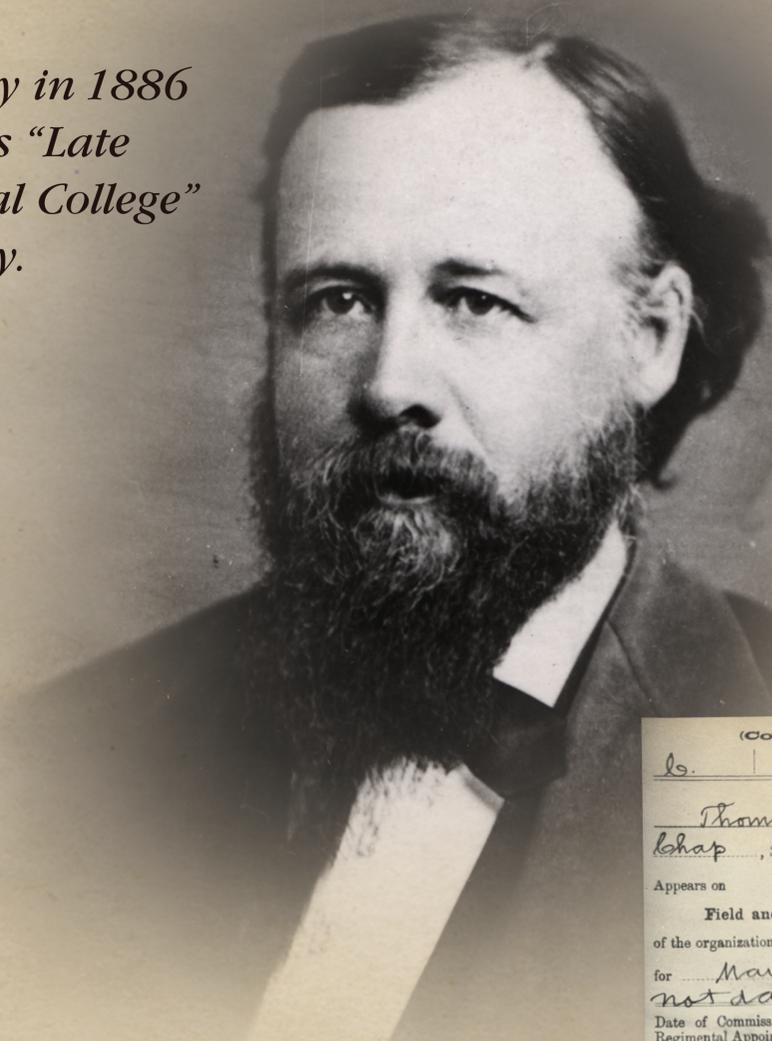
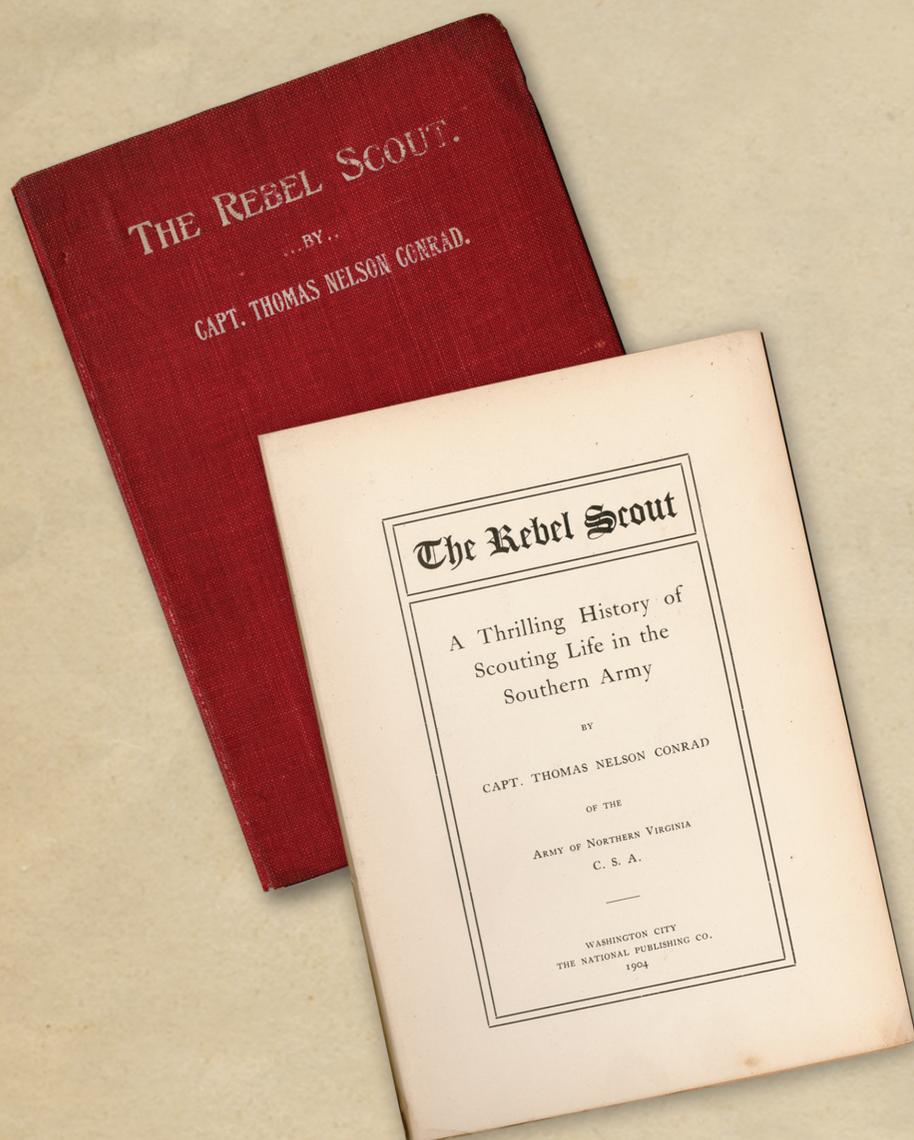


Thomas Nelson Conrad

When Thomas Nelson Conrad joined the MAC faculty in 1886 as professor of agriculture, the catalog touted him as "Late President of the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College" but failed to mention his career as a Confederate spy.

Born August 1, 1837, in Fairfax Court House, Virginia, Thomas Nelson Conrad graduated from Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1859. He began his teaching career at Georgetown Institute in Washington, D.C., and caught the attention of federal authorities when the school's 1861 commencement exercises turned into a Confederate rally. He was, in his own words, "intensely southern in the very fiber of his nature" and believed that slavery was "scriptural and God-ordained." Conrad was arrested and confined at the Old Capitol Prison.

After being freed in exchange for a federal prisoner, he enlisted in the 3rd Virginia Cavalry as a chaplain but was drawn to scouting, then more covertly into spying. Working under the command of Major General J.E.B. Stuart and later the Army Intelligence Office at Richmond, Conrad made valuable contributions to Confederate military tacticians. He spent time behind enemy lines in the District of Columbia, befriending Union clerks in the War Department, often remaining in residence for weeks at a time.



In his last and perhaps most dangerous assignment in March 1864, he donned clerical clothing and mingled with General Ambrose Burnside's troops camped in Annapolis and learned that they planned to reinforce General Ulysses S. Grant, information that was passed along to General Robert E. Lee. Citing nervous exhaustion, he then turned to less stressful counter-espionage activities. When the war ended, he dodged federal authorities until it was safe for him to return home.

While teaching at MAC in the late 1880s, Conrad published a series of articles in the *Philadelphia Times* detailing his wartime exploits. The articles were later expanded into a 1904 book entitled *The Rebel Scout: a Thrilling History of Scouting Life in the Southern Army*, which includes several episodes of capture and daring escape, one by feigning illness and another by jumping from a train, and describes his failed plot to abduct Abraham Lincoln.

He left his MAC professorship in 1890 and took a position with the U.S. Census Bureau. Conrad died in 1905, claiming to have lived long enough to have outgrown "many of the prejudices engendered by the war." He was buried with full cadet honors in Blacksburg, Virginia, not far from the campus of Virginia Polytechnic Institute, formerly Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College, where he had served as the third president.

(Confederate.)
Co. 3 Cav. Va.
Thomas N. Conrad
Chaplain, 3 Regiment Virginia Cavalry.
Appears on
Field and Staff Muster Roll
of the organization named above,
for May + June, 1864
not dated
Date of Commission, or
Regimental Appointment, Oct 1, 1863.
Station
Present or absent absent
Remarks: detailed on secret service for the Lt. Stuart. Reported for duty about 25 May 1864 - detailed again to report for duty to Army Intelligence Office, Richmond, Va. 30 Aug 1864
The 3d (also called the 3d) Regiment Virginia Cavalry was formed of independent companies which had been mustered into the service of the State of Virginia for one year. It was transferred to the service of the Confederate States July 1, 1861, and was reorganized April 26, 1862.
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