



## MEMBER RENEWAL

The MRRT celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> year in 2020 – and now is a great time to show your support by renewing your membership! (Or become a new member!).

Membership is \$25 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**.

**Our April 27, 2020 meeting has been cancelled as stated in a previous e-mail.** The Farmington Library has cancelled all meeting room reservations through the end of April 2020.

We thank our scheduled April speaker; author **Tobin Buhk**, who was going to speak on “True Civil War Crime”. **Tobin has agreed to reschedule his presentation for Monday, March 29, 2021!**

Please visit our website at <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt>. Several websites with Civil War presentations are listed on our website.

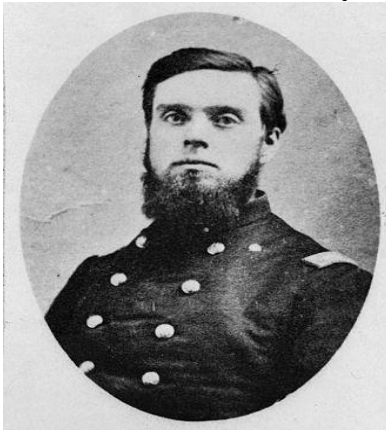
**The Roundtable has voted to tour the Brandy Station battlefield and the surrounding area! The tour will be the weekend of October 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>.** Our tour guide will be **Clark “Bud” Hall, leader of the 25 year effort to preserve the Brandy Station battlefield.** Our trip committee is working on the details of the trip. Of course, our field trip depends on the virus situation – which we will be monitoring closely.

Please contact **Jeanie** (248.225.7596), **Linda** (586.588.2712), and or **Mollie** (313.530.8516) to sign up or ask questions. Mollie’s e-mail is [mmgalate@gmail.com](mailto:mmgalate@gmail.com). If we are able to go, this will be a great trip!

### Civil War Essentials - J. T. Wilder – Pollyanna turned Hero

John T. Wilder, born in New York in 1830 of a family of military men, was by late 1863 an experienced leader in the Union Army. As the MRRT learned during its 2018 trip to Chickamauga, his mounted brigade with its Spencer repeating rifles, was instrumental in covering the retreat of Rosecrans’s army following its defeat there. **However, a decision he made a year earlier in September, 1862 caused some to question his judgement.**

Wilder moved to Ohio and worked as a draftsman and millwright. **In 1851 he moved to Indiana. He married and started a successful foundry.** He became a recognized expert on hydraulic machinery in the pre-war years.



At the start of the war, **Wilder organized an artillery company to which he contributed 2 cannon cast by his foundry.** Although initially mustered into Federal service as an infantry company, the guns accompanied the unit and it was soon reorganized as an independent artillery battery. Wilder, however was promoted to Lt. Colonel of the 17<sup>th</sup> Indiana infantry regiment, then to Colonel in March 1862. His value during the Corinth campaign was noted by senior officers and **by August 1862, he commanded a 4000 man garrison at Munfordville along the Louisville & Nashville Railroad.** As the Confederates under Bragg approached during their offensive into Kentucky, Wilder’s fortified troops fought off an initial attack forcing the rebel forces to commence a regular siege in mid-September. Worried that General Buell’s forces were approaching, the Confederates demanded that he surrender.

**Unsure of the correct course, he came over to the rebel siege lines and actually asked Confederate General Simon Buckner what he should do! Flabbergasted by this naïve request, Buckner (who had surrendered Fort Donelson to Grant) reportedly exclaimed, “This is not how such things are done!” but he honorably agreed to allow Wilder to inspect the Confederate siege lines.** Wilder concluded that he could not hold out against the 22,000 man rebel force and surrendered on September 17.



John Wilder was exchanged after 2 months as a prisoner. Returning to duty, **he bent Army regulations and mounted his units – 3 Indiana and 1 Illinois infantry regiments – on horses and obtained Spencer repeating rifles (purchased with a bank loan, but ultimately paid for by the government) for them.** Apparently, they also carried hatchets as side arms!

During General Rosecrans' 1863 campaign to drive Bragg's army out of Tennessee the "Lightning Brigade", as they were called, **drove the Confederates from Hoover's Gap and held off several heavy counterattacks there.** He then commanded a diversionary attack on Chattanooga designed to make Bragg believe Rosecrans' main attack would be from the north.

**His greatest days were at the battle of Chickamauga.** The brigade held the bridge crossing West Chickamauga Creek against a Confederate flanking maneuver on September 18. **Two days later, it counterattacked the surging rebel forces at the Bloody Pool after the Union army's right flank collapsed.** General George Thomas recommended Wilder's promotion to brevet Brigadier General for these actions.

Wilder led the brigade during the 1864 Atlanta campaign but was forced to leave the army in October 1864 due to recurring ill health. After the war, he set up in the iron and machinery business in Chattanooga where he also eventually served as a commissioner of the National Military Park. He died at age 87.

#### **Quiz Questions: This month's questions pertain to the Battle of Brandy Station**

1. How many reviews did General J.E.B. Stuart hold prior to the Battle of Brandy Station? What was the effect of these reviews?
2. What was the long-term effect of the battle on the Federal Cavalry?
3. What did most of the Confederate cavalymen do when they were surprised at 5:00 am on June 9, 1863?
4. What was the historical significance of the Battle of Brandy Station?
5. Why did Union Cavalry commander General Alfred Pleasonton attack J.E.B. Stuart's force at Brandy Station?

#### **Civil War Essentials – The Court-Martial of Union Major General Fitz John Porter**

Fitz-John Porter (1822-1901) was a career Army officer and a general officer in the Army of the Potomac. He was a confidant of General George McClellan, acting as second in command at the Battle of Antietam under his friend, General George McClellan. Admirals David Porter and David Farragut were his cousins.

**The General Porter court-martial case began with a letter he wrote to J.C.G. Kennedy, a Washington insider, on July 17, 1862.** General McClellan's Army of the Potomac was resting at Harrison's Landing after the bloody Seven Days Battles. Meanwhile, farther north, General John Pope was commanding the new Army of Virginia. **General Porter wrote, "I regret to see that Gen. Pope has not improved since his youth, and has now written himself down, what the military world has long known, as an ass."** General Porter, a General McClellan confidant, predicted that Pope and his army would only reach Richmond as prisoners of war.

**Mr. Kennedy passed General Porter's letter along to President Lincoln and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. Stanton then passed the letter along to General Pope. The letter eventually became the cornerstone of the case against General Porter.**

General Porter also sent letters to Manton Marble, editor of the Democratic *New York World*, who was the most outspoken critic of the Lincoln Administration. Porter told Marble that Pope was *"a vain man (and a foolish one) . . . who was never known to tell the truth when he could gain his object by a falsehood..."* General Porter predicted on August 10, 1862 (three weeks before the Battle of Second Bull Run) that, *"I told you some weeks since Pope would be whipped..."*

Two weeks later General Porter's V Corps was under the command of General Pope. Porter pleaded with McClellan *"Can't you get us all away? We pray for it"*.



General Porter sent General Burnside, another Corps commander, several comments on General Pope. *“The strategy is magnificent, and tactics in the inverse proportion . . . It would seem, from proper statement of the enemy, that he was wondering around loose . . . I wish myself away from it, with all our old Army of the Potomac, and so do our companions.”* Of course, General Burnside sent these dispatches along to Washington, where Lincoln and Stanton saw them. General Pope did not plan to bring charges against General Porter until the President showed them to him.



On August 28, 1862 General Stonewall Jackson came out of hiding near the First Bull Run battlefield and attacked a portion of Pope’s army. Pope then ordered a series of nighttime marches to bring his army together for an attack the next day. General Porter was ordered to begin marching his V Corps at one o’clock in the morning. He delayed his march for at least two hours. Four other generals did not obey their orders that day either, only Porter would later be court-martialed.

A second charge would come when General Porter received an order to join with General McDowell and turn Stonewall Jackson’s right flank. The orders were confusing so the V Corps did not attack.

The V Corps had not joined the battle by 4:30 pm, so General Pope sent General Porter an order to attack. Darkness ended the battle with no assault by the V Corps, thus earning a third charge of disobeying an order. Porter’s inaction on

August 29<sup>th</sup> earned an additional three charges of misbehavior before the enemy.

The V Corps was heavily involved in the fighting the next day, August 30<sup>th</sup>, losing almost a quarter of its force. Two brigades strayed from the field, thus earning General Porter two more charges of disobeying orders.

After the battle, General McClellan resumed command of the Army of the Potomac and General Pope was sent to Minnesota to fight the Sioux Indians. Pope believed that he was deprived of his command *“because of the treachery of McClellan and his tools”* and filed charges against General Porter. To Pope, the real enemy was General McClellan.

The Army announced on November 25, 1862 that a general court-martial to try Major General Fitz John Porter would be convened in Washington. Nine generals, approved by Secretary of War Stanton, were the jury. Their selection was not a random process. For example, the president of the court-martial was General David Hunter, who had a previous run-in with McClellan. General Silas Casey had been demoted by McClellan. General Rufus King actually came down from the jury bench to contradict one of Porter’s witnesses, a major impropriety. Future President James Garfield was predisposed to convict Porter.

Three and a half hours after receiving the case, the jury convicted General Porter of failure to obey lawful orders (Ninth Article of War) and misbehavior before the enemy (Fifty Second Article of War). He was sentenced to be cashiered from the army. President Lincoln approved the verdict without comment.

Fitz John fought the court-martial verdict for the next twenty four years. The government printing press was very busy during this time period. *The Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* included a volume on the Porter court-martial. President Rutherford Hayes appointed a three-man panel during the spring of 1878 to review new evidence in the case. A detailed study of the Second Bull Run battle resulted in the panel agreeing with General Porter’s contentions from the battle.





**Seven years later, Democratic President Grover Cleveland signed a relief bill for Porter. The U.S. Senate appointed Porter a Colonel in the Regular Army on August 1<sup>st</sup> and he then retired on August 7<sup>th</sup>.**

#### Answers to Battle of Brandy Station Quiz:

1. General Stuart held three exhausting reviews; on May 22, June 5, and June 8 (the day before the battle) that included a mock battle demonstration. Union officers observed these displays with great interest. General John Buford (of Gettysburg fame) believed as a result that the Confederate cavalry was concentrating near Culpepper.
2. Even though the battle was a Union defeat it showed that the Union cavalry was becoming very competitive with the Confederates. General Stuart was criticized for being surprised and almost defeated on Virginia soil.
3. Most of the Southerners were in bed when news of the attack arrived. With the Federal cavalry only two miles away, many galloped toward the gunfire without saddling their horses or even being fully dress.
4. The Battle of Brandy Station was the largest cavalry battle in American history. A total of 18,456 men participated in the battle; which was 1,500 more cavalrymen than participated in the 1864 Battle of Trevilian Station.
5. Union Generals Hooker and Pleasonton became suspicious of the build-up of Confederate cavalrymen in the Culpepper area that might lead to another one of General Stuart's raids. As a result, Pleasonton planned his own raid to "disperse or destroy" the rebels.

**Civil War Essentials – David Reed, Shiloh's Veteran Historian** 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant David Reed, 12<sup>th</sup> Iowa, celebrated his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday at Pittsburgh Landing, Tennessee, four days before the Battle of Shiloh. He was then involved with the fury and chaos of the Hornet's Nest, suffering a wound in his thigh. Reed remained on the battlefield, wreathing in pain, unattended until the next day.

David survived his wound and fought the rest of the war. After the war ended, he returned to Iowa and held governmental posts from 1867 to 1895. David was active in local veterans' organizations and became the historian of two of them.



In 1890, the Federal government established Shiloh as one of the first five military parks. David Reed was appointed secretary and historian for the Shiloh National Military Park Commission. He consulted the *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* and the living veterans of the battle.

David's accomplishments included:

- He helped place the numerous monuments on the Shiloh battlefield.
- David authored 400 tablets marking troop positions on the battlefield and created two detailed battlefield maps.
- He published *The Battle of Shiloh and the Organizations*

*Engaged*, a work consulted by today's historians.

David Reed ensured that his work was "complete, impartial, and correct" so that his history represented "nothing but the truth". His tablets and the monuments he helped place guides today's visitors around the Shiloh battlefield.

John Bachelder at Gettysburg, Ezra Carman at Antietam, and David Reed at Shiloh laid the groundwork for future historians of these battlefields. They were able to visit with veterans of these battles, saving their words for future historians.