

TOLTEC and the Shreds of Truth From the Author

The interesting and exciting thing about writing historic fiction is the author's ability to disperse shreds of truth throughout the text. This can be done in varying degrees by using some actual character's names, actual places and historical events within the story. It helps to make the story become alive and allows the reader to let their imagination envision reality as the tale unfolds. It also permits the reader to inject themselves into the scenes to share the experiences with the characters and most important, lets the reader escape and become a part of the adventure—this is the fun of reading fiction.

In my historical action/adventure novel *TOLTEC*, one of the main characters, Elijah Walker, was this author's great grandfather—a colorful character who actually served as a captain in the Confederate cavalry during the American Civil War.

Born in High Bridge, KY in 1843, Elijah's family moved to Belmont, MO in 1857 and when the war broke out in 1861, he joined the Confederate 8th Missouri Calvary and fought in several skirmishes throughout the western theater. Among the different locations his unit visited he was especially attracted to the beautiful Paint Rock Valley area of northeast Alabama, and after the war, settled in a small town called Gurleyville (now Gurley) just east of Huntsville. Gurleyville was where he lived until his death in 1907. Elijah Walker's war record and other family information can be found in the Gurley, AL website in their "*From Our Past*" historical series or Googled: Captain Elijah F. Walker. His son, William was this author's grandfather.



Captain Elijah F. Walker (CSA)



Elijah F. Walker later years

It also interesting to note, in *TOLTEC*, Elijah serves in the 7th Alabama Calvary, an actual active Confederate cavalry unit formed in Madison County, AL and commanded by Captain Frank B. Gurley, later a good friend and business associate of Elijah Walker and uncle to Elijah's wife Matilda Gurley.

Elijah Walker served in the Alabama state legislature as Representative for Madison County from 1888-1889.



Elijah Walker and wife Matilda Gurley Walker with grand children at his Gurley, AL house built in 1872. This photo was taken around 1900.

Elijah Walker's close friend and associate in *TOLTEC* was Simon Murphy, a character derived from the great grandfather of this author's good friend Tom Murphy, formerly from Michigan and now residing in North Carolina. The idea for *TOLTEC* was hatched from a brief parody this author wrote pitting our ancestors against one another in a brief Civil War skirmish. Murphy's wife Sharron read the narrative and suggested I write a novel around the event. The rest is history.



Charles Murphy, born in County Cork, Ireland in 1840, came through Ellis Island with his family in 1845. The original family name was O'Murphy but the O was dropped through a clerical error and the family name was changed to Murphy. The family settled in Flint, Michigan with promises of cheap and fertile farmland.

Charles B. Murphy's wedding photo taken in 1868

In 1861, Charles Murphy joined the 2nd Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment and served in several Civil War battles including the 2nd battle of Bull Run, Antietam, Battles of the Wilderness and Cold Harbor. Sergeant Charles Murphy participated in the siege of Knoxville (Tennessee), ironically the author's home town. After the war Murphy returned to Flint, Michigan and married Patricia Malloy in 1868 who gave him seven children. Like many Midwesterners during the period, he participated in the occupation of farming.

Several historic figures, mostly political and military, are used in the book as background characters to add reality to the story. One such figure is the famous American detective Allan Pinkerton (1819-1884) who founded the famous private American detective agency. One of his accomplishments was the thwarting of a assassination plot against President-elect Abraham Lincoln in February 1861 in Baltimore. Presidents Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, and General Ulysses S. Grant also appear in several scenes as historical supporting characters. Most of the characters however, are fictional figures hatched in the mind of this author.

Many of the towns and cities are real places—Washington, DC, DeRidder, LA, Georgetown, Grand Cayman Island, Chichen Itza and Coba, Mexico. Some are fictional. The town of Gurleyville, Alabama (now Gurley) was originally named Gurley's Tank after the water tank built there to service the railroad steam engines.

The magnificent Toltec and Mayan temples, pyramids and other structures located in the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico, many which still stand today, are real and display incredible feats of ancient engineering and construction skills. The Toltec and Mayan builders, who quarried, shaped, moved, and lifted huge blocks of stone to construct their pyramids, accomplished incredible engineering feats that still prevail as one of the world's great mysteries. The Toltec Indians, the *Great Builders* as they are called, predated the Mayas and Aztecs and thrived from around 900-1200 AD. Their empire once controlled the areas of central Mexico, the Yucatan peninsula, the Gulf Coast and perhaps as far west as the Pacific Coast of Mexico. A warlike people themselves, the Toltecs were eventually absorbed into the Mayan civilization that was later conquered and absorbed by the mighty Aztecs. Like so many ancient civilizations, the Toltecs faded into history.

The photos below are current reminders of the magnificent structures left behind by the Indian civilizations of Mexico. How did those ancient engineers and builders acquire such amazing skills? This is another lingering enigma of the ancients.



Magnificent pyramids of Mexico still stand as a tribute to ancient pre-Columbian engineering skills



Temple of Kakulikan – Chichen Itza, Mexico

Aside from the historical significance of the times, places, and events of *TOLTEC*, this author sincerely hopes the reader can transport his or her mind back into another time and place and journey along with our characters as they search for a lost city and the hidden treasures of a lost civilization. I hope you enjoy the adventure experience...

Alex Walker