

### WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

WASHINGTON -- The thunder and smoke of dueling caninons preceded the capture by Union soldiers of a prized Alaibama Confederate battle flag nearly a century and a half ago.

But it didn't take an artillery bombardment for Nebraska to return the 146-year-old banner Wednesday.

Not a single musket volley was fired as a group of Nebraskans handed back the flag under a clear, blue sky during a Capitol Hill ceremony.

The flag belonged to the 1st Regiment, Alabama Volunteer Infantry, and it dates to 1861.

It follows the basic design of the first Confederate national flag: seven stars in a circle on a blue background and three horiizontal stripes, two red and one white. The flag's maker added the Alabama coat of arms inside the ring of stars, and the dates of a triumphant battle later were painted on the flag.

It was captured after Confedierate forces were defeated near New Madrid, Mo. A Union comimander took it home, then passed it on to his son, who moved to Neibraska.

The flag made its way into the possession of the Nebraska Hisitorical Society, which recently offered it to the Alabama Departiment of Archives and History. The

Alabama agency, which is building a collection of Confederate flags, hopes to display it soon.

Officials from the Nebraska Historical Society joined U.S. Reps. Jeff Fortenberry and Lee Terry, both Nebraska Republicans, in presenting the flag to representatives from the Alabama historical agency and Reps. Robert Aderholt and Terry Everett, both Alabama Republicans.

"It's good to be here this morning as we return a piece of Alabama history back to its home," Aderholt said before thanking the Nebraskans.

Fortenberry organized the ceremony after reading a newspaper story about the flag's pending return. Fortenberry is an avid reader of Civil War history and a member of the Congressional Battlefield Caucus, a group focused on preserving the country's military history.

"We couldn't be more excited to lend some decorum and formality to this important event," Fortenberry said.

Terry lent some levity to the event by suggesting that -- before turning over the flag -- Nebraska should insist on an agreement for the Huskers and the University of Alabama's Crimson Tide to host each other in future college football games.

Continuing the shift from battlefield to football field, Terry recalled the Jan. 1 Cotton Bowl between the Huskers and Auburn. "I would appreciate a thank-you for the two turnovers . . . that allowed Auburn to win that football game," he told the Alabama delegation.



