

MEMBER RENEWAL

The MRRT is celebrating its 57th year in 2017 – and this month is a great time to show your support by renewing your membership (or becoming 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, March 27, 2017 meeting begins at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library with member Dr. David Stoddard sharing with us the story of “The Red River Campaign”. Please visit our website at <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt>

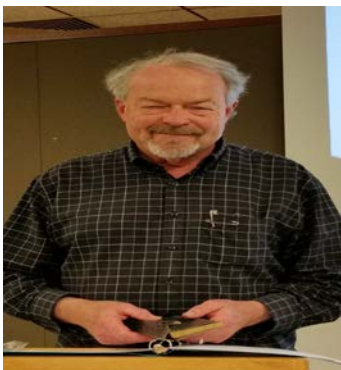
The March meeting will include the FINAL vote for our fall trip destination. The two finalists are Chattanooga/Chickamauga or Shiloh/Corinth. If you are interested in going and will not be able to attend the March meeting, you may send Mollie an e-mail at mmgalate@gmail.com or telephone her at 313.530.8516.

The Roundtable welcomes member Dr. David Stoddard, who will speak on “The Red River Campaign”.

The Red River Campaign (March 10 – May 22, 1864), which included the largest combined army-navy operation of the war, was the last decisive Confederate victory of the war. The commanders of both armies had major issues during the campaign. One Union general complained that “one damn blunder from beginning to end”. The two Confederate leaders, Generals Edmund Kirby Smith and Richard Taylor, had numerous heated arguments. The cotton trade was deeply involved in the expedition. Member Dr. David Stoddard will share with us the story of this often neglected episode of the Civil War. One of his ancestors was involved in the campaign. David is a member of the Roundtable who has recently toured both Civil War and Revolutionary War sites. He is a radiologist after graduating from the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine. (Right – Union Commander General Nathaniel Banks)



The Roundtable would like to thank member Bill Christen for his enjoyable and educational presentation on “The Curtis Brothers of Connecticut”. Bill and his wife, Glenna Jo, have spent one and a half years researching and cataloging over 700 pages of documents from the Curtis family of Connecticut that were mostly preserved in a barrel that was over 150 years old. James Bond (his real name!) of Omaha, Nebraska received the barrel and its contents from the estate of his late father, Milton W. Bond. Also, one of James’ relatives in Pennsylvania had boxes of letters and 16 diaries. Most of the documents were from the 1850’s through the end of the 19th Century. Bill has been

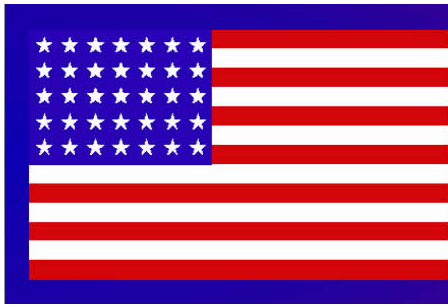


transcribing and putting the documents in chronological order. There were also numerous photographs of the Curtis family and friends included in the treasure trove.

There were nine Curtis siblings, five boys and four girls, who all wrote to each other for many years. Their father was a prosperous carpenter. There were also numerous letters from friends of the Curtis family.

The barrel was purchased from a stationery store. The letters were in amazingly good condition with no water damage after so many years. Some of the writing was difficult to read. Bill sometimes found it hard to understand the cursive writing.

James great-grandfather, Frederick Curtis (1840-1925) was in the First Connecticut Cavalry and two of his brothers, John and Elliot, were mainly with the



Ninth Connecticut Infantry. Frederick spent time in Detroit (not during the war) selling Hoover sewing machines. He also worked at the Adam Express Agency in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Frederick's brother, Elliot (1831-1894), fought at Bull Run with the 3rd Connecticut Infantry. He joined the 9th Connecticut Infantry and participated in the Gulf campaign. After three years of service he became a Major in the 4th Regiment, U.S. Veteran Volunteers. **One of his duties as Provost Marshall of New Orleans was to provide security for one of John Wilkes Booth's performances. He received a letter from Captain and future President William McKinley informing him of the murder of President Lincoln. Later, Elliott was in charge of the regiment watching the Lincoln conspirators hanging in Washington, D.C.**

John Curtis (1845-1917) was a 2nd Lieutenant in the 9th Connecticut. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions capturing two Rebel soldiers at the point of a bayonet on August 5, 1862 at the Battle of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The medal was lost and then replaced by the U.S. government. Bill saw the replacement at a Curtis relative's home in California. The original may still be out there someplace!

Another brother, Cornelius, did not serve in the Union Army. He participated in minstrel shows, using black face.

Bill is presently transcribing 15 dairies from 1854 to 1867. He and his wife continue their amazing research!

MRRT Minutes for February 27, 2017: Call to Order 6:45 pm, about 25 present for business meeting **Pledge** Dedicated to Bob Casteronochs, a Marine buddy of Gene, whose funeral was today **Introduction of Guests and New Members** Guest Suzanna Clinton, Marsha Greco, and Dennis Cruthers. Marsha and Dennis joined the Roundtable! **Secretary's Report** Accepted **Preservation** No Report **Newsletters** No report **Website** Updated monthly **Program** Our April 2017 has postponed his presentation. Member Dr. Abel has agreed to replace him with a talk on "Lincoln's Assassin and the Women Who Loved Him". **Items of Interest** Dr. David Stoddard discussed his recent trip to Civil War and Revolutionary War sites in South Carolina. There will be a Re-enactors Conference at Monroe Community College, March 24-26. The cost is \$110 with pre-registration required. **New Business** None **Old Business** Most of the incumbent officers were re-elected. Wayne Smith – President, Gary Pritchard – Vice President (New), Mollie Galate-Secretary, and Jeanie Graham - Treasurer

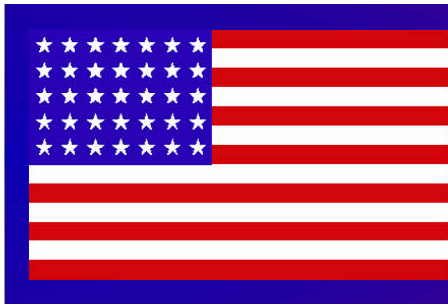
Quiz Questions: This month's questions and answers pertain to "The Red River Campaign".

1. What was the relationship between General Nathaniel Banks and Admiral David Porter?
2. What was the significance of Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith in 1865?
3. Describe the Union command structure during the Red River Campaign?
4. What was General Banks relationship with the New England textile industry?
5. What was the effect on Mobile, Alabama of the Red River Campaign?

Orlando Poe – adopted Michigan Hero – Part 2

During the period between Antietam and Fredericksburg, Poe again sought to secure a brigadier generalship, by writing Secretary Stanton, Ohio Senator Howard, and Michigan Senator Chandler. His hopes were doomed since he was identified with McClellan who was now viewed by these "radicals" as soft on the vigorous prosecution of the war. Chandler's anti-McClellan prejudices also condemned Generals Willcox, William Franklin and William Smith to backwater positions. The war hawks viewed West Point grads, especially engineers with their emphasis on fortifications, as too defense-oriented to aggressively push the war to a successful conclusion.

At Fredericksburg, the Ninth Corps, including Poe's men, was in the center and not among the Union forces which made bloody, unsuccessful assaults on the left and right. **After Fredericksburg, the Ninth was transferred to Fortress Monroe and Poe was given temporary command of a division. Poe was finally promoted to Regular Army captain**



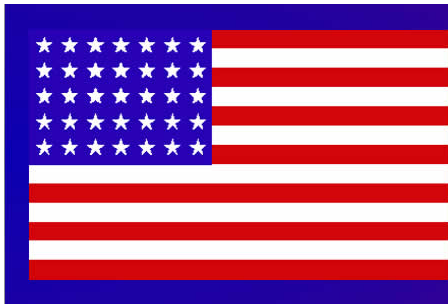
in March 1863, still a humiliating situation when countless younger officers held much higher ranks. The Ninth and Ambrose Burnside were then reassigned to the Department of the Ohio. Poe had to give up his line command and became the Chief Engineer of the 23rd Corps. When he left the 2nd Michigan, it was clear that the regiment had by then realized that Poe's strict policies in the past had been for their benefit. They expressed outrage that Poe's temporary brigadier generalship had lapsed after the Senate failed to confirm it.

Captain Poe set about constructing or improving fortifications in Kentucky with special emphasis on positions protecting key railway lines. He set up Camp Nelson to support Burnside's planned move into eastern Tennessee. Poe was assigned a valuable 300 man engineering battalion. He also used local slaves in its construction. In late August 1863 Burnside crossed into Tennessee and moved toward Knoxville. Progress was slow and difficult because of the rough terrain. The engineers were constantly needed to improve the poor roads to permit his small army to pass over them. They marched through a ruined countryside which gave ample evidence of the internecine warfare carried on between local Union and Confederate supporters. **Half starved, the army reached Knoxville in early September. Poe's priority was to fortify the city against a Confederate counterattack.**

The works were needed as Longstreet's force was soon advancing northward toward Knoxville. Burnside made an organized withdrawal of his advanced troops back towards the city. Longstreet concentrated on a strongpoint called Fort Sanders because a gully extending to 120 yards of the fort would provide attackers some cover to that point. Both sides suffered from short rations and exposure in the threadbare country during the month-long siege. The 2nd Michigan suffered very heavy casualties in a failed attempt to drive the rebels back from their positions in front of Fort Sanders.

On November 29, Longstreet attempted a surprise attack on the fort. The rebels ran into the obstructions (including telegraph wire stretched across the approaches) and deep ditches that Poe had concocted and were subjected to the same kind of slaughter experienced later in the war by Union soldiers in the Crater and Hood's Confederates at Franklin. After 30 minutes the attack ended and soon after, Longstreet raised his siege and departed. Poe's well laid out defenses were recognized by all as the key to the Union victory. He considered this as an emphatic response to the doubts and criticism of him from Stanton and Congress.

In early 1864, he was reassigned to the Mississippi Military Division under Gen. William "Baldy" Smith to help prepare for Sherman's upcoming advance on Georgia. Smith was transferred east to Lt. Gen. Grant's staff and he attempted to pull Poe back with him, but **W. T. Sherman saw the need for a well-trained engineer in his army and stopped the transfer. Captain Poe, virtually the only engineer in this army, and Sherman then began a long and close personal relationship based on mutual respect and trust which would last until Sherman's death in the early 1890's. Initially, his low rank hindered his efforts but in April 1864, Sherman issued a Field Order naming him Chief Engineer. He gained two invaluable resources – the 1st Michigan Engineers & Mechanics and the 1st Missouri Engineers – as well as the battalion he had used so well in Kentucky and eastern Tennessee.** Each went to one of Sherman's three armies. In addition to railroad work, the engineers performed map making, built pontoons/bridges and studied Confederate defenses during the campaign. Poe often came under enemy fire while personally reconnoitering Johnson's successive positions and several times barely escaped death or injury. Every time the Union army reached a rail line, the engineers destroyed it, burning the ties and bending the rails into "Sherman's Neckties". **By the time Atlanta fell, Poe's engineering troops had built numerous bridges, roads and entrenchments and surveyed hundreds of miles of routes for Sherman's forces. Keeping the rail line back to Chattanooga in service kept the army supplied. Sherman understood their value and praised Poe in his report on the campaign.**



Quiz Answers:

1. General Banks and Admiral Porter did not like each other. Banks did not trust Porter because he was a close friend of Generals Grant and Sherman. Porter thought that Banks was incompetent and unreliable.
2. General Smith was in charge of the last Confederate unit to surrender in 1865.
3. An overall Union commander was not appointed. Generals Nathaniel Banks and Frederick Steele and Admiral David Porter held separate commands and to a great extent were not answerable to each other.
4. General Banks was the confidant of several wealthy New England textile mill owners. The textile mill owners sent boatloads of cotton buyers to accompany the expedition. Most of the Union soldiers thought that they were on a cotton raid and not a military expedition.
5. Mobile was a much more strategic objective for the Union cause. Mobile probably would have been captured in 1864 instead of 1865 if resources had not been diverted to the Red River Expedition.

Civil War Essentials – Dentistry – Part 2 Confederate dental care was superior to Union care during the war. President Davis, when he served as Secretary of War for President Franklin Pierce, advocated the establishment of a dental unit for the U.S. military. Davis “received the proposition (for dentists) as one of great value”. The U.S. Congress did not act on the proposal.

The Confederate army created a small corps of dentists who were located at the major military hospitals. Each admitted soldier received a dental exam resulting in as many as 25 fillings and 20 extractions each day. Lead, gold, and thorium were used for fillings. One dead Confederate soldier had a filling of shotgun pellets.

By early 1864, professional dentists were employed at the military hospitals and providing care out in the field. Many soldiers with dental-related ailments or wounds were able to return to their units as a result of this care. Unfortunately, secession resulted in the Confederacy having only one dental supplier, Brown and Hope in Atlanta, and only a few professional dentists.



The Conscription Act of 1864 predictably created some opposition in the dental community. Some dentists felt that they should be exempt from the draft like their doctor and medical surgeon associates. The draft did provide the Confederate Army with a significant number of dentists.

Dental techniques improved significantly during the war. New surgery techniques allowed for teeth preservation instead of extraction. Root canals saved many teeth. The “Bean Split” was a device that was credited with the successful treatment of over one hundred gunshot wounds to the mouth and jaw. The device enabled patients to consume food without the risk of infection. A recent invention resulted in dentures becoming much more comfortable and affordable.

