was rather like sorting

through document fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls; all I had were fragments, from dozens of sources--mostly obscure--and it took a long time to put them together. One important thing I have learned about sources: Everywhere I went in the rural counties throughout the area I found zealous, local, unknown, amateur historians, who go about in obscurity, doing tireless research, people without a lot off education, who usually self-publish their work in fold-and-staple booklets or spiral binding at Office Depot. These people, and their publications, are priceless, largely unknown, treasures. There is not one of the five rural counties where most of the story took place that doesn't have an active, vital, county historical society.

RW: Are there any descendants still living?

TM: When I first began the research there were 4 living great grandchildren of Jack Hinson. During the research and writing the two great grandsons have died; the two great granddaughters are living, one in Montana and one in Tennessee.

RW: What do they think of your book?

TM: Both great grandsons were enthusiastic about the book and helpful; it is very sad that neither lived to see the final result. One great granddaughter was at times enthusiastic and at times unresponsive. The other great granddaughter has never been interested. My right arm, however, has been the widow of one great grandson, Frances Hinson; she is a zealous amateur historian, and was collecting information before I met her, but had very limited means to pursue it. We have been a team of two. As I say in the acknowledgements, she could qualify as co-author, but must not be held responsible for my mistakes.

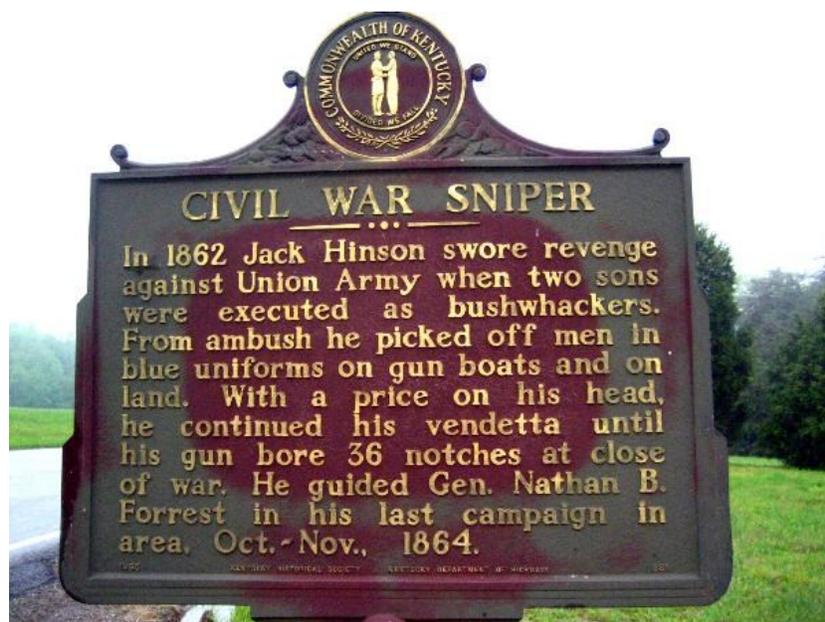
RW: How long did it take you to write the book?

TM: The research and writing began with a stroke--not of the pen, but the kind that happens in the brain. **In a very angry conflict with a publisher (over an index), I had a slight stroke. I decided to give myself a month off to recover, but didn't want to be idle. It occurred to me that I could finally begin to search for the Hinson story. In that month I found the rifle and made other progress, then went back to the regular schedule. Three years later I had another little stroke, so I gave myself another month to pursue the story, and much progress was made. Then about 5 years ago I decided that the project had languished long enough and gave it top priority. Altogether, it took about 15 years.

RW: Did Jack Hinson teach you anything and is there anything in particular you'd like for readers to learn from the story?

TM: The Jack Hinson story includes at least three important lessons in life: 1. It takes two to make peace, but only one to make a fight; he didn't want the war, but the war came to him. 2. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city (Prov 18:19). The bitterest enemies are friends whom we have betrayed. 3. Vengeance has a high price. It cost him at least 6 of his children, his plantation, businesses, and life as he had known it before the war. Additionally, in a military sense, guerrilla warfare works. By the end of the war, the Union had committed elements of 9 regiments and an amphibious task force of Marines against that one old man, and they never got him.

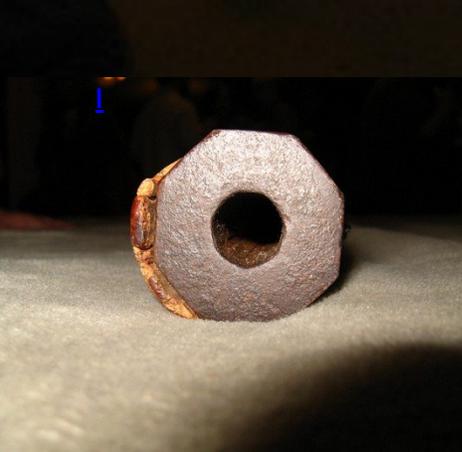
RW: Thank you Colonel.



<http://oldviriniablog.blogspot.com/2009/02/jack-hinsons-one-man-war.htm>



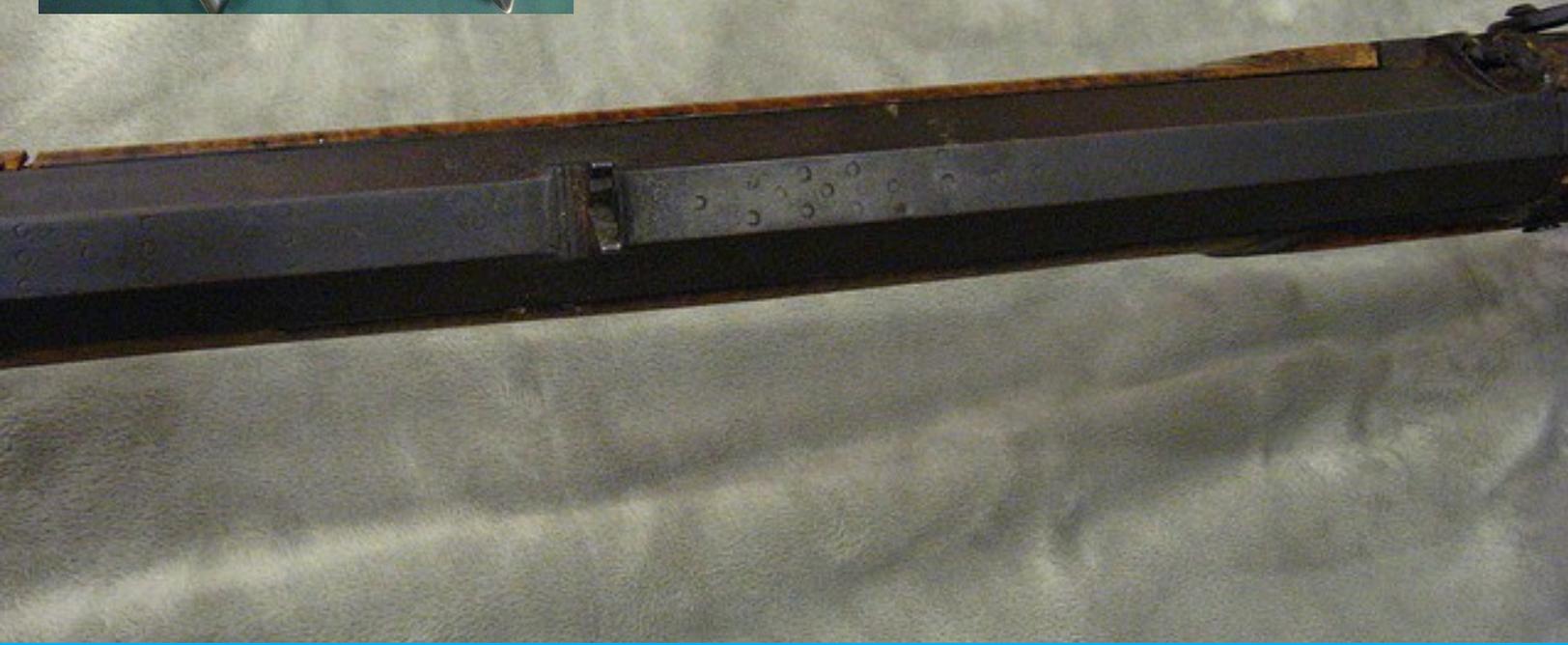
More great pictures of the rifle at http://www.flickr.com/photos/scott_fam_pics/sets/72157614976106266/





Here is a photograph of Hinson's pistols and a whiskey flask that belonged to Nathan Forrest.

<http://www.pelicanpub.com/proddetail.php?prod=9781589806405>



Justice Delivered! The circles on the barrel represent dead, that is, *good yankees* !



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Dr. Andy Bloom
2600 Years Ago, We Were Warned

Play media in flash player.

9:40 PM 5/9/2012

Hear Pastor John Weaver tell Jack Hinson's amazing story in his sermon: [Jack Hinson, Confederate Sniper](http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=105091215367) at: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=105091215367> (67 min. long).



Only known photograph (above).

Drawing by Robert DeWolfe (left).