

MEMBER RENEWAL

The MRRT celebrates its 58th year in 2018 – and this month is a great time to show your support by renewing your membership! (Or become a new member!). Membership remains \$20 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; or simply bought to the meeting and given to Jeanie. Cash is always welcomed.

Our Monday, February 26, 2018 meeting begins at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library. Abraham Lincoln (Ron Carley) will be visiting with us! The President will share with us “Lincoln Straight from the Horses’ Mouth”! The story of Abraham Lincoln’s early years in Illinois was remarkable. He went from a failed store owner to postmaster to a self-taught lawyer and a member of the Illinois state legislator. Abraham will give us the straight story of what happened to him before he became well-known. Ron Carley has been a Lincoln presenter since 2012. He was the Lincoln Look Alike Winner in 2017. Ron is a member of the Association of Lincoln Presenters. **Please come to our February 26, 2018 meeting and enjoy a great evening with the President!**



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

Member Dr. Ernest Abel will have his book, *John Wilkes Booth and the Women Who Loved Him*, published on April 9, 2018! Dr. Abel spoke to the Roundtable on this subject in April, 2017!

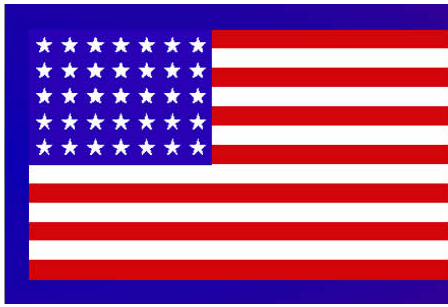
We are looking for a member(s) to become coffee sergeant.

The February 2018 meeting will include the PRELIMINARY vote for our fall trip destination. Several sites were suggested as possible destinations during the January meeting. Proposals include Atlanta, Chickamauga & Chattanooga, Gettysburg, the 1862 or 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaigns (based in Winchester, Virginia), and West Point. The FINAL VOTE will be at our March meeting. If a member knows a good tour guide for a particular destination that will be a major help in the vote!



The Roundtable thanks member Jeff Glass for his outstanding presentation on “*Sultana: Rear Guard of the Army of the Dead*”. The *Sultana* was a Mississippi River side-wheeled steamboat that exploded on April 27, 1865, resulting in the worst maritime disaster in United States history. The *Sultana* losses of 1,800 victims were greater than the *Titanic*’s (1912) 1,500 plus and the sinking of the *Lusitania* (1915), 1,200. Most of the victims were survivors of the Confederate prison camps at Andersonville, Georgia and Cahaba, Alabama. Some of the prisoners had been held for a year or more as prisoner exchanges were ended until they began again in February, 1865. Most of the former prisoners were starved and sick or both. They were dressed in rags. The two-year old *Sultana* with Captain J. Cass Mason of St. Louis was licensed to carry only 376 passengers and a crew of 75 to 80 men. Lieutenant Colonel Ruben Hatch, Union Quartermaster at Vicksburg, asked Captain Mason to carry 2,400 passengers at \$3 per person. Captain Mason then gave Lieut. Col. Hatch a kickback for the deal.

Several other boats were also very overcrowded with exchanged prisoners. Army record-keeping was sloppy and



incomplete in the rush to get as many men as possible home. Lieut. Colonel Hatch later was court-martialed but escaped major punishment.

The Sultana traveled from Vicksburg to Memphis with a 260 foot long boiler repair that was patched rather than replaced in Vicksburg. The ship left Memphis for the North at 1 AM on April 27, 1865. Bagged coal was added on at Mound City, Arkansas.

The Sultana struggled against the strong current going north. Then, three of the ship's boilers exploded at 2 AM on the 27th. The explosion was caused by too much pressure and low water in the boilers. The boiler repair did not hold-up. The boat was engulfed in flames as passengers near the boilers died immediately. Most of the other passengers were injured. Survivors had to jump into 60 degree water. The passengers in the water fought over scraps of wooden debris. Several clung to mule carcasses. Hypothermia and drowning were the fate of many victims in the water.

The *Bostonia II* was the first ship to reach the Sultana disaster. Hay bales were thrown overboard to act as life preservers. **Other ships arrived from Memphis, 7 miles away. The rescue ships originally thought that the glow from the ship was a house fire. Over 700 people were pulled from the river of which 200 died shortly thereafter.** They were buried in Memphis's Elmwood Cemetery.



Final death casualties were 1,700 to 1,800, including Captain Mason. Only a few hundred bodies were recovered from the river. Many former prisoners made their way to Camp Chase by paying for their own train tickets instead of the government paid for steamboat trip.

The tragedy was only briefly mentioned in the eastern newspapers, probably because the day before John Wilkes Booth was killed and

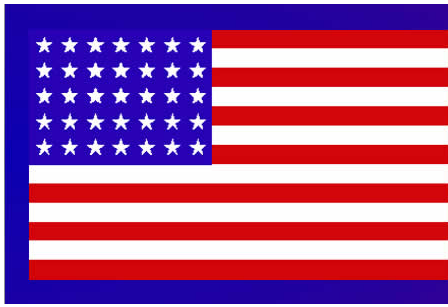
General Joseph Johnston surrendered to General Sherman. Also, after four years of war the public became mostly immune to large losses of life.

Michigan losses were 280, of which 95 were from the 18th Michigan. A monument to the *Sultana* was erected in Hillsdale, Michigan. Losses from other states included Ohio – 700, Indiana – 500, and Kentucky – 190.

The survivors formed associations that met periodically. The last survivor, from the 3rd Tennessee Cavalry (U.S.), died in 1941. The last Northern survivor, from Grand Rapids, MI, died in 1938.

The charred remains of the *Sultana* were found in 1982 buried in a soybean field west of the present day Mississippi River course. Today, a small *Sultana* museum is located in Marion, Arkansas.

MRRT Minutes for January 29, 2018: Call to Order 6:40 pm, about 20 present on a cold, snowy night **Pledge** Dedicated to the Union soldiers from the North and South who died on the *Sultana* **Introduction of Guests and New Members** Bob Coch, a former member; Dwane Getzmeyer; and Mike Crumley, each members of other roundtables. **Treasurer's Report** Jeanie Graham will be next month **Secretary's Report** Accepted **Preservation** Joe Epstein reported on the latest Civil War Trust efforts. A \$33.42 to \$1 match on 33 acres at New Market, VA, where the U.S. Colored Troops won 15 Medals of Honor on Sept. 29, 1864, 126 acres at North Anna, 5 tracts at North Anna, and 5 tracts on the Cold Harbor Battlefield. Waiting to hear about the status of Camp Letterman at Gettysburg **Newsletters** No change **Website** No change **Trip Report** the Roundtable proposed several sites for our 2018 field trip. A lead on a tour guide really assists a particular destination. **Program** The 2018 speaker program was in the January 2018 newsletter **Items of Interest** Larry Hathcock found information about the GAR Post, the R.W. Thompson in Steel (Steel's Depot), St. Clair Co., Alabama. Several from the community lost their lives on the *Sultana*. **New Business** None **Old Business** None

**Quiz Questions: This month's questions and answers pertain to Abraham Lincoln in Illinois.**

1. How long did Abraham Lincoln "ride the circuit"? Which circuit did he ride?
2. Which courthouses from Lincoln's time still survive today?
3. When did Abraham Lincoln live in New Salem? How did he make a living during this time period?
4. How did Abraham Lincoln acquire the nickname, "Honest Abe"?
5. How did Abraham Lincoln become a lawyer?

Civil War Essentials: Ambrose Burnside – An Early Positive Contribution to Victory

Apart from his (unintentional) contribution to men's facial hair fashion, Burnside is mostly known for his bloody failed attack at Fredericksburg in late 1862 and his inept handling of the 1864 infantry assault after the mine explosion at the "Crater". **However, he should be credited with a series of early victories which were both timely and crucial to the Union cause.**

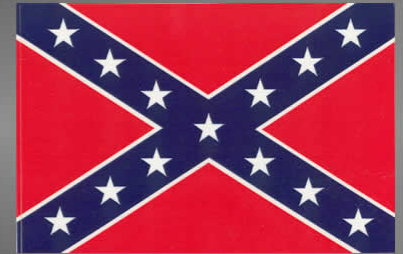
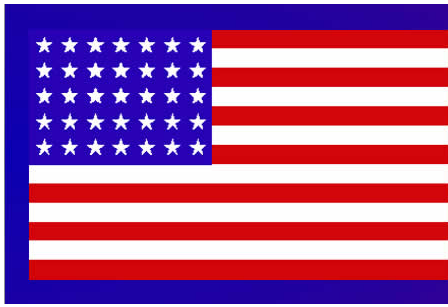
Burnside, an 1847 West Point grad, had reentered the Army in 1861 as commander of a Rhode Island 90-day volunteer regiment. After Bull Run, the regiment's enlistment expired and Burnside was left idle. **He and McClellan used the time to develop the concept of an amphibious assault on the Confederate coast.** The Union had begun seizing a few strategically key points on the CSA's east coast and by the end of 1861 held Hatteras Island (seized by Ben Butler – his *only* military success) and Port Royal. They gave the Union's blockading fleets some port/ coaling facilities closer to their patrol stations and reduced the amount of coastline the Confederates could use for blockade running or privateers.

Roanoke Island controlled North Carolina's Albemarle Sound. Capturing it would further reduce the coast left to the Confederates and threaten their inland communications with Virginia. Burnside and McClellan agreed to his raising a "coastal division" primarily recruited from men from the northeastern states to include some sea-wise men. This avoided Little Mac's resistance to any drain of troops from the Army of the Potomac. These troops would use light draft surf boats and launches suitable for the shallow waters of the coast. Secretary Welles pledged full Navy support. Burnside raised about 12,000 men and with great difficulty acquired around 80 vessels. Because the Navy had already been active buying ships for the blockade, Burnside had to choose from what was left. Many vessels proved to be ill-suited as transports and their sailing qualities varied greatly. **To counter his troops' resentment that he had originally planned to travel on the best ship, he transferred to a small rickety steamer, the *Picket*.** His motley fleet joined the naval forces at Hampton Roads in January 1862 and proceeded down the coast where it ran into a major storm. Many ships including the *Picket* were nearly overwhelmed and five were beached and abandoned. The lost ships contained horses and wagons whose loss would be felt later. When they arrived at Hatteras Inlet, the ex-sailors and fishermen in the force had to struggle with the problem of the Inlet being only 7 ft. deep – some of the transports drew more. By early February the fleet had passed into Pamlico Sound.



On February 7, while the Navy engaged the small rebel Fort Bartow, 3 Union brigades carried out a successful landing on the island's west coast. As planned by Burnside and Navy commander Louis Goldsborough, the men rode longboats and barges towed by shallow draft steamers towards the shore. At the last moment, the steamers cast off their lines and turned and the troop carriers were rowed to shore. Over 4000 men were ashore in under an hour; 10000 by midnight. The next day, Burnside's force defeated the poorly armed 2500 man rebel force on the Island and forced its' surrender.

In March 1862, he followed up this success and by again using a combined army and navy force captured New Bern, North Carolina's 2nd largest port. Beaufort, Morehead City and Fort Macon fell to the Federals in April. In June, Burnside planned to penetrate



into the interior of the state and attack vital communications with Richmond. General McClellan's defeat on the Peninsula forced the recall of Burnside and part of his force to support Little Mac. The Union held the captured areas until war's end, but the remainder of the coastal war was mostly indecisive raids and bushwhacking – brutal, destructive but indecisive.

Beside the seizure of strategic cities and parts of 13 valuable coastal North Carolina counties, the true benefit of Burnside's coastal campaign lay in the victories' uplift of Northern morale (and the reverse in the South) and the proof that a well-planned army/naval "task force" action could achieve major results. Burnside displayed vision, the ability to work with the Navy, and sensitivity to his men's views.

Quiz Answers:

1. Abraham Lincoln rode the Eighth Judicial Circuit of Illinois for 20 years.
2. Two are in Mt. Pulaski and Metamora, Illinois. The Logan County Courthouse is preserved at Greenfield Village in Dearborn, MI
3. Abraham Lincoln lived in New Salem from 1831-1837, when he moved to Springfield. During this time period he was a boatman, soldier in the Black Hawk war, general store owner, postmaster, land surveyor and was elected to the Illinois General Assembly for the first time in 1834.
4. Abraham's former store partner died in January, 1835. He became liable for all of their debts, over \$1,100. Abraham sold almost all of his possessions (a friend bought the items and gave them back to Abraham) and then paid the balance off over time in cash, which was very unusual at the time.
5. His New Salem friend, lawyer John Todd Stuart, encouraged Abraham to read the law. Abraham became his junior partner when he received his law license in 1837. Over four years they were involved in at least 700 cases.

Civil War Essentials – James Hanger (1842-1919) Prosthetics

James Hanger was an engineering student at Washington College (Virginia) when the Civil War began in 1861. He joined the 23rd Virginia Infantry in the western Virginia town of Philippi. **He experienced the first land battle of the Civil War on June 3, 1861 in Philippi when General George McClellan made a name for himself.**

James was severely wounded below the left knee by a 6-pound solid shot during the battle. A Union surgeon amputated his left leg. He and another Rebel soldier became the first of over 50,000 amputees from both sides during the war.

James was exchanged and discharged from the Confederate army. **During his recovery he engineered his own false leg. Using old oak barrel staves, rubber bumpers, and nails, he created a prosthetic leg so that he could walk and stand. He added hinges and joints so that the limb would feel more natural. By the end of 1861, the Hanger Limb prototype was complete and he opened his first shop in Staunton, Virginia.**

James continued to produce and improve his design. He received two Confederate patents and opened another store in Richmond, Virginia. **By the end of the war the State of Virginia and the Association for the Relief of Maimed Soldiers had ordered over 1,000 false limbs for Confederate amputees.**

After the war ended, James Hanger's business grew rapidly in the Northern states. He received a U.S. Patent and his company was incorporated in 1906. He went to Europe during World War 1 to teach amputees how to use the prosthetic limbs. James died in 1919, shortly after the end of the war.

Today, Hanger, Inc. is the largest provider of prosthetics in the world!