



Antietam ranks as the bloodiest single day of the entire Civil War as more than 23,000 casualties occurred in less than 12 hours of combat. This sanguinary contest commenced at sunrise in a fully-grown cornfield, moved to a peaceful sunken road, and culminated in late afternoon at a picturesque stone bridge—a slugfest that sorely tested the mettle of two rival armies. Perhaps no other single spot on any battlefield in American history epitomized the inglorious futility of warfare as did the struggle at the D.R. Miller cornfield. Here men fought for four hours with a loss of 12,000 in an area of little more than 30 acres as the cornfield exchanged hands six times.

Words could scarcely describe the awful carnage, but soldiers who survived this holocaust later penned their thoughts on the horror they had witnessed that morning. Wrote one: *“The last of the charging lines....was sweeping majestically into the jaws of death when the mass seemed to halt, while from the front line spouted forth a long angry sheet of flame from innumerable gun-barrels. Men were falling fast now, as unseen batteries were pelting the lines with an iron storm....It was pitiful to see the men drop, at times in groups, knocked over by solid shot, or riddled with musket and rifle balls or bits of shell or case or canister.”* Rufus Dawes of the 6<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin remembered, *“There was....great hysterical excitement, eagerness to go forward, and a reckless disregard of life, of every thing but victory....The men are loading and firing with demoniacal fury and shouting and laughing hysterically.”* Young Edward Walker of the 1<sup>st</sup> Minnesota stated: *“Our men and Secesh lay as they fell, many begging us for a drink of water, others telling us not to tread on them and it was difficult to march over the ground without stepping on some man....the dead lay in rows in a line as they fell. I never could have believed [it] had I not seen it.”* Another simply lamented, *“Whoever stood in front of the corn field at Antietam needs no praise.”*

Artillery fire from the two opposing armies had caused much of the damage as the projectiles literally ripped human bodies apart. Confederate Sam Buck of the 13<sup>th</sup> Virginia noted, *“I saw more men torn to pieces in that battle than any other during the war.”* Artillerist Stephen Dill Lee concurred, simply labeling it, *“Artillery Hell.”* Indeed, it was the strategically positioned batteries of 24-year-old John Pelham atop Nicodemus Heights, overlooking the Miller cornfield, which staggered the nearly three corps of Federal infantry attempting to crush Stonewall Jackson’s outmanned troops on the Confederate left. Federal success on this flank would undoubtedly have yielded a Confederate defeat, but the stellar performance by Pelham’s gunners saved the day. No wonder the normally laconic Stonewall Jackson issued his ultimate praise: *“With a Pelham on each flank, I believe I could whip the world.”*

This month our speaker, Jerry Maxwell, will present the details of *“John Pelham at Nicodemus Heights.”* A 30-year member of the MRRT, Jerry has given numerous talks to our Round Table. You’ll want to hear this one; so plan on being in attendance on **MONDAY, MAY 20** [please note the earlier meeting date for Memorial Day].

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The MRRT expresses its thanks to last month’s speaker, **Dr. Gerald J. Prokopowicz** for his fine presentation, *“All for the Regiment: The Army of the Ohio, 1861-1862.”*

**FALL FIELD TRIP:** Our planned excursion to Shiloh, scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, October 19-20, is coming along nicely. Our guide, Jim Minor, is a veteran at leading groups around this beautiful battlefield. This is the month to SIGN UP, so you’ll want to be in attendance to put your name on the sheet. Hotel reservations, food accommodations, and bus service information will also be given.



**QUIZ: All questions pertain to the artillery**

1. What is the large knob at the base of a cannon breech called? And, what was an eprouvette?
2. Name the 5-second pewter fuse resembling a crude watch face that was developed by a Belgian captain. And, which British lieutenant invented a projectile in 1784 that was filled with balls of iron and a bursting charge intended to break apart shortly after firing?
3. Where was Confederate General Leonidas Polk killed by an artillery shell, on June 14, 1864, and what type of artillery piece fired it?
4. At Fredericksburg John Pelham of Jeb Stuart’s Horse Artillery held off the left wing of the Army of the Potomac with merely two guns. What two types of cannon did he use?
5. What was the name given to a raised wooden bed or platform that allowed an artillery piece to be fired over a protective wall or parapet without exposing its gun crew to the enemy? And, what was the major flaw in firing chain shot from 2 cannons?
6. What did the initials WPF and RPP on cannon indicate?
7. Intended for maritime use, what were the solid iron projectiles called that were heated in a furnace and fired at wooden vessels? And, which Confederate general was hit by a shell fragment that took his life while directing artillery fire at Champion’s Hill?
8. What caused the death of Charles T. James, the inventor of the James Rifle and projectiles? And, what was the sabot on a Schenkle shell made of?
9. What was the 18-foot length rope wrapped on a gun carriage trail called? And, what was it used for?
10. What were the fake cannon that Joe Johnston employed to “scare off” Federals who came near Richmond called? And, what were the two cylindrical pivots on the exterior of a cannon which allowed the weapon to be easily elevated or depressed called?

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Confederate General Daniel Harvey Hill was noted for his cantankerous attitude as well as his dynamic fighting ability. A graduate of the highly-touted West Point class of 1842 (number 28 of 56), he served ably in the Mexican War at Monterrey under Zachary Taylor and at Vera Cruz under Winfield Scott. During the Civil War his reputation for a negative attitude and a sharp tongue continued to grow. Labeled a “croaker” for his incessant pessimism, Hill, according to the Confederate War Department, was “*harsh, abrupt, often insulting in the effort to be sarcastic*”—a man who could “*offend many and conciliate none.*” No one, however, doubted his bravery. An incident at the “*Bloody Lane*” at Antietam clearly demonstrates this.

Severely outnumbered at this sunken road, Hill took advantage of the terrain and positioned his men to await the anticipated Federal attack. Robert E. Lee joined Hill, and together they rode for a better vantage point to observe enemy lines. Soon they were joined by James Longstreet. Sensing danger, Lee and Longstreet dismounted, but Hill, who already had two horses shot from under him that day, remained in the saddle. Longstreet suggested to Hill that “*he ride a little apart, as he would likely draw fire upon the group.*” Looking through his field glasses, Longstreet “*noticed a puff of white smoke from the mouth of a cannon*” a mile away and casually remarked: “*There is a shot for General Hill.*” Within three or four seconds, the cannon ball was upon them, and Longstreet turned toward Hill and “*saw his horse drop on its knees. Both forelegs were cut off just below the knees.*” Although unhurt, Hill had difficulty dismounting but finally managed to crawl over the rump of the mortally wounded animal. Longstreet, a veteran of countless battles, recalled the marksmanship as “*one of the best I ever witnessed.*” Moxley Sorrel, one of Longstreet’s staff officers, however, marveled at the stoicism of the horse: “*The poor beast did not fall immediately, and made no sound, but put his nose into the grass, nibbling at it seemingly....I....cannot recall an instance in which the animal made any noise.*” The focus of the generals’ attention once again turned toward the oncoming Federals.



Longstreet later claimed the shot that hit Hill's horse was the "*second best shot I ever saw.*" He related that the best occurred in the fighting at Yorktown during the Peninsular Campaign. There a Federal officer came out of his tent and sat down at a small table to draw a map. "*One of our officers,*" noted Longstreet, "*carefully sighted a gun, touched it off, and dropped a shell into the hands of the man at the little table.*"

The shot that mangled D.H. Hill's horse was described nearly twenty-four years later by Federal Major Alfred A. Woodhull on June 8, 1886. "*On the 17<sup>th</sup> of September, 1862, I was standing in [Stephen H.] Weed's battery....when a man on....a gray horse appeared about a mile in front of us, and footmen were recognized near. Captain Weed, who was a remarkable artilleryman, himself sighted and fired the gun at the horse, which was struck.*"

Daniel Harvey Hill's somewhat sour attitude and blunt honesty continued to hound him. Eventually transferred to the Western Theater, he participated in the Battle of Chickamauga where his fighting ability was praised. However, he engaged in a violent quarrel with his commanding general, Braxton Bragg, and President Jefferson Davis authorized Hill's removal from the Army of Tennessee. Hill saw limited action the remainder of the war. Following the war, Hill edited a monthly magazine, **The Land We Love**. He later accepted the presidency of Arkansas Industrial University. After nine years he left to become president of the Middle Georgia Military and Agricultural College. He died in Charlotte, North Carolina on September 24, 1889, at age 68.

### QUIZ Answers:

1. Cascabel and a small mortar used in testing the strength of gunpowder
2. Bormann fuse and Henry Shrapnel
3. Pine Mountain, Georgia and Parrott gun
4. 12-pounder Napoleon and a Blakely
5. Barbette and the 2 barrels could not be fired simultaneously
6. "West Point Foundry" and "Robert Parker Parrott" [on all rifled Parrott guns]
7. "Hot shots" and Lloyd Tilghman
8. A worker standing next to him dropped a live shell that exploded and papier-mache
9. Prolonge and maneuvering an unlimbered gun
10. "Quaker Guns" and trunnions

Reminder of this month's meeting—**MONDAY, MAY 20**—for **Jerry Maxwell's** presentation of "*John Pelham at Nicodemus Heights.*" Meeting place: Farmington Public Library at Grand River and Farmington Road. Meeting time: 7:30 P.M. Come early and bring a friend.....

Don't forget to check out our website: <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.