

“Kind reader, right here my pen, and courage, and ability fail me. I shrink from butchery. Would to God I could tear the page from these memoirs and from my own memory. It is the blackest page in the history of the war of the Lost Cause. It was the bloodiest battle of modern times in any war. It was the finishing stroke to the independence of the Southern Confederacy. I was there. It saw it. My flesh trembles, and creeps, and crawls when I think of it today. My heart almost ceases to beat at the horrid recollection. Would to God that I had never witnessed such a scene!” So wrote the young Tennessean Sam Watkins nearly twenty years after the Battle of Franklin. He continued his narrative with a description of what he saw the following day. *“But when the morrow’s sun began to light up the eastern sky with its rosy hues, and we looked over the battlefield, O, my God! what did we see! It was a grand holocaust of death....The dead were piled the one on the other all over the ground. I never was so horrified and appalled in my life.”*

Others from both armies, along with the town’s nearly 900 population, had observed what might have been the Civil War’s grisliest and most horrific fighting. The soldiers participated in a slugfest, a virtual street brawl, for little more than five hours. Hand-to-hand combat was commonplace as men swung rifles, axes, and picks at their enemy. Bayonets became killing implements instead of mere ornaments at the end of a rifle. Soldiers fought maniacally with a sheer sense of urgency as though possessed by demons. An Illinois colonel later remembered, *“It would be impossible to picture that scene in all its horrors. I saw a Confederate soldier, close to me, thrust one of our men through with a bayonet, and before he could draw his weapon from the ghastly wound, his brains were scattered on all of us that stood near, by the butt of a musket swung with terrific force by some big fellow whom I could not recognize in the grim dirt and smoke that enveloped us.”* Another Federal described some Rebels rushing up to a cannon they thought had been silenced. *“A large crowd [of Confederates] was rushing to the muzzle of a gun. The man with the lanyard tremblingly held his fire until the first rebel in the rush placed his hands upon the muzzle of the cannon to spring over, when he let go. Like a huge thunder bolt that awful roar and flash went blasting through that crowd of men, annihilating scores! Arms, legs and mangled trunks were torn and thrown in every direction....”*

Casualties at Franklin were staggering. The Confederates lost 1750 killed, 3800 wounded, and 702 captured for a total of 6252. Union losses were approximately one-third of their enemy—189 killed, 1033 wounded, and 1104 missing or captured—totaling 2326. Among the Confederates, five generals met death that day—John Adams, Patrick Cleburne, States Rights Gist, Hiram Granbury, and Otho Strahl. Another, John C. Carter, was mortally wounded and died ten days later. They were young men—ranging in age from 26 to 39. All were well educated with one a graduate of West Point. Three were married, one a widower, one engaged, and another’s marital status unknown. One had fathered six children.

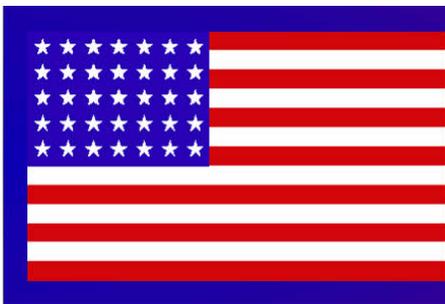
This month—**MONDAY, JUNE 25**—longtime Michigan Regimental member, Jerry Maxwell, will present *“‘A terrible and Useless Waste of Life’: Six Dead Generals at Franklin.”* Their stories and the bloodbath of Franklin will be detailed with anecdotal material and slides. It’s a tale you won’t want to miss.

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FALL FIELD TRIP: Fifteen folks who are registered for a seat on the bus have not yet paid their \$60 fee. **THIS MUST BE PAID THIS MONTH OR YOU WILL FORFEIT YOUR SEAT ON THE BUS.** Please make your check out to either Carroll Tietz or Jerry Maxwell (and give it to Jerry). If you have any difficulty in complying with this, call Jerry at 248-363-1710. The Saturday evening dinner menu has been determined and will be sent out in the July newsletter with the dinner checks collected at the July meeting.

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The MRRT expresses its thanks to last month’s speaker, David Collins, for his presentation, “The McClellan Effect,” a comparative discussion of the Elections of 1864 and 2004.

**QUIZ: All questions pertain to the Battle of Franklin.....**

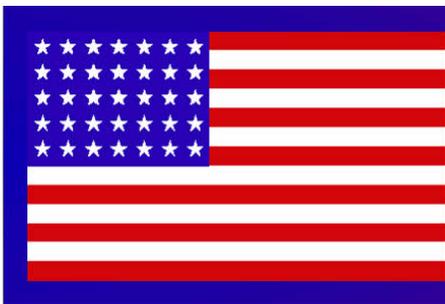
1. Which river flows north and east of the town of Franklin? And, what is the main road leading into Franklin that John Bell Hood's forces used to reach the town?
2. Name Hood's three Corps Commanders at Franklin. And, which general led Hood's cavalry?
3. At which home did Hood establish his headquarters? And, which two Confederate generals died in this building from mortal wounds—one occurring in a cavalry raid in September of 1864, the other from wounds incurred at the actual battle on November 30, 1864?
4. From which hill did Hood oversee the advance of his troops? And, which hill is just across the road?
5. Which generals led John Schofield's two Corps at Franklin? And which general commanded Schofield's cavalry?
6. Who was the 67-year-old patriarch of the Carter House? And, which of his sons of the 20th Tennessee Infantry was at home with the family after being paroled? Also, which son was mortally wounded at Franklin and died in his own home?
7. Which Federal general was demoted for his disastrous performance at Franklin and later resigned from the humiliation? And, who was the only captured Confederate general at the battle?
8. Which two Federal regiments under fiery Col. John Casement were partially armed with Henry repeating rifles? And, which Michigan unit was armed with Spencer repeaters?
9. Who was called the "Angel of Carnton" for her valorous work with the wounded after the battle? And, which Confederate major replaced John Pelham as the head of Jeb Stuart's Horse Artillery, was transferred to the Western Theater under Hood, and was mortally wounded the day before the Battle of Franklin in an artillery skirmish?
10. Which road helped protect the Federal right at Franklin? And, which road helped protect the Federal left?
11. EXTRA CREDIT: Which dead bodies were actually laid out on the back porch of the Carnton House? And which Confederate general suffered a serious head wound which led to complications that caused his death from the same wound 22 years later?

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Tales from the Battle of Franklin.....

Francis Marion Cockrell was one of seven wounded Confederate generals at Franklin. Missouri-born and college educated, Cockrell was a warrior of the highest caliber. His Missouri brigade was arguably the best fighting unit produced on either side. At Kennesaw Mountain he suffered wounds to both hands which caused the loss of several fingers. At Franklin he and his brigade fought desperately. Early in the battle his horse was shot from under him. Cockrell, urging his men forward, was blasted from a second horse, struck four times—twice in the right arm, a bullet through his left leg, and hit in the right ankle. In agony, he hobbled to safety with a useless left leg. He lost 419 of 696 men in his brigade. Yet, Cockrell survived. He returned to Missouri after the war where he was elected to the U.S. Senate for the next 30 years. He died on December 13, 1915, at age 81.

At the corner of the gin house on the Carter property Union artillerists had set up two 12-pounder Napoleons. Canister and spherical case exploded from the mouths of the guns and ravaged the hapless Southern ranks. Frantically the Rebels pushed forward, trying to get out of the line of fire. In one horrible scene a Missouri drummer boy, no more than 15 years old, jumped in front of one of the guns and shoved a fence rail into the smoking tube. What he did not know was that the gun had just been loaded. As the boy strained to jam the rail in as deeply as possible the gun suddenly went off. In a split second the young boy, who had run forward with his drum still strapped to his back, simply vanished, his body blown away in shreds "so that nothing was ever found of him."



Inside the breastworks Union soldiers fought tenaciously. Lt. Col. Porter C. Olson, a school teacher before the war, was “*everywhere among his men*” shouting encouragement and urging the members of the 36th Illinois to hold steady. Soon Olson was struck in the chest by a bullet that passed through his body. Gasping for air and spitting blood, Olson collapsed to the ground. Two men picked up their commanding officer and carried him through the blistering fire to a point near the Carter House. Once there a sergeant from Company G ripped down a window shutter and Olson’s body was placed on it. Olson was then taken to an ambulance and transported to the rear. Somewhere near the river Porter Olson’s struggle finally ended. He said simply, “*Oh help me, Lord,*” and died.

Following the battle the surgeons at the Carnton House were completely overwhelmed. Doctors sawed off arms and legs by the dozens. Upstairs bedrooms still bear stains where blood dripped off the edge of surgical tables and soaked into the floorboards. Colonel Noel Nelson of the 12th Louisiana, who was horribly wounded, screamed in agony and tossed back and forth. He cried out, “*My poor wife and child!*” Nelson’s body had been “*torn to pieces*” by enemy fire and he screamed for the doctors to give him some sort of drug to ease the pain. Almost mercifully, Nelson died on the morning of December 1. Nearby lay a Mississippi captain who had been hit in both legs by artillery fire. One of his legs was broken and the other was sliced open to the bone. One of his arms was broken and one of his hands had been “*torn away.*” Surgeon George Phillips told the captain there was no point in amputating his most damaged leg because the severity of his other wounds would surely kill him. The stricken officer looked at the doctor and said it would be just fine if his leg were left alone because he did not intend to die anyway. Miraculously, the Mississippian did survive and lived for many years following the war.

QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. The Harpeth River and Columbia Pike
2. Benjamin Franklin Cheatham, Alexander P. Stewart, Stephen Dill Lee and Nathan Bedford Forrest
3. William Harrison House and John H. Kelly, John C. Carter
4. Winstead Hill and Breezy Hill
5. IV Corps David S. Stanley, XXIII Corps Jacob D. Cox and James Harrison Wilson
6. Fountain Branch Carter, Moscow Carter, and 24-year-old Theodrick “Tod” Carter
7. George Wagner and George Gordon
8. 65th Indiana and 65th Illinois Infantries and 2nd Michigan Cavalry
9. Carrie McGavock and Robert Beckham
10. Carter’s Creek Pike and Lewisburg Pike
11. EXTRA CREDIT: Both answers will be given at this month’s talk

Make certain you mark your calendars for this month’s program—**MONDAY, JUNE 25**—for **Jerry Maxwell’s** rendition of “*A Terrible and Useless Waste of Life’: Six Dead Generals at Franklin.*” The meeting, as usual, will begin 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/>.