

“On paper, Shiloh was a draw; actually it was one of the decisive battles of the war. It was a battle the Confederacy simply had to win. For it had been a blow struck to restore a disastrously lost balance; a desperate attempt to re-establish the Confederate frontier in the Kentucky-Ohio Valley. It had failed, and the fact that it had come close to being a dazzling victory did not offset the failure...” So stated historian Bruce Catton. Up until its time Shiloh truly was the bloodiest battle in the history of the North American continent as a combined 23,273 fell dead or wounded, missing or captured in merely two days of fighting.

As with most of the early conflicts of the Civil War, Shiloh was fought by amateur armies whose ill-prepared commanders made debatable errors, negligent miscalculations, and inexcusable blunders. Many of these problems would be the fault of the culpable leaders who simply were not used to guiding huge amounts of soldiers into battle. Unanswered questions persisted long after the guns ceased firing: Why wasn't Ulysses S. Grant with his army when the battle commenced? Why had no entrenchments been dug nor guards posted properly? Why had the Federal army been “parked” with its back to a river inviting an enemy attack? Why were the more inexperienced troops positioned closer to the enemy while the seasoned soldiers held the rear of the army? Grant's closest lieutenant, William T. Sherman, also needs to be scrutinized for his maladroitness preparations. Why did he ignore the constant warnings of his subordinates concerning the nearness of the enemy forces? Why were some units of his army without any ammunition while some 5000 men with proper ammunition had not been taught to load and fire their weapons? And, why did both Grant and Sherman adamantly believe the Confederates would not attack, and when the battle ended, why did they unwaveringly deny that a sneak attack had been made on their forces?

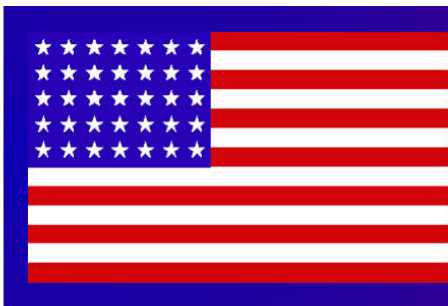
Questions persisted as well concerning the Confederate leadership. Why would Albert Sidney Johnston emulate the disputable attack formation that Napoleon employed at the Battle of Waterloo? Why would he attack an enemy force without proper reconnaissance? And, why would he jeopardize his own being and the welfare of his army by leading an advance into the teeth of the enemy? Johnston's second-in-command, P.G.T. Beauregard, further has been criticized for his failure to continue the attack against Grant's final line of defense at the end of the first day. Principally, why did Beauregard call off the attack with more than an hour of daylight remaining and an enemy army in panic?

Yet, with all of the failings managed by both sides, countless heroes emerged in the fields and wilderness surrounding Shiloh Church. This month—**MONDAY, JUNE 26**—longtime MRRT member Jerry Maxwell will examine the performances of **“Six Heroes (and two honorable mentions) at the Battle of Shiloh.”** Three of these men were born in Kentucky, two hailed from Ohio, and the other three were born in Massachusetts, Virginia, and Tennessee. Their educations varied considerably from a West Point graduate to one with no more than three months of formal schooling. Two others graduated from Harvard with another holding a degree from Yale. Their ages ranged from 24 to 59, and their ranks from captain to general. One was killed at Shiloh while two others were mortally wounded. Another was wounded while two escaped without injury, although one of them was killed less than six months later. All of them performed with much valor at the battle yet one was threatened with court-martial and one was labeled as an “arrant coward.”

Be certain to mark your calendars for Jerry's talk which is bound to provoke some controversy and discussion.

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FALL FIELD TRIP: Forty-two folks have enlisted for the trek to Franklin/Spring Hill/Nashville for the weekend of October 14-15. Four more vacancies exist on the bus, so you can still sign up. Eight still owe the \$65 deposit for the bus, guide, etc. **THIS AMOUNT SHOULD BE PAID BY THIS MONTH'S MEETING.** The menu for the Saturday night dinner is enclosed in this month's newsletter for those who have signed on for the trip. This money and the cost for lunches will be collected at the July meeting.



The Michigan Regimental expresses its thanks to **Larry Hathcock**, last month’s speaker, for his excellent and informative program, “*Alabama Tories.*”

QUIZ: All questions pertain to the Battle of Shiloh....

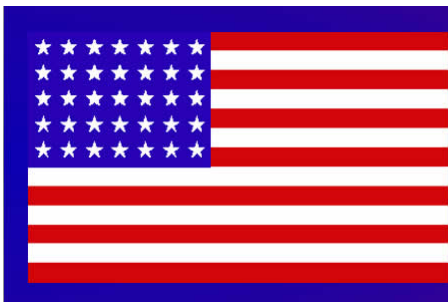
1. Name the three creeks near the battlefield that helped protect the Union army’s flanks. And between which main roads did the “Hornet’s Nest” meander for 2/3 of a mile?
2. In which local field did the fighting begin? And, across which 3 fields did the Confederates repeatedly attack the “Hornet’s Nest”?
3. Which 2 Federal gunboats fired their guns from the Tennessee River on the night of April 6 against the Confederate army?
4. Which generals led the four Confederate corps from the Army of the Mississippi in the attack?
5. Which Michigan units participated in the battle?
6. Which of Grant’s Divisional commanders, stationed at Crump’s Landing, took 7 hours and 15 minutes to move his 5800 men merely 6 miles to the battlefield? And, why would he earn lasting fame in the 1880’s?
7. Which 19-year-old future African explorer of much renown fought with Co. E of the 6th Arkansas Infantry? And, which famous drummer boy was incorrectly reported to have fought with the 22nd Michigan Infantry at Shiloh and died as a retired general just three months before his 86th birthday on May 13, 1937?
8. Which Federal colonel of the 43rd Illinois Infantry was hit by a minie ball in the right thigh, was amputated the following day, and died on April 11? And, which Confederate general had his left arm nearly torn off, and following an amputation, died on April 12?
9. Name Grant’s 6 Divisional commanders at Shiloh.
10. Where was Grant at the time the battle began? And, how did he get to the battlefield later that morning?

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The aftermath at Shiloh was not for the squeamish. “*As far as the eye could reach, in every direction, lay the silent forms of those who went down before the storm of battle,*” wrote one Federal soldier. The battlefield rendered a “*heart sickening sight,*” penned another. “*The bodies of dead horses and wrecks of wagons, caissons, guns and all kinds of war implements, were strewn over the battlefield. The dead were lying in every conceivable shape.*” Yet another stated: “*In places dead men lay so closely that a person could walk over two acres of ground and not step off the bodies.*”

Throughout the rugged woodlands and hidden in deep ravines, search parties discovered unspeakable images of warfare. Littered among the dead were countless wounded men, too incapacitated to move on their own. Numerous bodies were transported by wagon to the boats, now serving as hospital vessels, along Pittsburg Landing. “*The scene upon [one] boat was heart rending,*” wrote an Iowa corporal, “*men wounded and mangled in every conceivable way....some with arms, legs, and even their jaws shot off, bleeding to death, and....no surgeons to attend us.*” Downriver at Savannah, nearly every house had been filled with wounded men the day following the battle. One officer in a letter to his wife stated: “*You can have no conception of the amount of suffering here. Men lay in stables and die without having their wounds dressed.*” Of army surgeons he added, “*They all seem to have a mania for cutting off arms and legs.*”

Once the wounded had been removed from the battlefield, the grisly task remained of burying the dead. Grant wrote: “*Owing to the warmth of the weather I deemed it advisable to have all the dead of both parties buried immediately.*” One Indiana soldier penned a letter to his mother: “*I dread tomorrow. Burying those unfortunate Rebel dead. They are swollen and smell so awful bad and terrible many of them. I do not see how I can stand it.*” An Illinois veteran wrote: “*We dig holes in the ground, lay them side by side without any coffin, fire a salute over the grave, and then cover their*



cold bodies with the Tennessee clay. The Secesh we bury with less ceremony, dig a hole, role them in and cover them.” The Rebels, according to another participant, were buried “*with as little concern as I would bury a dog.*” “*Our own dead were buried with more care,*” remembered an Ohioan. “*We fastened the arms across the breast with the cross belt from the man’s own equipment, and the knees close together with his cartridge box belt. Many men were buried singly, and all those who could be identified had rough head boards placed over them. [These were] made from the sides of cracker boxes, barrel staves, and the like. In other cases, a pen of rails was built around the grave.*”

Burial details continued for several days. The dead were so numerous and scattered over such a large area that big army wagons drawn with six-mule teams were used to gather the slain. On into April 9 the burial parties worked with a sense of urgency. By now the stench of decaying flesh had begun to pervade the air. Particularly obnoxious was the odor from dead horses, many of which were scattered across the battlefield. Fortunately the weather turned damp and cool during the day, slowing the rapid decomposition of the remains. By Thursday noon the last of the dead had been buried, although random corpses continued to be found more than a week later. Following a series of heavy rainstorms during mid-April, some of the earth washed away, exposing many of the hastily buried corpses in the burial trenches. When hot weather set in toward the end of the month, the pungent odor of rotting flesh again tainted the air.

One young Confederate soldier summed up the death toll with a story to his mother. “*I shall never forget the face of a young lieutenant from Louisiana with a smooth face and the bluest eyes...He lay with his revolver in his right hand, a most peaceful smile on his face, and a great big Yankee laying across him cold in death, with his musket still firmly grasped in his hand. The Yankee’s gun was empty, and the lieutenant’s pistol had two empty chambers. The lieutenant had a death wound made by a musket ball, and the other man had two pistol ball holes clear through him; neither face had any expression of pain or anger...I don’t know but what we should have put them both to sleep in the same grave, but we did not.*”

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QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. Owl, Snake, Lick Creeks and between Hamburg-Savannah Road and the Corinth-Pittsburg Landing Road
2. Fraley Field and Duncan Field, Sarah Bell Cotton Field, Davis Wheat Field
3. *Lexington* and *Tyler*
4. William Hardee, Braxton Bragg, Leonidas Polk, and John Breckinridge
5. 2nd Michigan Light Artillery and the 12th, 13th and 15th Michigan Infantries
6. Major General Lew Wallace and he wrote the acclaimed novel, *Ben Hur*. [As Governor of the New Mexico Territory, he also forced the surrender of Billy the Kid.]
7. Henry Morton Stanley and John Lincoln Clem
8. Julius Raith and Adley Gladden
9. 1st Division: John McClernand, 2nd Division: W.H.L. Wallace, 3rd Division: Lew Wallace, 4th Division: Stephen Hurlbut, 5th Division: William T. Sherman, 6th Division: Benjamin Prentiss
10. Nine miles away at the Cherry Mansion in Savannah, Tennessee and aboard the *Tigress*

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Come join in on the fun at our next meeting—**MONDAY, JUNE 26**—as **Jerry Maxwell** will present: “*Six Heroes (and two honorable mentions) at the Battle of Shiloh.*” The meeting, as usual, begins at 6:30 P.M. at the Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road). See you there....

Also try our website: <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.