

“History presents no instance of a people exhibiting a purer and more unselfish patriotism, or a higher spirit of fortitude and courage, than was evidenced by the citizens of Fredericksburg,” stated Robert E. Lee in 1862. Founded in 1727, the proud city of Fredericksburg had once been the home of such luminaries as George Washington, James Monroe, John Paul Jones, and Matthew Fontaine Maury. One visitor called it *“an ancient city....noted for the refinement of its inhabitants, their aristocratic characteristics and the beauty of its women.”* In 1860 the city contained 5,020 residents, nearly one-third of which were slaves, along with an additional 400 freed blacks. Located on the eastern bank of the Rappahannock River, Fredericksburg, a thriving commercial city with fine homes, stood halfway between the wartime capitals, Washington D.C. and Richmond. By virtue of its geographic position Fredericksburg was destined to feel the awful sting of war. As one Confederate noted, *“Virginia is truly unfortunate in being the theater upon which this monster war is enacted....My heart has been made to bleed freely when called to witness the sufferings of the weak and helpless inhabitants of this unfortunate country.”* Federal soldiers first occupied Fredericksburg in April of 1862. Although the city was left intact, the townspeople, especially the women, often demonstrated their hatred for the intruders. One Federal in a letter to his mother described the local ladies giving *“invitations to kiss them in localities that I never thought of applying that token of affection.”*

By December of 1862 Fredericksburg was the target for two opposing armies as nearly 200,000 soldiers descended upon the town to do battle. Early in the month Robert E. Lee ordered the townspeople to evacuate and over 4000 slowly trudged away from their homes. Federal artillery began bombarding Fredericksburg at dawn of December 11 destroying more than 80 buildings. The normally stoic Lee found the words to show his contempt for the enemy: *“Those people delight to destroy the weak and those who can make no defense. It just suits them!”* Confederate Benjamin Stiles harbored his own grudge: *“I do believe after seeing all I have I could murder the devils in cold blood.”*

When the Yankees finally reoccupied the town, many of them proceeded to loot the finer houses and destroy or steal private property. *“Everything that they could not eat or wear,”* wrote a New Yorker, *“they destroyed in pure wantonness.”* Another eyewitness noted: *“What was a short time since a wealthy city, is now nothing but a poverty-stricken place.”* When the two armies finally marched away, many forlorn townspeople returned to find their city and homes in ruin. Collections were soon taken up in Lee’s army to relieve the suffering of the civilians. One Georgia regiment raised \$500; Stonewall Jackson personally donated \$100 while his headquarters staff gave \$800; and A.P. Hill’s division collected \$10,000.

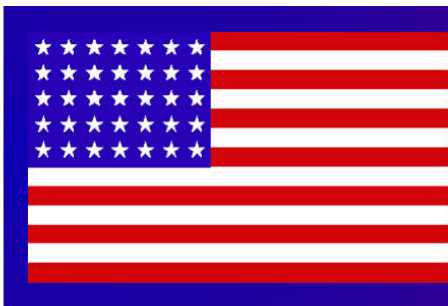
On **MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26** the MRRT is exceptionally pleased to have as our special guest speaker, **Liz Stringer**, who will present the heartrending story, **“Wartime Fredericksburg.”** Four years ago this month Liz delighted us with a program on *“ ‘Crazy Bet’: Union Spy, Elizabeth Van Lew.”* As a member of the Abraham Lincoln Civil War Round Table, Liz has served as their president for over ten years and leads them on TWO Field Trips per year. Liz’s style, sense of humor, and great ability to tell a story all guarantee this to be an outstanding program. Circle that date now.

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The Michigan Regimental extends its warmest thank you to last month’s speaker, Dr. Weldon Petz. Weldon’s superlative talk, *“Michigan’s Monumental Tribute to Abraham Lincoln,”* was enhanced by a variety of slides and anecdotes which prove again why Weldon is simply the best.

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FALL FIELD TRIP: The weekend dates of our Fall Trip to Gettysburg have now been finalized! Our tour guide, John Heiser, who led us around America’s most hallowed battlefield 12 years ago, has agreed to do it again. So you’ll want to be in attendance to sign up for this extraordinary trip.



QUIZ: CITIES OF THE CIVIL WAR

1. Which city, the Confederacy’s largest, was formally surrendered on 25 April 1862, and who captured it?
2. Which Confederate city, the 25th most populous in the U.S. at the outbreak of the Civil War, was the 3rd largest among Southern cities? And, name the largest hospital located within this city.
3. Which Confederate city remained the only major Southern port still in Confederate hands at the war’s end? And, which Confederate general formally surrendered this city on 2 June 1865?
4. Of which city did President Lincoln’s personal secretary, John Hay, state: “This miserable sprawling village imagines itself a city because it is wicked”? And, which city was sometimes called the “Gibraltar of the Confederacy”?
5. When the Civil War broke out in 1861 which 9 U.S. cities had a population of over 100,000?
6. Although born in New York, from which Michigan city did wartime Governor Austin Blair hail? And, Blair’s successor, Henry Crapo, born in Massachusetts, represented which Michigan city?
7. In which city was Abraham Lincoln re-nominated for the Presidency on 7 June 1864? And, a week earlier Republican mavericks met to nominate which Federal general who was later persuaded by Michigan Senator Zachariah Chandler to withdraw from the race? [Extra Credit: In which city was this general nominated?]
8. In which city was George McClellan nominated by the Democratic Party for President in 1864? And, when the Michigan State Democratic Convention met in 1864 who did the party nominate for Governor? [Extra Credit: From which Michigan city did this man hail?]
9. On March 19-20, 1865, William T. Sherman and his army fought their last major battle, attacking the Confederate army near which town? And, which Western city did the 1st Michigan Cavalry muster out on 10 March 1866?
10. Thirty-five miles west of Staunton, Virginia Stonewall Jackson fought the initial engagement of his Shenandoah Valley Campaign by defeating Robert Milroy’s forces at which Virginia town? And, near which town did Jackson fight the last battle of the campaign on 9 June 1862?

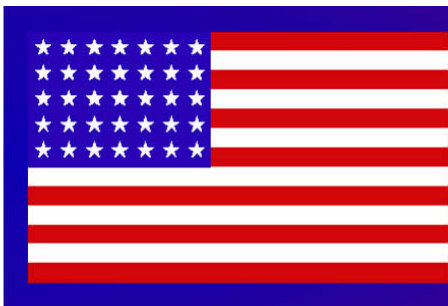
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Stories from the Battlefield of Fredericksburg.....

Thomas Francis Galwey of the 8th Ohio Infantry participated in the attack against the Stone Wall along Marye’s Heights. “General [Darius] Couch orders the advance,” remembered Galwey. “With a cheer we deployed and went forward at a run.....We halted for a few minutes behind a light rise of ground to reform and to give the short-winded men time to come up. Then with a lusty cheer we bounded forward again, not halting until we had taken the house at the fork of the road. Here the fighting became desperate. We distributed ourselves among the houses in the vicinity, firing from behind fences, out of windows, and from every possible cover.

“We carried our bleeding comrades in, laying them first on the counters and then, as their number increased, on the floor....Strangest of all, here we found a woman who, either by accident or a foolhardy desire to save her property, had descended into the cellar. This house was right in the vortex of the whirlpool of destruction. Bullets whistled through it in every direction. Shells shattered every glass window. The wounded began to beg for water, and their comrades, after looking everywhere in vain for a well, dragged the poor woman out of her cellar. Opening the back door which looked out on the enemy’s terrible batteries on the heights, they forced her out into the pelting shower of missiles to show them the well. Poor woman! She must have gone mad with fear, if she finally escaped with her life.”

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W.W. Blackford, Jeb Stuart’s Chief Engineer and a former resident of Fredericksburg, was sent into the town after the battle to check on the enemy’s whereabouts and to ascertain the damage done to the city. Blackford was soon joined by his brothers, Eugene and Charles. *“Our old home,”* wrote Blackford, *“had been used as a hospital. The room in which we were born was half inch deep in clotted blood still wet, and the walls were spattered with it, and all around were scattered legs and arms. The place smelt like a butcher’s shambles.*

“Our uncle, Mr. John Minor, had lived here until his death not long before....he had surrounded himself with a fine library of rare books and many works of art, and curiosities of all kinds. These books and valuables, it seems, had been used for the amusement of the troops during their occupation, and what they had not carried off were scattered all over the town. How many memories of my boyhood came crowding into my mind as I wandered through the rooms, every corner of which was so familiar to me, and how strange it seemed that I should now see them under such circumstances. In the old ‘cuddy,’ as it was called, a garret where all household lumber was stored, there was at that moment a dead man, but we did not know it; he had been firing at our lines from that retreat when a bullet laid him low. His body was not found for weeks in that dark, lonely place.”

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After the battle a **London Times** correspondent wrote: *“Death, nothing but death everywhere, great masses of bodies tossed out of the churches as the sufferers expired; layers of corpses stretched in the balconies of houses as though taking a siesta. In one yard a surgeon’s block for operating was still standing, and, more appalling to look at even than the bodies of the dead, piles of arms and legs, amputated as soon as their owners had been carried off the field, were heaped in a corner. There were said to be houses literally crammed with the dead; but into them, horrified and aghast at what I saw, I could not look.”*

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Confederate Val C. Giles wrote: *“No general that ever lived could have whipped Lee at Fredericksburg.....The Battle of Fredericksburg was a complete failure as far as results were concerned. Not one foot of disputed territory was gained or lost by either army, though nearly 20,000 American soldiers were killed or wounded there. The only result was a flood of women’s tears from the St. Lawrence to the Rio Grande.”*

QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. New Orleans and David Farragut
2. Richmond and Chimborazo Hospital
3. Galveston, Texas and Edmund Kirby Smith
4. Washington D.C. and Vicksburg
5. New York, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, Baltimore, Boston, New Orleans, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Chicago
6. Jackson and Flint
7. Baltimore and John C. Fremont [Extra Credit: Cleveland]
8. Chicago and William M. Fenton [Extra Credit: Flint]
9. Bentonville, North Carolina and Salt Lake City, Utah
10. McDowell and Port Republic

A reminder to attend our meeting on **MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26** to hear **Liz Stringer’s** excellent rendition of *“Wartime Fredericksburg.”* As usual, we’ll start at 6:30 P.M. in the Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road). Plus, you’ll get a chance to sign up for the trip to Gettysburg. It’s a meeting you can’t afford to miss!

Also try our website: <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.