



During the cavalry fighting on the third day at Gettysburg, a line of Rebel skirmishers, 1500 strong, moved on foot toward George Armstrong Custer's men down Cress Ridge. To meet this challenge, Custer ordered Colonel Russell A. Alger to advance his 5th Michigan cavalrymen armed with their 7-shot Spencers. Alger skillfully placed his men behind the shelter of a rail fence. The Confederates continued to go past the Rummel barn and advanced on Alger's line. Alger waited until they were 120 yards away before he ordered his troopers to fire. Suddenly, 500 Yankee rifles crashed. Instantly, Confederate officers urged their men forward shouting, "*Now for them before they can reload!*" But Stuart's "*Invincibles*" did not know they were facing repeaters, and before they could get much closer, their ranks were stopped by a second volley, withered by a third, and sent running by a fourth. Several Rebels were pinned down wounded or unharmed right in front of Alger's position, and the Michigan Wolverines called on them to surrender or be shot. Most of them, stunned by the Spencers' performance and seeing no chance of escape, did so. "*One tall, lean lank Johnny,*" Lieutenant Samuel Harris of Company A was later told, "*after he came in, asked to see our guns, saying: 'You'ns load in the morning and fire all day.'*"

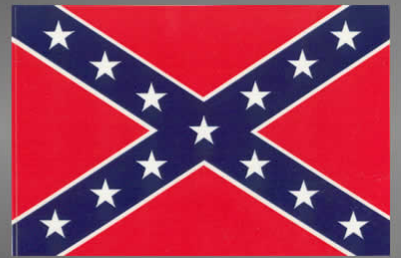
George Custer's later report lauded the actions of Alger and the 5th Michigan. "*Colonel Alger....made such admirable disposition of [his] men behind fences and other defenses as enabled them to successfully repel the repeated advance of a greatly superior force....I attributed their success in a great measure to the fact that this regiment is armed with the Spencer repeating rifle, which in the hands of brave, determined men, like those comprising the 5th Michigan Cavalry, is, in my estimation, the most effective fire-arm our cavalry can adopt.*" Custer added: "*Colonel Alger held his ground until his men had exhausted their ammunition, when he was compelled to fall back on the main body.*"

Born in Medina County, Ohio on February 27, 1836, Russell Alexander Alger later studied law, was admitted to the bar in 1859, and eventually settled in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was wounded twice during the Civil War—at Booneville, Mississippi on July 1, 1862, where he was also captured, but escaped the same day and at Boonsboro, Maryland on July 8, 1863. Shortly after the war Alger was promoted to Brevet Major General. His credentials continued to flourish. He was elected Governor of Michigan on the Republican ticket, serving from 1885-1887 and later became commander-in-chief of the G.A.R. in 1889-1900. Alger was selected as the U.S. Secretary of War from March 1897 to July 1899 during the Spanish-American War. Although his administration of the War Department was criticized for "*extravagance and general inefficiency,*" the 113-day war ended successfully. In 1902 Alger became a U.S. Senator. He died in Washington D.C. on January 24, 1907, at the age of seventy.

Serving in Custer's Wolverine Brigade, Alger and Armstrong appeared to be in good stead with one another. However, a glitch occurred in their friendship—one that wasn't made public until after Custer's death—that would hamper Alger from furthering his political career. This month the MRRT welcomes member, **Hudson Mead**, who will present: "*I Thought Armstrong Was My Friend—I Thought He Was My Friend.*" This interesting story will intertwine the lives of these two Ohio cavalrymen who later adopted Michigan as their home state. Hudson served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and later received a law degree from the University of Michigan. He was also President of the Detroit Historical Society and the Michigan Historical Commission. For 47 years he was married to the late Frances Alger Boyer whose great-grandfather was the Russell Alger. Hudson's brother-in-law and member of the MRRT, Harold Boyer, was to have joined Hudson in co-delivering this special presentation. Unfortunately, illness prevents Harold from participating. Come hear Hudson Mead's tribute to Michigan's Russell A. Alger on **MONDAY, JULY 26**.

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The Michigan Regimental wishes to thank last month's speaker, **Jerry Maxwell**, for his informative program—"*Black Spartacus: Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion of 1831.*"



FALL FIELD TRIP: Forty-five people have signed up for the trip to Chattanooga/Chickamauga. All but two have paid the bus fees. Now the next step: Starting this month a check for \$20 will be collected for the Saturday night meal. Again, make it out to Carroll Tietz or Jerry Maxwell, but give it to Jerry. Also, you will need to make a decision on your entrée. As you hand in your check, please indicate which of the following you would like:

- ROAST SIRLOIN OF BEEF (with natural brown gravy)
- GRILLED BONELESS CHICKEN BREAST (served over rice pilaf)
- VEGETARIAN PLATE

The meal also comes with a garden tossed salad, bread, marshmallow yams, fresh green beans, peach cobbler, and a beverage (coffee or tea).

QUIZ: All questions pertain to Michigan during the Civil War

1. Name Michigan's two war-time governors.
2. Which Michigan woman enlisted as a nurse with the 2nd Michigan Infantry and served from First Bull Run until R.E. Lee's surrender? And, which medal did she earn for bravery?
3. Which Michigan regiment crossed the Rappahannock River at Fredericksburg to help drive out Confederate sharpshooters who were preventing the building of Federal pontoon bridges? And, which Michigan unit assisted in the capture of Jefferson Davis at Irwinville, Georgia on May 10, 1865?
4. To which Michigan unit did William T. Sherman credit the capture of Lookout Mountain? And, who was the colonel of these men?
5. Which Michigan regiment won more Medals-of-Honor than any other Michigan regiment? And, besides Tom Custer, which Michigan man won two Medals-of-Honor?
6. Which native New Yorker was known for her abolitionist exploits and today has a statue in her honor in Adrian, Michigan? And, which Detroitier suggested to John Brown that he forego the Harpers Ferry plan and instead pushed to blow up Southern churches with assembled congregations in them?
7. Following the war, a trooper from the 4th Michigan Cavalry returned to Detroit and concocted a popular soft drink. Today this beverage is famous throughout the U.S. Name this soldier. And, what was Joseph Clovese's claim to fame?
8. Which of these companies was not a part of the 1st Michigan Infantry? A) Jackson Greys B) Coldwater Cadets C) Adrian Light Guard D) Steuben Guard E) Michigan Hussars F) Hardee Cadets And, from which four primary areas were the 10 companies of the 24th Michigan Infantry raised?
9. Which famous colonel, nicknamed "Greasy Dick," was first appointed to command the 2nd Michigan Infantry? And, what was his final outcome?
10. Some would rate the 22nd Michigan Infantry as the finest unit the state produced. Who was its colonel? And, which pre-teen drummer boy from the regiment became a general after the war?

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Further tales from Michigan...

During the fighting at Trevilian Station in mid-June of 1864, Russell Alger and part of his 5th Michigan Cavalry were hemmed in by a rising tide of Rebels, who charged through his command, shattering its alignment and taking about 150 prisoners. They also liberated many of their comrades, horses and wagons Alger had in his keeping. Unable to reform and facing death or capture, the men of the 5th adopted the time-honored strategy best suited for just such an occasion. Four companies clawed their way back to Custer, but most were not that fortunate. Colonel Alger rallied 40 troopers and set out for the woods to the west with his adjutant and 5 other officers. On the way they ran into a superior body of



Confederates, but the enemy leader did not perceive the blue under the heavy dust that clung to their coats, and he asked, “*What command do you belong to?*” “*Hampton’s,*” replied the quick-thinking Alger. “*All right,*” the Rebel said, and Alger and his party made for the cover of timber. From there they headed south toward Custer, but they were met by a mass of Confederates, who chased them through the woods. Alger got away, but only after losing 28 men, and he had to make a 20-mile detour before he entered Phil Sheridan’s lines much later that day.

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When the 7th Michigan Infantry was forming at Fort Wayne, Charles M. Walker, a young lawyer, very short in stature, rendered so by a shortness of legs, was anxious to enlist. One morning before the colonel reached his office, Walker, worried about his lack of height, seated himself at the colonel’s table. The colonel entered and sat down, and Walker said: “*Colonel, I want to enlist in your regiment; please give an order for an officer to muster me in.*” The colonel looked at him; he appeared healthy and strong, and apparently of sufficient height, as he sat at the table. The colonel replied, “*Certainly,*” wrote the order, and Walker rose to leave, but the colonel discovering that he was but little higher when on his feet than when sitting in the chair says, “*Hold on! I do not know about this!*” But Walker hastily left, saying, “*Never mind about my legs, Colonel, they are of the growing kind.*” He was accepted and became an efficient officer in the regiment.

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Sergeant William B. McCreery of Flint, while a member of the 2nd Michigan Infantry, was wounded three times at Williamsburg, Virginia. Later as a Colonel of the 21st Michigan McCreery was again wounded three times at Chickamauga and captured. Taken to Richmond’s Libby Prison, McCreery and others dug a tunnel and made their escape on February 9, 1864. He later telegraphed his father, Ruben: “*I have made escape from Hell, and am again in God’s country—will be home soon.*”

QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. Austin Blair and Henry Crapo
2. Annie Etheridge and the Kearny Cross
3. 7th Michigan Infantry and the 4th Michigan Cavalry
4. 1st Michigan Engineers and Mechanics and William P. Innes of Grand Rapids
5. 17th Michigan Infantry (a total of 8) and Lt. Col. Frank D. Baldwin of Constantine, in the 19th Michigan Infantry
6. Laura Smith Haviland and George de Baptiste
7. James Vernor and a former slave and Civil War soldier, Joseph Clovese died at 9:40 A.M. on July 13, 1951, at age 107 in the Veterans Administration Hospital in Dearborn—the oldest living Michigan soldier. But, he did not serve in any Michigan regiment. He was in the 63rd Negro Infantry.
8. C) Adrian Light Guard and Detroit (companies A, B, D, E, F, G, H) Plymouth (company C) Redford (company I) and Livonia (company K)
9. Israel B. Richardson and mortally wounded by a ball from a spherical case shot at “Bloody Lane” at Antietam, he died at the Philip Pry house (McClellan’s headquarters) on November 3, 1862. He is buried in Pontiac.
10. Moses Wisner of Pontiac and Johnny Clem

A reminder of our upcoming meeting—**MONDAY, JULY 26—Hudson Mead** will present a tribute to Russell A. Alger, “*I Thought Armstrong Was My Friend—I Thought He Was My Friend.*” We will meet as usual in the Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road) at 6:30 P.M. See you there. Also try our website:

<http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.