

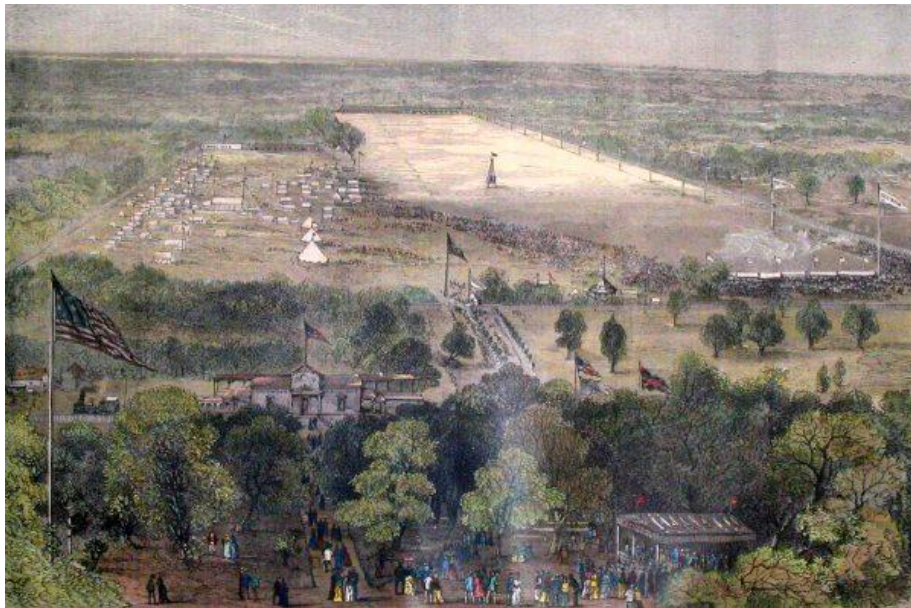
## **INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE FIRST CREEDMOOR MATCH — 1874**

### **THE STORY OF CREEDMORE**

Throughout recorded history tales abound about the fantastic shots taken by some of the early pioneers of this country, like Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. The incredible shot taken by Billy Dixon during the battle at Adobe Walls in the Texas panhandle in June 1874 is one that many consider to be the greatest ever made. Using a Sharps “Big 50” .50 caliber buffalo rifle, Dixon took careful aim, fired, and struck a hostile Indian sitting on horseback at an estimated distance of 1,538 yards — 9/10ths of a mile away!

It may seem hard to imagine now, but in the late 1800s and early 1900s, before baseball became the “national sport”, organized target matches were the most popular sport in this country. Probably the most famous long range precision match ever held, and the one that made the term “Creedmoor” famous, was the Long Range Black Powder match that took place between the United States and Ireland on the \*\*NRA’s newly established shooting facility built on the site of the “Creed” farm in upstate New York in 1874. The land around this area reminded many who saw it of the “moorland” in Great Britain — hence the term “Creedmoor”. Thousands of spectators came to watch long-range rifle matches held on “Creed’s Moor”, a range built by the \*\*NRA with funds from the New York state legislature.

***(\*\* The first President of the "National Rifle Association" was General Ambrose E. Burnside)***



***“Creed’s Moor” range built by the NRA with funds from  
the New York state legislature***

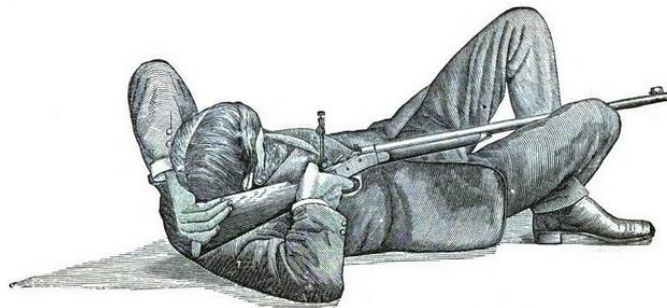
## **IRISH vs. AMERICAN RIFLE TEAMS**

- 1) The famous Creedmoor Match of 1874 between the American and Irish national teams came about as the result of a letter that was sent to the New York Herald and published on November 22, 1873 entitled "Challenge to the Riflemen of America from the Riflemen of Ireland".
- 2) The two teams that competed consisted of six (6) shooters on each team.



***The American Team***

- 3) The U.S. team used a combination of breech loading Remington Rolling Blocks and Sharps rifles. The Irish team used Rigby muzzle loading rifles.
- 4) The reason that you see pictures or lithographs from that time period with men shooting from a fully reclining position with the barrel of the rifle nested between their feet is because the rules of the day dictated that "Any position can be assumed, but no artificial rest is permitted either for the rifle or person of the shooter."



MAJOR HENRY FULTON IN POSITION.

5) The first Creedmoor Match was won by the American team on the very last shot of the match. The score with one shot remaining was the Irish team 931 and the American team 930.

John Bodine, also known to many as “Old Reliable”, was a 48-year old former Colonel in the New York Militia. When his time came to shoot, he calmly walked to the firing line at 1,000 yards, got into his shooting position (which oddly enough was a face-downward posture, but not using any type of crossed sticks for support of the barrel), took aim, and fired. His shot struck the black bullseye of the target for a score of 4 — giving the American team the victory with a final score of 934.

6) One of the best shots on the Irish team, a 24-year old wool merchant by the name of J. K. Milner, scored a bullseye (4) on his first shot at 900 yards — only to discover that he had fired on the wrong target. His shot was scored a “Miss”. That miss probably cost the Irish team the match.

7) **On the day of the match, September 26, 1874**, the two teams shot the 800 and 900 yard relays in the morning, took a one-hour break for lunch, and then completed the match with the 1,000 yard relay in the afternoon.

Apparently, one of the members of the American team, General T. S. Dakin, had a bit too much champagne with his lunch and did very poorly at 1,000 yards. He had three (3) misses out fifteen shots at 1,000 yards. His poor performance almost cost the U.S. team the match.

Fortunately, another member of the American team, H. Fulton, a 29-year old surveyor, put on an outstanding performance to help make up for Dakin’s indiscretion. Fulton scored 36 bullseyes and 9 centres in his 45 record shots — with not a single miss. His final score, out of a possible 180 points, was 171!

**Only one shot remained to be fired on our side, and still the Irish were three points ahead. If that shot at 1,000 yards proved a bull's eye, we had the victory by one point. If it was anything else, we were beaten. Being a "tie," it would be decided by the points made at the longest range, and the Irish had beaten us entirely at 1,000 yards.**

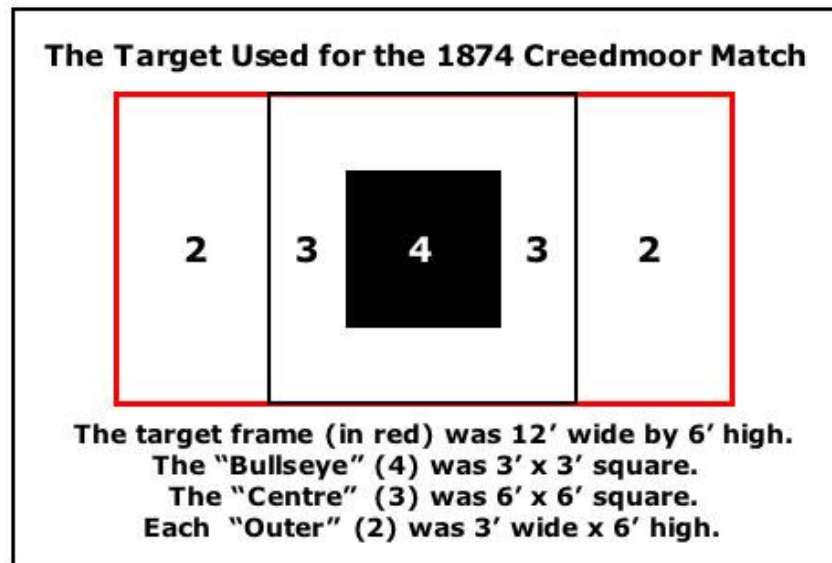
**The last shot was fired by John Bodine, thenceforth justly named “Old Reliable”; a tall, gaunt old man with bronzed face and iron gray hair. He came quietly forward and lay down on the ground, rifle in hand, and drew his sight on the dim black spot more than half mile away.**



COL. JOHN BODINE IN POSITION.

*(Skirmisher Lying.)*

Remember, you who think a three-foot bull's eye a huge mark, that a thousand yards off that bull's eye looks no larger than a spot of ink three-hundredths of an inch in diameter looks to you if you place it one yard from your eye; about the size of the "period " at the end of this sentence, as you now read your magazine, the page being about a foot from your eye. It is a visible spot, and that is all!



Remember further that Bodine's bullet was not going straight on that bull's eye, but seventy-five feet up in, air, thence descending on the target, just as you play a stream of water from a garden hose. Remember lastly that the difference between his striking that bull's eye and missing the target altogether was a tremor which should move his front sight one-hundredth of an inch; that on his shot depended victory or defeat for America; that he knew it; that the excited crowd knew it, and then judge the strain on his nerves. Quietly Old Reliable took his aim, and pulled the trigger. Away went the bullet singing on its way, every one listening intently for three or four seconds, till "clap!" came the welcome sound, as the lead flattened on the iron target. "He's on any way," was the excited murmur, and then how eagerly every one watched for the disk of the marker to rise from the pit under the target and proclaim the value of the shot. If a black disk came up, it was an outer, counting two, and the match was lost. If a red disk came up, it was a centre, three, the match a tie, and the Americans would be defeated.

At last came up a great white disk, hiding the bull's eye, and the crowd made a yell and rushed for Bodine, carrying him off in triumph. The match was ended and victory was won - hardly won, almost a defeat, but victory for all that.

The actual result of the victory was that the art of long-range rifle shooting became a national boast, and the future of Creedmoor was assured.

The challenge of the Irish to shoot a return match in Ireland was accepted, and the Dollymount victory assured the final success of American rifle practice as a national amusement. The American team won a complete and decisive victory over the Irish by 29 points at Dollymount in 1875, and the contest closed on higher scores for both sides than had ever before been made. It scared the English, and the Americans had the honor of being practically barred out of team contests at Wimbledon that year. They won an equally decisive victory, however, in the Elcho shield match of that meeting, for they were permitted to "coach" the Irish team, and their pupils won the shield on better scores than had ever been made in that celebrated match.

They developed too in the Dollymount contest the last crowning excellence of American rifle shooting, which is certain to give them the victory in all future contests against any team not using the same system. This was the "unity" system of team shooting.

Small diagrams of the targets are kept beside the marksmen in this method, and each shot is "spotted" with a telescope and marked on the diagram so as to indicate without any talking the amount of error caused by the wind, to enable each marksman to correct himself by his next neighbor's experience.



FREDERICK WHITTAKER.