

Vol LXI, #1

Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

January 2021

## MEMBER RENEWAL

The MRRT celebrates its 61<sup>st</sup> year in 2021 – and now is a great time to show your support by renewing your membership! (Or become a new member!).

Membership is \$25 a year – or \$5 for students. Checks should be made out to

Treasurer **Jeanie Graham** (the bank does not like checks made out to the RoundTable) and can be mailed to her home at **29835 Northbrook, Farmington Hills, MI 48334-2326**.

Sadly, long-time member and friend of the Roundtable, Gary Pike, passed away on January 16, 2021. Gary served the Roundtable as President for several years and participated in several of our field trips. He gave a presentation on “Getting Ready for War”, the story of a Rebel soldier as he got ready to go to war. One of his ancestors fought for both sides during the war! He and his wife, Marilyn, were married for 54 years.

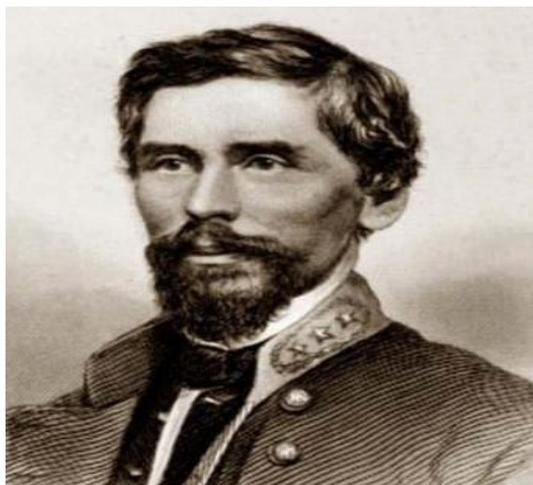
The January 2021 meeting was cancelled because of the pandemic. We are optimistic that we will be able to meet during 2021 and travel to the Culpepper, Virginia area for our field trip.

Please visit our website at <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt>.

### Civil War Essentials - Patrick Cleburne – the Irishman in Confederate Gray

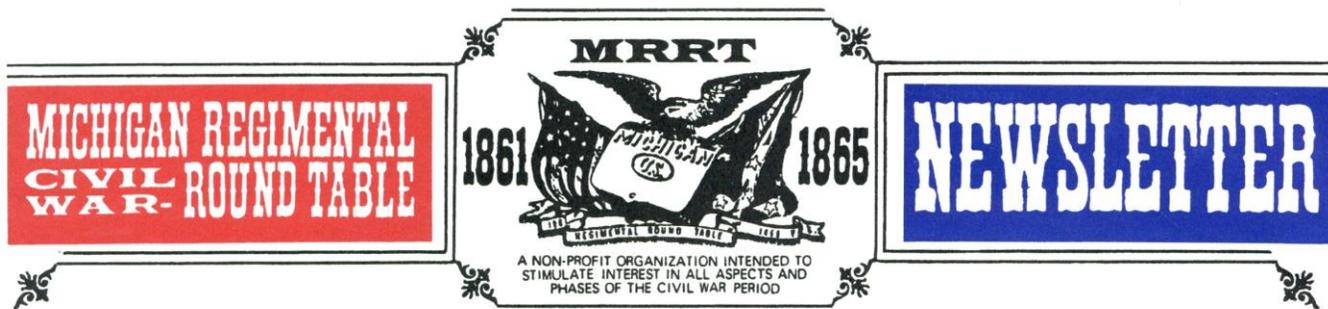
Patrick R. Cleburne, born in County Cork, Ireland on St. Patrick’s Day in 1828, was one of the stars of the Confederate military leadership. As a foreign-born person and without a formal military education, his rise through the ranks of officers in the rebel army was slower than his skill warranted. He was only a division commander at the time of his death in November 1864, but **his reputation as a capable and hard fighter was unexcelled**. He was heralded as “*The Stonewall of the West*” and “*The Ney of the Confederacy*” (after Marshal Michel Ney, one of Napoleon Bonaparte’s most renowned generals).

In 1846, Cleburne, whose father was a physician, applied to the Trinity College of Medicine but failed the entrance exam. Perhaps depressed by this failure on top of his father’s death the year before, he enlisted in the 41<sup>st</sup> Regiment of Foot in the British army. He rose to the rank of corporal, but after 3 years was able to obtain a discharge. **He then emigrated to the US with several siblings and settled in Helena, Arkansas**. He started out as a pharmacist but, together with Thomas Hindman (who also became a CSA general), purchased a newspaper. By 1860 he had become a citizen, passed the bar to become a lawyer, and was fully integrated into Helena society.



**As the Civil War commenced, Cleburne decided to support the Confederacy. He joined a militia company as a private but quickly rose to captain** and with his company took over the US arsenal at Little Rock. His militia company was integrated into an Arkansas regiment and in the fall of 1861 was moved across the Mississippi to join Albert Sydney Johnston’s army where further promotions followed. **At Shiloh, Cleburne’s division was on the Confederate left and helped push Sherman’s men steadily backwards during the first day’s fighting**. In April/May 1862, after Shiloh, his force engaged in bluffing Henry Halleck’s ponderous Union army approaching Corinth, Ms. long enough for valuable supplies and railroad rolling stock to be removed before the city was yielded.

Cleburne next participated in the Bragg/Kirby Smith invasion of Kentucky. In August, at the rebel victory at Richmond, Ky., he received a serious wound to his face. He recovered in time to rejoin the army for the



Battle of Perrysville in October 1862 where he was again slightly wounded during his attack on the right flank of McCook's Corps. **In December, he was promoted to major general.**

**He and his division were praised by Braxton Bragg for their hard fighting at Stones River** fought at the year's end. As part of Hardee's Corps, they attacked the right side of Rosecrans' Union army and pressed it back far behind its initial position. Bragg had less success along the rest of his line, so the battle was ultimately inconclusive, and he decided to retreat.

Again, at Chickamauga in September 1863, **Cleburne hammered Rosecrans' force, this time attacking the left center of the Union army, forcing it slowly back.** Desperate to support his embattled left flank, General Rosecrans made a fatal error by ordering a division already engaged elsewhere along his line to transfer to the left side. This opened a gap in the Union line which General Longstreet immediately exploited, resulting in a clear Confederate victory that forced the Yankees to withdraw to Chattanooga.

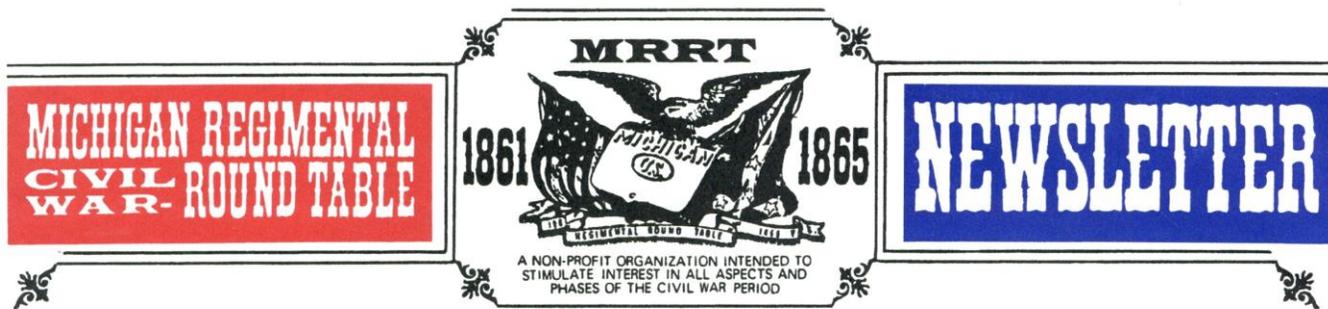
### Chattanooga Battles-1863

**The battles around Chattanooga would highlight Cleburne's skill in defense.** Bragg failed to aggressively follow up on his victory at Chickamauga and, with US Grant in charge, the Union army began to recover. By late November 1863, Grant felt ready to counterattack Bragg and force him away from the city. A key aspect of his strategy was to have William T. Sherman attack the right flank of the main rebel position on Missionary Ridge while Joseph Hooker attacked their position on Lookout Mountain. Hooker succeeded at his end but **Cleburne's stubborn defense of a position on a high point called Tunnel Hill completely foiled the Union army's repeated attacks, inflicting heavy casualties on Sherman's force.** Only the collapse of the Confederate center on Missionary Ridge itself forced Cleburne to withdraw and he did so in good order covering the disorderly retreat of the rest of Bragg's army. **Two days later, as Bragg continued his retreat, Cleburne again acted to stave off the pursuit of Union forces under Joseph Hooker at a pass through the mountains of extreme northern Georgia called Ringgold Gap.** Although the rebel defenders were outnumbered 4 to 1, Hooker's attacks were turned back with heavy loss while Cleburne's loss was minimal. Partly due to Cleburne's success there, Grant called off further pursuit of the retreating Confederates. **For his efforts in this campaign, Patrick Cleburne was given the official Thanks of the Confederate Congress.**

Cleburne's support for the Confederacy was based on a belief in the doctrine of States' Rights and his fondness for Arkansas, *not* for the institution of slavery. He had never owned a slave. He could see that slavery had become a vulnerability and an embarrassment for the Confederacy. **In January 1864 he circulated a written proposal to the other senior leaders of the Army of Tennessee that, in view of the pressing need for more manpower, the Confederacy should draft slaves into the army. Their freedom would be given to them in return for faithful service.** Not surprisingly, his proposal was roundly condemned by other senior officers and by the Richmond government which suppressed all records of it. **Confederate disapproval of his act ensured that he would never rise any higher although his military skills justified a corps command.** The great irony is that the Confederate Congress finally, in desperation, passed a bill in 1865 authorizing the recruitment of slave soldiers into the rebel army - exactly as Cleburne had proposed a little over 1 year before! By then it was too late, the war ended before any could be used in combat.

### Battle of Franklin

He continued to fight in the Army of Tennessee during the 1864 Atlanta Campaign's complex maneuvering battles between Joseph Johnston and Sherman. After losing Atlanta, John Bell Hood, who had replaced Johnston, determined to invade Tennessee, and recover Nashville rather than continue to spar with Sherman. Hood's strategy was to outmarch Union General John Schofield and cut off and destroy his force (4<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Corps) before Schofield could retreat to junction with the army General George Thomas was assembling at Nashville. He nearly succeeded at Spring Hill, Tennessee but the Union force was able to escape the trap at night up the inexplicably unguarded road north.



**Hood's frustration at the failure to block the road caused him to lash out at virtually all his subordinates, especially Benjamin Cheatham, including Cleburne.** Cleburne intended to ask for an investigation into the failure at Spring Hill to clear his name. He would never have the chance. **General Patrick R. Cleburne was killed along with many of his division's officers and men in the disastrous frontal attack ordered by Hood on Schofield's entrenched force at Franklin, Tennessee on November 30, 1864.**

**Of Cleburne and his men, General William Hardee said,** "Where *this division defended, no odds broke its line; where it attacked, no numbers resisted its onslaught, save only once; and there is the grave of Cleburne*".

**Quiz Questions: This month's questions pertain to the Navies-Part 2.**

1. Which Union ironclad sunk in 12 minutes without the loss of life after striking two torpedoes on December 12, 1862? Which river did this event happen?
2. What were "tinclads"? What was another name for this type of vessel?
3. Name the Federal ironclad that fought alongside the *Monitor* against a powerful Confederate battery at Drewry's Bluff on May 15, 1862. Who commanded this vessel which lost 13 dead and 11 wounded?
4. Which U.S. diplomat was called out of retirement to help resolve the "Alabama" claims? How much money was Great Britain ordered to pay the United States?
5. Which Federal naval captain had two sons who served the Confederacy, was scalded by escaping steam aboard his vessel at Fort Henry, and died of heart disease during the war on May 1, 1864?

Our thanks to "Old Sarge" for his help with these questions.

**Civil War Essentials - Mississippi River Squadron – Part 2** The capture of Fort Henry in February 1862 established the Union Western Gunboat Flotilla as a powerful force capable of destroying Confederate fortifications and strongholds along the Western rivers. A week after Fort Henry, Admiral Foote's gunboats pounded the Confederate fortifications at Fort Donelson. However, the Rebel guns forced the Union fleet to retreat. Union victory came when General Grant's army forced the Confederates in the fort to surrender.

#### **Spring 1862 Union Victories on the Mississippi**

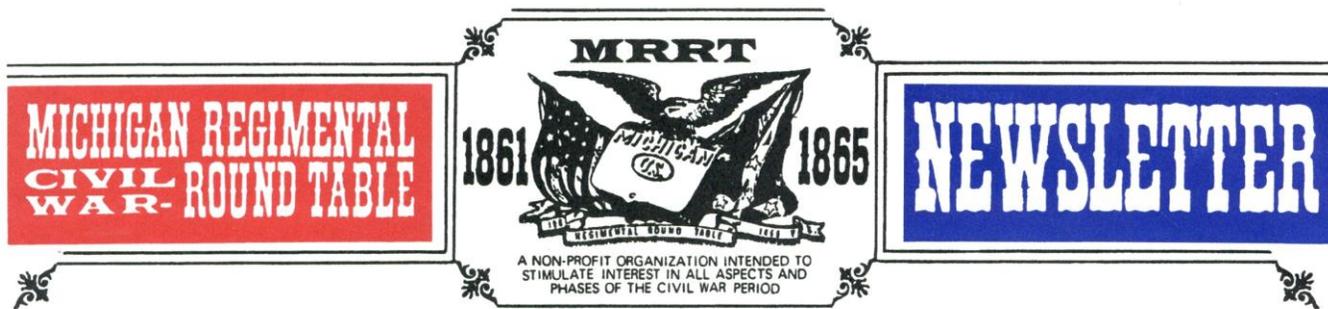
Shortly thereafter, Admiral Foote's Flotilla bombarded the Confederate garrisons at New Madrid, Missouri, and Island Number 10 on the Mississippi River. The Navy then transported thousands of Federal infantries past the Rebel defenses. These positions fell shortly afterwards. Then, New Orleans surrendered to Admiral David Farragut's West Gulf Blockading Squadron on April 25, 1862. Significant progress in opening the Mississippi River had been made in only two months.

#### **The Battle of Memphis – June 1862**

Further progress was made in June 1862. The Union Flotilla, now commanded by Charles H. Davis, took Fort Pillow and Memphis within two hours on June 6, 1862. The Flotilla now included the Ram Fleet, which were steam-powered tugboats with reinforced hulls to ram enemy ships. Included with the Ram Fleet was the Mississippi Marine Brigade, which included marines, artillery, and cavalry.

**The Battle of Memphis was a major Union victory.** The Confederate River Defense Fleet, after the garrison fled to Vicksburg, decided to fight. Union commander Charles Davis said that the fight began when "*the Rebels...opened fire*". A combination of gunfire and ramming, "*compelled the remaining (Rebel) vessels to resort to their superiority in speed as the only means of safety.*" Only one rebel boat escaped, the *General Van Dorn*.

**As a result of the Memphis victory, the command of the Western Gunboat Flotilla was transferred from the army to the navy, with Admiral David Porter in command. The flotilla's success on the Mississippi River was "one of the brightest pages in the history of the war for the preservation of the integrity of the country and the suppression of a**



*causeless and wicked rebellion*". By October 1862, Vicksburg and Port Hudson, Mississippi was the only two locations on the Mississippi River with Confederate garrisons.

### Vicksburg

After several failed attempts to capture Vicksburg from December 1862 to March 1863, Union Army commander General Grant used intelligence gathered by the Mississippi River Squadron to devise a joint Army-Navy operation to capture Vicksburg. He wrote to Admiral Porter, "*I will go below Vicksburg and cross over if I can depend upon you for a sufficient naval force. I will prepare some transports...and we'll start as soon as you are ready*".



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The Mississippi River Squadron was ordered on April 16, 1863 to run past the Vicksburg batteries to bring necessary supplies and transport vessels to Grant's army near Grand Gulf. During the night, the squadron embarked with engines muffled, lights off, and protected with

cotton bales, "*to prevent the enemy from becoming aware of our design*".

When the fleet approached Vicksburg, large fires around the Confederate defenses illuminated the river to discover approaching Union gunboats. Rebel batteries opened on the Flotilla as well as Confederate soldiers only 20 yards away from the gunboats. The Mississippi River Squadron only lost two transport ships and several sailors were killed or wounded.

### Importance of Vicksburg

Admiral Porter wrote in his book, *Incidents and Anecdotes of the Civil War*, "*The Vicksburgers must have been disappointed when they saw us get by their batteries with so little damage...General Grant had turned the enemy's flank with his army, I had turned it with the gun-boats; now Grant had to cross the river and trust to his brave soldiers.*"

*Grant's army crossed the Mississippi with the assistance of the Mississippi River Squadron on May 1, 1863. Without the Squadron's help it would have been impossible to cross the River.*

*Immediately after General Pemberton's surrender on July 4, 1863, General Grant thanked Admiral Porter in person for the Navy's assistance in the successful campaign. "The most perfect harmony reigned between the two arms of the service"*.

### Quiz Answers:

1. U.S.S. *Cairo* and the Yazoo River. The U.S. S. *Cairo* is on display at the Vicksburg National Military Park.
2. 4<sup>th</sup> class gunboats designed for use on shallow rivers (they were neither "tin" nor classified as ironclads). "Light Draft" was another name for this type of vessel.
3. U.S.S. *Galena* and John Rodgers was the commander.
4. Charles Francis Adams, son of President John Quincy Adams and grandson of President John Adams. The British paid \$15.5 million in gold to the United States.
5. William D. Porter