

MEMBER RENEWAL

The MRRT celebrates its 60th 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 MUST 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 May 18, 2020 meeting was cancelled as stated in a previous e-mail. The Farmington Library has cancelled all meeting room reservations through the end of May 2020.

We thank our scheduled May speaker; our friend author Jack Dempsey, who was going to speak on “Michigan’s General Alpheus Williams”. We will reschedule Jack for 2021.

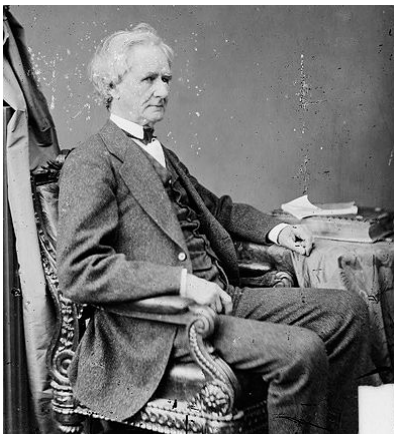
Please visit our website at <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt>. Several websites with Civil War presentations are listed on our website.

The Roundtable has voted to tour the Brandy Station battlefield and the surrounding area! The tour will be the weekend of October 3rd and 4th. 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. If we are able to go, this will be a great trip!

Civil War Essentials - Simon Cameron – President Lincoln’s First Secretary of War

Those familiar with the Civil War are well acquainted with Edwin M. Stanton, Lincoln’s forceful, abrasive, capable Secretary of War. **But Stanton was not the first to hold that position in President Lincoln’s Cabinet.** Simon Cameron was earmarked for that position as the result of a political deal struck at the 1860 Republican Convention in Chicago. While not an unqualified promise to give Cameron the post in return for Pennsylvania’s endorsement of Lincoln, it was very close.



Simon Cameron was born in 1799 in eastern Pennsylvania. He was apprenticed into the printing business becoming a journeyman printer at age 16. He moved into newspapers and served as state adjutant general... Clearly capable, he then started building and running railroads and founded a bank. **The first hint of questionable conduct in public positions came in 1838 when it was alleged that he cheated the Winnebago Indians after he was appointed commissioner to settle claims with the tribe.**

Cameron began his political career as a Jacksonian Democrat. He was first elected to the Senate in 1845. Because he opposed slavery and favored high import tariffs, he shifted to the new Republican Party in the 1850s. **Controlling the Pennsylvania delegate vote at the Chicago Convention, he forced Lincoln’s representatives there (Lincoln did not attend) to pledge him a high position in the administration**

and support for high tariffs in return for switching the state’s delegate votes from Seward to Lincoln. After the election, Lincoln reluctantly made him Secretary of War.

Cameron faced the enormous task of trying to prepare for a war with limited resources at hand. In early 1861 the total headcount of the War Department, from the Secretary down to the night watchman, was about 200. Given the unparalleled expansion of military expenditures in the early months of the war, some waste and fraud was almost inevitable [*witness the present controversy around the hurried acquisition of protective equipment to combat the spread*]



of coronavirus]. **But from the beginning, his tenure was marked by inefficiency and, worse, actions that strongly suggested Cameron was using his office for personal gain.** For example, he failed to protect the B&O Railroad lines from destructive Confederate raids seemingly in order to ensure the B&O would not be able to compete with railroads in which he had an interest. **By the end of 1861, evidence of major mismanagement and corruption in the War Department was mounting.** The corruption associated with Cameron allegedly caused Thaddeus Stevens, Pennsylvania's radical Republican Congressman, to sarcastically declare to Lincoln, **"I do not believe that he would steal a red hot stove"**. Cameron demanded that Stevens retract that statement. In response, Stevens said, **"I believe I told you he would not steal a red hot stove. I will now take that back."** President Lincoln decided to replace Cameron with Stanton in January 1862 but did so without publicly censuring him. **War Department performance immediately improved under Stanton.**

Lincoln appointed Cameron Minister to Russia in order to remove him from Washington and divert attention from the scandal. Perhaps because the President had made his removal as gentle a process as possible, he supported Lincoln's reelection in 1864. Always a better politician than administrator, Simon Cameron continued to play a major role in Pennsylvania politics after the war. He died in 1889.

Quiz Questions: This month's questions pertain to the month of May during the Civil War.

1. Which former U.S. Army Captain offered his services to the Union Army on May 24, 1861 but received no response?
2. What bill did President Lincoln officially sign into law on May 20, 1862, that gave virtual free land in the Western United States? Also, what were the provisions of this law?
3. On May 9, 1862 what valuable army and navy supply depot did Confederate forces evacuate? On the same day which Union general ordered the emancipation of slaves in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, an order that President Lincoln quickly rescinded?
4. Which Union general was killed by a Confederate sharpshooter, armed with an "elephant gun" on May 9, 1864? Who replaced this general as head of the Union VI Corps?
5. On May 15, 1862, notorious General Benjamin "Beast" Butler issued his infamous order in New Orleans which enraged the females of that city for any "word, gesture, or movement" insulting to Federal officers. What was the order officially called and what did it accuse women of "plying"?

We thank "Old Sarge" for his help with these questions.

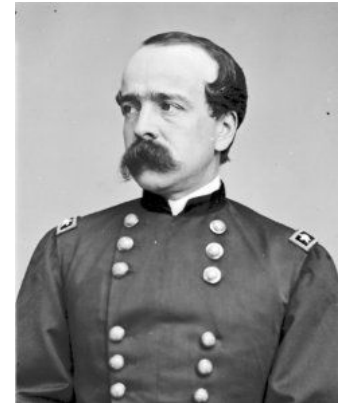
Civil War Essentials – Rebirth of the Army of the Potomac (Winter 1863) When General Ambrose Burnside left the Army of the Potomac after the disaster at Fredericksburg and the short-lived Mud March, it was in very poor condition. The soldiers had not been paid for six months. Even though the Washington warehouses were packed with food, little of it reached the front lines. After the Mud March, two hundred men were deserting every day, by the end of January 1863; more than 25% of the Army was absent without leave. Additionally, hundreds of men were dying from various diseases and epidemics. A Wisconsin officer said that this winter was the *"Army's Valley Forge"*.

The new Army commander, General Joseph Hooker, required a new Chief of Staff. His choice was Daniel Butterfield, a non-West Pointer and the son of a founder of the American Express Company. He quickly became a great administrator, even though very few outside Hooker's inner circle trusted him. Major General Webb, of General Meade's staff, described Butterfield *"That little lying knave. He is one of the most corrupt, scheming, lying scoundrels. And he is one of those fellows that when he's found out in his lies, it doesn't seem to phase, he will brazen it*



out”. Webb and his fellow West Pointers called him Napoleon. Butterfield was the creator of Taps, the musical interlude to signal bedtime.

The unlikely tandem of General Hooker and General Butterfield surprisingly quickly assessed the army’s needs and even acted on alleviating the needs. The biggest concerns were in the areas of supply and morale, then camp cleanliness. The old saying that “an army marches on its stomach” applied to this situation. Once the supply problem was alleviated, the morale problem would also improve. The historian of the 5th New Hampshire stated that “...However veteran of Fair Oaks, Malvern Hill, and Antietam and of a year of severest campaigning declared emphatically that they would never engage in another battle. This idea prevailed, not of the want of patriotism and devotion to duty, but because of a total want of confidence in those who managed the operations of the Army of the Potomac.”



Army Supplies

First, Federal supply facilities on the Potomac River at Aquia Landing were significantly improved. Aquia Landing was the nerve center for supplies coming to the front. Provisions were offloaded from ships and then sent to the front by the Military Rail Road. At its peak, Aquia Landing was the fifth busiest port in the world. Two railroad men, Herman Haupt (from Michigan) and David McCallum, devised a system where train cars filled with necessities of war, including food, was packed into box cars of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. They then traveled to Alexandria, Virginia where the cars were placed aboard “floats”. These floats were boats that had rail road tracks atop their deck. From Alexandria the floats went to Aquia Landing, (picture left) which took less than 12 hours during good weather days. The cars were then off-loaded and 140 at a time, carrying 800 tons of supplies traveled south along the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad. The supplies were then distributed to the Army when they reached Falmouth, Virginia.



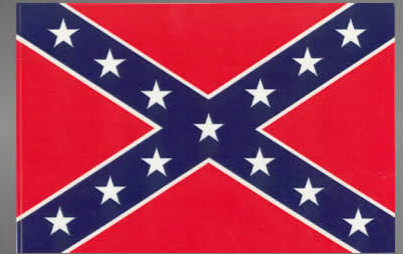
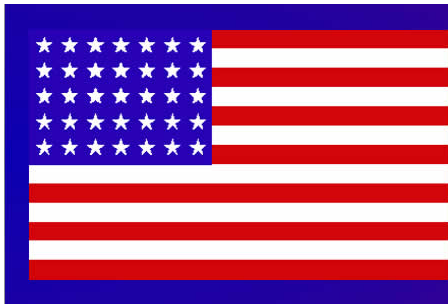
Food Supply

Several other improvements were made to the food supply. Fresh ovens were installed around the various winter camps in Stafford County, Virginia, resulting in fresh bread distribution at least four times a week. Soldiers also received vegetables, including onions or potatoes twice a week. Oysters were also issued to the men. This was a major improvement over salt pork and hardtack that was the staple on the march and in camp.

Desertion

A second major problem of the Army of the Potomac was desertion. With General Hooker assuming command, the Army officially went into winter camp. Morale was very low and homesickness was a real problem. A member of the 7th Michigan, said, “I am tired of this way of carrying on war and if this Army stays here much longer there will not be over half their number left on account of desertions nearly all the soldiers are disgruntled with Lincoln’s mode of warfare and if I ever get a chance there will be one less in the Northern army.”

The winter camps in Stafford, Virginia were only 40 miles from Washington. The capital included barrooms, brothels, and the opportunity to book passage back home. Chief of Staff Butterfield ordered the Potomac River Flotilla to stop the crossing of small boats that were carrying deserters away from the army. The 132nd Pennsylvania received civilian clothing from home, helping their escape attempts.



General Hooker instituted a new furlough system, which allowed officers and enlisted men to go home for 10-15 days. For every 100 soldiers present, two enlisted men were allowed to go on furlough along with one field officer and two line officers. Lt. Elisha Hunt Rhodes (of Ken Burns' *The Civil War* fame) wrote, "*Furloughs are . . . given to the men, and it is hard for me to tell who ought to go (home) first.*" Some regiments that had performed well were allowed to send more men home. Morale improved significantly.

Corps Badges

General Hooker eliminated the cumbersome grand division system and reinstalled the corps system. Each infantry corps received new identification badges. The soldiers embraced them immediately. First Lieutenant Cornelius Moore wrote, "*...all officers & men in the several corps should wear badges...Ours is a tree foil-color red-1st Division, 2nd Corps...*" The badges were a point of pride that many carried the rest of their lives after the war ended. **Hooker had made a very positive impact on the Army of the Potomac.** "*This army was never in a better condition for fighting...*" boasted one Federal soldier.

Answers to the month of May in the Civil War Quiz:

1. Ulysses S. Grant
2. The Homestead Act. A settler was given 160 acres for his promise to occupy and improve the land for five years and pay a \$10 registration fee.
3. Norfolk, Virginia. Major General David Hunter.
4. General John Sedgwick. General Horatio G. Wright
5. Order #28 and their 'avocation'.

Civil War Essentials – Shoes Both the Confederate and Union Army's enlisted men were primarily foot soldiers. **The most painful equipment deficiency they endured was marching with poor shoes or even no shoes. The average life expectancy of an Army shoe was one month.** The standard army shoe was low-cut and lightweight, with wide soles of cheap leather. Some shoes were shapeless and could be worn on either foot. Not only were most shoes of low quality they seldom fit. A Union soldier wrote, "*There was always plenty of room to spare in all directions, except in one or two places where they pinched.* Soldier's nicknames for shoes included "gunboats" and "pontoons".



Long marches usually produced swollen, blistered, and infected feet from ill-fitting shoes. A private wrote his wife after a long march, "I am all right except (for) the doggoned blisters on my feet, and I hope these few lines find you enjoying the same blessings".

Quartermasters of both armies were unable to meet the demand for shoes. A reporter estimated that 40,000 Confederates lacked shoes during the 1862 Maryland Campaign. Even if this is exaggerated, it probably contributed to the Confederates retreating back to Virginia after the Battle of Antietam.

Confederate General Henry Heth received a report on June 30, 1863 that shoes were available in the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. General Heth then wrote to his commander, General A.P. Hill that, "If there is no objection, General, I will take my division there tomorrow and get those shoes". The Battle of Gettysburg then began. During the 1864 Overland Campaign 50,000 soldiers in the Army of the Potomac needed shoes.