



MEMBER RENEWAL

The MRRT celebrates its 59th year in 2019 – and this month is a great time to show your support by renewing your membership! (Or become a new member!). Membership is \$25 a year (\$5 increase to support preservation) – 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.

Sadly, long-time member from Grosse Pointe, John “Jack” Renick, 88, passed away on April 6th. He gave a presentation to the Roundtable on General Dan Sickles in 2014. A memorial service will be held on Saturday, April 27, 2019 at 10:30 am at the Christ Church Grosse Pointe.

The Roundtable expresses its condolences to the family of Robert Newill (who died in January) and his wife, Anna (who died in March). Robert and Anna enjoyed our field trips for many years.

Our next meeting will be Monday, April 29, 2019. We meet in the basement of the Farmington Library (corner of Grand River Avenue and Farmington Road) at 6:30 pm. Our speaker will be member Bill Christen, who will share with us the story of “Bullets or Bugs? How Were Michigan Civil War Soldiers More Likely to Die?”

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

We will be electing new officers in April! Mollie is retiring as Secretary after many years of service and George will be retiring as coffee sergeant. All of our positions, including President, will be up for a vote. Your participation with the Roundtable will be greatly appreciated.

The Roundtable voted to visit Savannah, Georgia this fall! Our great trip committee – Jeanie, Linda, and Mollie are working on the details of the trip to this great destination.

The Roundtable welcomes member **Bill Christen** who will share with us “Bullets or Bugs? How Were Michigan Soldiers More Likely to Die?” Bill found a table in Michigan in the War that listed all the casualties for each Michigan unit (all three branches). Civil War historians have stated that for every man killed in battle, three died of disease. Bill decided to investigate whether this was true for Michigan.



Bill Christen is constructing a detailed database about every soldier in the 17th Michigan Infantry. He will examine causes of death in the regiment, using letters and diaries.

Bill and his wife Glenna Jo, live in Chelsea, Michigan. They have two grown children and three grandchildren. Bill was an automotive engineer for General Motors for thirty-seven years after earning a degree in mechanical engineering from Kettering University.

He wrote *Pauline Cushman: Spy of the Cumberland* in 2006. Bill and his wife have worked with independent film companies making documentaries and other films about the Civil War. Bill has studied several Civil War regiments, especially the 17th Michigan.

Bill’s presentation continues the great research that he has shared with us over the years.



The Michigan Regimental Roundtable wishes to thank David Walker for his highly informative and entertaining portrayal of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. David has been a Davis reenactor for 12 years. **President Davis said he was born in Kentucky in June 1808, one of 10 children.** His parents were older by the time he was born and his father died about the time he went to West Point. The family moved several times after Jefferson was born, eventually moving to Mississippi. **Mr. Davis said that he attended several institutions of higher learning but after his well-to-do older brother Joseph arranged an appointment to West Point, Jefferson finished his academic career there.** He accumulated enough demerits (including for consuming alcohol at a local off-limits establishment) to finish only 23th of the 36 graduates of the class of 1828. Because of his class standing, he was assigned to the infantry. His first posting was at Ft. Crawford.



At this post he met Sarah, daughter of Zachary Taylor, the fort commander.

Despite Taylor's objections, they were married in 1835. Having left the Army, Jefferson became a planter and slave owner, but his wife died after only 3 months of marriage. He said he felt guilt for exposing her to the Mississippi climate which led to her death. **In the 1840s, Mr. Davis won election to the US House of Representatives. He married his second wife, Varina Howell, who was a well-educated woman some 16 years younger than him.** They would eventually have 6 children; only 3 reached adulthood. Not long after being married, and against his wife's wishes, he went off to fight in the Mexican American War in which he performed well under his former father-in-law, General Zachary Taylor.

Upon his return, he was elected to the Senate in 1847 and Taylor became president in 1849. **Around this time, Harriet Beecher Stowe published her sensational novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.** Mr. Davis contended that the scenes in this book did not accurately portray the true fate of most slaves in the South, but many in the North believed that it did. Davis unsuccessfully ran for Governor of Mississippi in 1851.

Newly elected President Franklin Pierce then made Davis his Secretary of War in 1853. Mr. Davis said he made a number of improvements to the function of the War Department and modernized the Army during his four years there. After this cabinet experience, Jefferson returned to the Senate. **The last years before the war were a time of growing conflict between the slave and free sections of the country.** The Dred Scott decision of the Supreme Court caused many northerners to become abolitionists. The final straw was the 1860 election of Lincoln on a platform of forbidding the spread of slavery to any new states or territories. **The voting for secession in the south was skewed by the fact that the political leaders of the southern states were typically wealthy slave-owning plantation owners.** A total of 11 states seceded, 7 before Ft. Sumter was attacked and 4 after.

President Davis did not discuss most of the details of the war but he did mention that he had refused General Lee's offer to resign after the signal defeat at Gettysburg. He also related that he was at a church service on a Sunday in early April 1865 when a messenger delivered a telegram from Lee saying that Richmond had to be evacuated. Davis and his cabinet left the city on a train. **After most of his entourage left him, he was captured by Union soldiers in Georgia.** U.S. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton spread a rumor that he was wearing a dress at the time of his capture.

Davis was conveyed to Fort Monroe where he was held in close confinement for 2 years which damaged his health. Eventually he was released without a trial after a number of prominent men, including Horace Greeley, combined to pay his bail. **Mr. Davis said he did not believe secession was illegal under the US Constitution and he therefore contended that he was never brought to trial because the Federal authorities knew their case for treason was weak.** He attempted to justify the creation of the Confederacy and his actions in a book he wrote after the war. He is survived only by descendants of Margaret, one of his daughters.



Minutes for March 25, 2019 Meeting Call to Order 6:40 pm, approximately 35 present for business meeting **Pledge** Dedicated to Anna and Bob Newill, members who have passed away this year. Dedicated to Henry Ray, World War 2 veteran, who died recently at age 97. He crossed the English Channel as a scout on June 8, 1944. We also dedicated the pledge to the patriots who have died in Afghanistan. **Introduction of Guests and New Members** guests Paul Gateman, David Duncan, and Jim Voss **Treasurer's Report** Approximately 20 members have not paid their dues. The library refunded \$60 from the cancelled January meeting. **Secretary's Report** February 2019 accepted **Preservation None Program** Jim has begun working on 2020's program, adding two speakers. **Items of Interest** Al Diebol presented a Naval History article. Ken Baumann added to the discussion of naval history and mentioned the Michigan Military Museum on Grass Lake. A new exhibit on World War 2 will be opening. **New Business** We will elect new officers in April because of time constraints in March **Old Business** None

Quiz Questions: This month's questions and answers pertain to Michigan in the Civil War:

1. What percentage of the Michigan male population served in the Union Army?
2. When and why did President Lincoln say "Thank God for Michigan"?
3. On August 26, 1861, Company C of the 1st U.S. Sharpshooters was mustered into federal service at Detroit. Which New Yorker organized this unit? What would qualify a man to join this unit?
4. The Michigan "Roll of Honor" listed 14,855 men that died during the war. What was the percentage split between dying in combat and dying from disease?
5. What was the nickname of the 17th Michigan Infantry? How did the regiment earn the nickname?

Civil War Essentials - Sally Louisa Tompkins (1833-1916) The Confederate Florence Nightingale Sally Tompkins was born at Popular Grove (Memo: Popular Grove was purchased by John Lennon and Yoko Ono in 1980) in the Tidewater Region of Virginia. She was the youngest of Colonel Christopher Tompkin's eight children. Colonel Tompkin became a very wealthy merchant in the Richmond area. Unfortunately, he died when Sally was only five years old.



Four years later, in 1842, more tragedy struck as three of her sisters died from a yellow fever epidemic. Eventually, the remaining family moved to Richmond in 1854 where her mother died shortly thereafter. Sally was only 21 years old then.

Sally's mission began shortly after the Battle of First Manassas in July, 1861. Richmond was unprepared for the hundreds of wounded soldiers that arrived there shortly after the battle. Hospitals were filled to capacity. Churches, factories, and private homes were needed to help the wounded.

Sally, 28 years old, opened the home of Judge John Robertson as a hospital after his family went to the countryside for safety. With the help of her mother's old cook she opened the hospital ten days after the Battle of First Manassas.

The hospital was rather small, averaging only about 25 patients at a time. Sally was a stickler for cleanliness so her hospital had one of the lowest death rates. **The statistical report of the Robertson Hospital, available in the National Archives, stated that, on average, 0-4 patients died each month with no more than 7 in any one month. During its four-year**

existence, the Robertson Hospital treated 1,334 wounded with only 73 deaths, the lowest mortality rate of any Civil War hospital.

Soon after the initial crisis resulting from the Battle of Bull Run had passed, President Jefferson Davis instituted rules that hospitals must operate under military control. Sally Tompkins fought back and refused to close her hospital. President Davis had her commissioned as an officer in the Confederate Army so that the hospital would stay open. Sally was on the Confederate payroll but refused to accept any pay.



Well known diarist Mary Chesnut wrote, “*Our Florence Nightingale is Sally Tompkins*”. Mary was a frequent visitor at the hospital.

Several soldiers asked Sally to marry them, which she turned down. She remained unmarried for the rest of her life.

She continued her service work after the war ended. During the 1896 Grand Confederate Reunion she hosted a special patient reunion for the soldiers of the Robertson Hospital. She rented a home and purchased food for the reunion. Soldiers and their wives came from nine states to honor.

She was buried with military honors when she died in 1916. Her legacy has been honored in the Richmond area. A marker has stood at the site of the Robertson hospital since 1910 and a stained glass was installed at St. James Episcopal Church in her honor in the 1960's.

Quiz Answers:

1. Approximately 23% of Michigan's male population served in the Union Army during the war.
2. President Lincoln called for volunteer soldiers after Fort Sumter surrendered in April 1861. The President said “Thank God for Michigan” shortly after the 1st Michigan Volunteer Infantry arrived in Washington on May 16th.
3. Hiram Berdan and 10 consecutive shots had to hit a target at 200 yards, “the average distance not to exceed five inches from the center of the bullseye”.
4. Almost exactly 30% died from combat while the remaining 70% died from various diseases.
5. “Stonewall Regiment” and during the fighting at South Mountain, Maryland, this regiment drove the Confederates out of position behind stone walls.

Civil War Essentials – Captain George James Starts the Civil War George James (1829-1862) was a native South Carolinian. **At the age of 17 George joined the United States Army during the Mexican War.** After the war, he returned to life as a student in South Carolina. He eventually rejoined the U.S. Army for a four-year stint that ended with South Carolina's secession.



George offered his military experience to South Carolina. He became a captain in the South Carolina Artillery stationed in Charleston. Initially, he served as an aide to General Beauregard conveying messages to the Union garrison in Fort Sumter. **Before April 12, 1861 Captain James took command of two batteries on James Island.**

The militant secessionist Edmund Ruffin did not fire the first shot of the war. Virginia Congressman Roger Pryor was initially given the honor of firing the first shot. At the last hour, Congressman Pryor changed his mind. Captain James volunteered to fire the first shot.

Captain James ordered Lt. Henry Farley to fire the first shot at 4:30 AM on April 12, 1861. The shot exploded directly above the fort. The Southern

bombardment was under way.

Captain James soon joined the 3rd South Carolina Battalion as its commander. After spending one year in Charleston, his battalion joined the conflict in 1862. **During the Maryland campaign, the battalion became involved in the battle for Fox's Gap, a pass through South Mountain in western Maryland. Captain James fell with a mortal wound to his chest. He died on the evening of September 14, 1862. His heavily outnumbered command lost 136 of its 160 men.**