

Pair of presentation Colt model 1851 Navy revolvers housed in their original pommel holsters presented to Colonel David Henry Williams of the 31st/82nd Pennsylvania Infantry on October 22nd, 1861



David Henry Williams (1819-1891) Led an interesting life prior to the American Civil War. Born in central New York he moved west to Detroit at the age of 18, to pursue a career as a railroad surveyor. Nearly ten years later, Williams joined the military as an enlisted man with forces bound for Mexico where his service remains much of a mystery. After the Mexican War Williams moved to the Pittsburg area and resumed his work with the ever-expanding railroad industry. In 1861, his county called and he was appointed Colonel of the 31st Pennsylvania Infantry. As many regiments were then enlisting, Pennsylvania had regular and reserve regiments. The 2nd Pennsylvania Reserves was designated the 31st Pennsylvania resulting in Williams' regiment to be redesignated the 82nd Pennsylvania Infantry regiment. Leading this regiment in 1862, Williams and his men were heavily engaged during the Peninsular Campaign, as well as, the battles of Seven Pines, Malvern Hill and other battles. For his actions, Williams was appointed a brigadier general on November 29, 1862, however, this appointment was never confirmed by Congress and expired before it could be voted upon. In early 1863, David Williams resigned from the army and returned to his home near Pittsburg to continue his civilian work as a railroad engineer. This was short lived however as Williams' health declined soon after, which prevented him from actively participating in the hard-physical work that was required of an engineer employed by a railroad company. Williams decided to become a writer for both newspapers and magazines, an effort that he became quite successful doing. He died in Pittsburg at the age of 72.

The pair of presentation Colt Model 1851 Navy Revolvers that are being offered in this auction were presented to Colonel Williams on October 22nd, 1861 by his friends from Philadelphia. The following day, October 23, 1861 Williams' regiment was presented with their flags, and as the flags would traverse the battlefields with the men of the regiment, the pistols housed in the accompanying saddle pommel holsters, would accompany Williams as he led the regiment on many hard-fought battlefields. They would return home with him after his service, treasured relics of an important time in American history.

