

“No people ever warred for independence with more relative advantages than the Confederates; and if, as a military question, they have failed, then no country must aim at freedom by means of war.” So stated P.G.T. Beauregard in his assessment of the South’s chances for victory in the Civil War. But did the Confederacy, whose advantages were less tangible than the Federal side, stand a chance in a war?

Population alone showed the North’s overwhelming strength: 22,000,000 to the South’s 9,000,000, a 2 ½ :1 advantage. Consider, too, that 3 ½ million of the South’s population were slaves, thus reducing their overall number to 5 ½ million—giving the North a 4:1 manpower advantage. It is also significant that halfway through the war, the North began using Black soldiers—187,000 total. Other notable advantages—industry, railroads, navies, an established government and credit—made the North’s chances for victory strikingly evident.

However, the U.S. was possibly less ready for what proved to be its biggest war than for any other war in its history. In early 1861 most of the tiny 16,000-man army was scattered in seventy-nine frontier outposts west of the Mississippi. Nearly one third of its officers were resigning to go with the South. The War Department slumbered in ancient bureaucratic routine, led by a known corrupt Secretary. Most of its clerks, as well as the four previous secretaries of war, had come from the South. All but one of the heads of the eight army bureaus had been in service since the War of 1812. General-in-Chief Winfield Scott was 74 years old, suffered from dropsy and vertigo, and weighed in at nearly 400 pounds. Furthermore, the army had nothing resembling a general staff, no strategic plans, no program for mobilization. Although the army did have a Bureau of Topographical Engineers, it possessed few accurate maps of the South. When Henry W. Halleck, commanding the Western Department in early 1861, wanted maps he had to buy them from a St. Louis bookstore! Only two officers had commanded as much as a brigade in combat, and both were over seventy. Finally, most of the arms in government arsenals were old smoothbores, many of them flintlocks of antique vintage.

This month, our guest speaker and MRRT member, John Renick, will answer the question “*Could the South Have Won the War?*” Born in Indiana and raised in Detroit, John is a retired Information Security Manager with a Masters Degree in history from Wayne State University. His grandfather served in the Civil War, volunteering as a drummer boy at age 14, and spent a year in a Confederate prison. John’s talk will assess the relative strengths of both sides, including leadership, both military and civilian, intangibles that existed, and a judgment as to the South’s chances for victory.

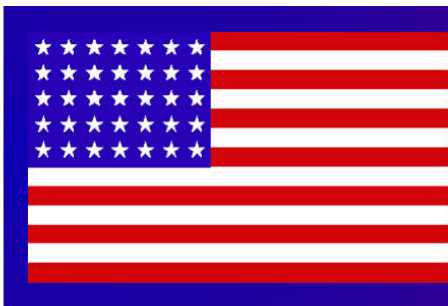
Come join us for this unusual presentation—**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23.**

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A special thank you from the Michigan Regimental for last month’s speaker, **Weldon Petz**, who presented “*A Pilgrimage With Abraham Lincoln.*” As usual, Weldon gave a sterling performance and held another audience spellbound. We also have Weldon committed to present next January’s program.

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Probably the highlight of each year in the MRRT is the **Fall Field Trip**. Last year’s trip—the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864—was no exception. It’s time again to decide where our trip will take us in the fall of 2004. We are due once again for a venture to a Western battlefield. Come help us choose a destination and be ready to cast your vote at this month’s meeting.



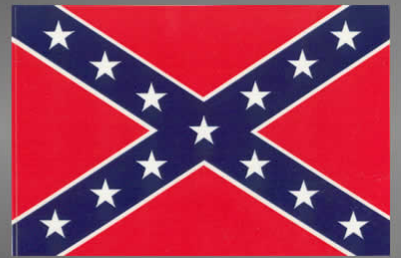
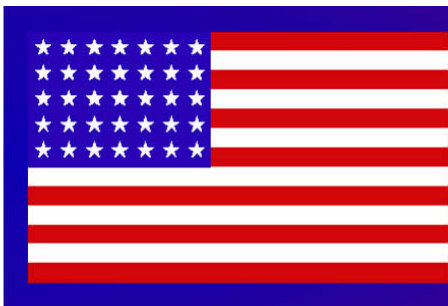
QUIZ: February was not known as a busy month during the Civil War. But certain events of importance occurred. Identify the following.

1. Two famous Confederate generals share their birthdays on February 6. [Hints: one married the daughter of a Union general and was killed at age 31, and the other led the assault on Fort Stedman near the war's end and is listed by some as a lieutenant general.]
2. On February 19, 1861, Jefferson Davis began selecting his cabinet. What 2 men (and their positions) were the only ones to remain in their respective posts throughout the four-year Confederacy?
3. On February 23, 1861, President-elect Abraham Lincoln arrived in Washington D.C. What two famous bodyguards came with him?
4. On February 1, 1862, the *Atlantic Monthly* published new lyrics to the tune of "John Brown's Body." Who wrote the words to the new popular hit and what was the title of the song?
5. On February 16, 1862, Ulysses S. Grant captured a Confederate stronghold. Name it and the wounded naval Flag Officer whose fleet helped Grant complete the victory.
6. Federal forces captured an important state capital in a bloodless victory on February 25, 1862. Name the city and the Union general who captured it.
7. On February 5, 1863, new commander of the Army of the Potomac, Joseph Hooker, eliminated the system of Grand Divisions and created a Corps system. Name 4 of his newly-appointed Corps Commanders.
8. On February 9, 1864, 109 Federal soldiers tunneled out of a Confederate prison. Name the prison and the Federal Colonel, captured by Nathan Bedford Forrest in his ill-fated raid through Alabama, who also escaped.
9. On February 24, 1864, despite objections, who did Jefferson Davis promote to Commander-in-Chief of the Confederate Army? And, which Confederate general warned Davis that the promotion would be "rewarding failure"?
10. On February 6, 1865, Jefferson Davis named his last of six Secretaries of War. Name him and the man he replaced for this post.

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Few Civil War scholars would recognize the name of Justin E. Dimick, who graduated number 26 of 34 in the 5-year West Point Class of June, 1861. Certainly Dimick was a favorite of other cadets. Morris Schaff, from the Class of 1862, remembered Dimick as "a joyous-hearted man." What seemed to make him popular were his uncanny knack for picking up demerits and his irreverence for authority. He stuck his bayonet in the wooden facing of the barracks wall with such force as to damage his musket, threw bread in the mess hall, smoked his pipe in a room near the Commandant's Office, wandered off the academy grounds to Cozzen's Hotel at eleven at night, overturned a model, defaced it with ink, and destroyed the drawing of another cadet, to say nothing of chewing tobacco in the drawing academy, spitting in his desk drawer and putting his quids (chewed tobacco plugs) in the same place. One student remembered Dimick entering the moral science room with his section and proceeding to use his textbook as a football, shouting as he kicked it all over the room, "*The virtues are what we are, the duties are what we do; what we are is more important than what we do. Therefore the virtues are more important than the duties.*" At this point the book smashed through a window pane as the instructor entered the room. A classmate remembered that the professor ordered, "*Go to your quarters in arrest, Mr. Dimick.*" In June, 1857 Dimick had a total of 225 demerits for the year and 107 for the past six months—more than enough to be expelled. Rumor had it that he would be asked to leave the academy. Later it was decided by the Superintendent that he would be "*turned back*" into the class just entering.

Neither decision pleased his fellow cadets. Henry du Pont wrote indignantly, "*They have gone and dismissed my particular friend, Dimick, without any sort of trial....No court martial would have dismissed him, and he has been treated with great injustice. Dimick has gone on to Washington to try and get reinstated, but I fear his chances are slim.*" Du



Pont, of course, was incorrect, as Dimick managed with the help of his father to get himself reinstated to the corps, promising never again to break the rules. As of April 8, he was once more a cadet and graduated in June of 1861. Interestingly, one of his classmates was none other than the hell-raising and demerit mongering Ohioan, George Armstrong Custer.

When Justin's father took over command as colonel of the First United States Artillery, he used his influence to obtain a commission for his son in the U.S. 6th Infantry. After fighting at First Bull Run, Justin was transferred to Fort Warren in Boston harbor as Adjutant. Justin, however, squirmed at having to spend his time in a safe desk job while his friends and classmates were rising in the field. Transferred to Battery H of the First Artillery he fought with his new command at the Battle of Fredericksburg.

On Saturday, May 2, 1863, Dimick was wounded in the foot during the first day of fighting at Chancellorsville. But he refused to leave his command. His horse was also shot from beneath him. A captain wrote: "*Lieutenant Dimick showed the skill and judgment of an accomplished artillery officer and the intrepid bravery of the truest soldier.*" Late the next day he was wounded in the spine by a Confederate sharpshooter. He lived in agony for two more days. On the 5th of May, his second in command, James Sanderson, reported that Dimick had died at half past five that afternoon in Potomac Creek Hospital. An officer wrote: "*[Dimick] was an educated and accomplished officer, just budding into the full vigor of manhood. As a line officer he has shown fine abilities, and on the battlefield was unsurpassed for gallantry.*" A Portsmouth, New Hampshire newspaper stated: "*He was a young man of noble impulses, generous to a fault, and a thorough soldier. He leaves a large circle of mourning relatives and friends by whom he was greatly beloved.*" Justin Dimick was buried in Portsmouth. His gravestone reads:

Lieutenant Justin E. Dimick, son of Col. Justin and Mary G. Dimick, was mortally wounded in the Battle of Chancellorsville on 3rd May while in command of Battery H, 2nd Reg. U.S. Artillery and died on 5 May 1863, Aged 23 years. He was a gallant Officer, a dutiful Son, and an affectionate Brother.

QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. Jeb Stuart and John Brown Gordon
2. Stephen Mallory (Secretary of the Navy) and John Reagan (Postmaster General)
3. Allan Pinkerton and Ward Hill Lamon
4. Julia Ward Howe and "Battle Hymn of the Republic"
5. Fort Donelson and Andrew Foote
6. Nashville and Don Carlos Buell
7. John F. Reynolds, Darius Couch, Dan Sickles, George Meade, John Sedgwick, William F. Smith, Franz Sigel, Henry Slocum and George Stoneman (cavalry)
8. Libby Prison and Abel D. Streight
9. Braxton Bragg and James Longstreet
10. John Breckinridge and James Seddon

Come join us for the next meeting on **MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23** at the downtown Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road). **John Renick** will present the arguments for his topic, "*Could the South Have Won the War?*" The meeting will begin at 6:30 P.M., but show up early for some fellowship. See you there! And try our website: <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.