

OUR MONDAY, JULY 16, 2018 MEETING IS TWO WEEKS EARLIER THAN NORMAL. The meeting begins at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library (Grand River and Farmington Road). Please visit our website at <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt>

Congratulations to member Dr. E. Lawrence Abel, PhD as his book, John Wilkes Booth and the Women Who Loved Him has been nominated for the New York Civil War Roundtable's Fletcher Pratt award. Well known authors including Bruce Catton and James McPherson have won the award in past years. Good luck to Dr. Abel as we await the announcement of the winner! Dr Abel will bring copies of his book to sell at the July meeting!

Our trip committee will begin to accept payments for our trip to Chattanooga & Chickamauga. We may write one check for \$195 to cover the tour guide, bus fees, and Saturday night banquet. If someone wants to go just on the battlefield tours the cost is \$150 and if an individual wants to sign up just for the Saturday banquet the cost is \$45. We may bring our checks to the meeting or mail them to our Treasurer, Jeanie Graham at her home at 29835 Northbrook, Farmington Hills, MI 48334-2326. PLEASE MAKE THE CHECKS OUT TO JEANIE GRAHAM AS THE BANK WILL NOT ACCEPT CHECKS MADE OUT TO THE ROUNDTABLE.

We will continue to sign up for the November 3rd and 4th trip to Chattanooga & Chickamauga at the July meeting. Contact Linda Gerhardt (586.588.2712), Jeanie Graham (248.225.7596), or Mollie Galate (313.530.8516) to sign up for the trip or ask for additional information. Mollie's e-mail is mmgalate@gmail.com

Trip Itinerary – Saturday, Nov. 3rd – Chickamauga Campaign Sunday, Nov. 4th – Lookout Mountain & Chattanooga Campaign

Tour Guide – Rick Manion, Chattanooga area Civil War tour guide for more than 20 years.

Tour Cost - \$150 for the tour guide and bus rental fees. The hotel and Saturday night banquet are extra.

Hotel – Hampton Inn, 1000 Market St., Dalton, GA 30720

Telephone: (706) 226-4333 State that you are with the Civil War Tour Group (CWT) Rate per night \$104 – good for Friday night, Nov. 2nd through Sunday night, Nov. 4th. Departure date is Monday, Nov. 5th. We do not have to stay at the Hampton Inn on Sunday night for the lower rate. King study and double rooms are available.

Cutoff date for reservations is October 18, 2018.

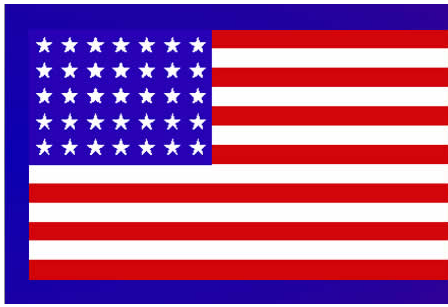
Saturday Night Banquet – Polly Claire's at the Historic Dent House, circa 1854 - \$45 per person.

Our Monday, July 16, 2018 program will be the long-awaited return of our "Show and Tell" program. This is your opportunity to bring a Civil War relic to share with us. Maybe someone will be able to add to the story of the relic. Please share with us the story of a Civil War ancestor that you have been researching. A great book on the Battle(s) of Chickamauga and Chattanooga will help us get ready for our fall trip. Any Civil War related item will add to the enjoyment of the evening.

If someone has a story about their favorite and least favorite Civil War general we will be glad to hear it. **This will be a fun evening!**

Speaker Dave Bastian's riveting depiction of the Union attempt to neutralize the key Confederate strongpoint of Vicksburg by using shovels instead of rifles – **Grant's Canal: the Union Attempt to Bypass Vicksburg** - was much appreciated by the Michigan Regimental Roundtable. **Dave is a civil engineer by profession** who was drawn to the story of the unsuccessful canal attempts when he first visited the Vicksburg area as a young engineer.

Dave explained that Vicksburg was located at a pivotal point on the Mississippi where a line of bluffs which started at Memphis rejoined the east bank of the river. Here was an ideal location for an east/west railroad to intersect the river.



The rebels used the bluffs near the city as a defensive position with cannon on them commanding the river. **At the time of the Civil War, the river made a loop across from the city which created a peninsula pointing roughly northeast. In the spring of 1862, the Federal Navy under Farragut planned to attack up the Mississippi from the Gulf.** To move his seagoing wooden warships into the mouth of the river, he had to find a way to pass over the bar where the water was much shallower than in the ocean or the river proper. This required much difficult unloading and reloading of guns and stores to lighten his ships enough to achieve this. Once across, he bombarded and successfully passed the two forts located between the river's entrance and New Orleans. **He forced the surrender of New Orleans, then proceeded further upstream and succeeded in also capturing Baton Rouge and Natchez without any fighting.**



The next strategic point was Vicksburg, 430 miles upriver from the mouth of the Mississippi. This proved a tougher nut to crack. Unlike the first three cities, Vicksburg's bluffs made it harder for Farragut to bombard it and instead gave the Confederates a great vantage point to shoot down at the Federal ships. **Because of this, thought was given to cutting a canal across the base of the peninsula – this would allow the Union to eliminate Vicksburg as an obstacle by simply bypassing it.** Without machinery to help, the work would have to be done by pick & shovel. **Soon the river was falling in mid-summer 1862 faster than the canal could be excavated.** The falling water level forced Farragut to retreat back down river ending the attempt.

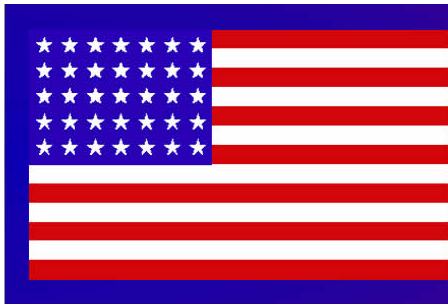
General Grant then tried a number of approaches to solving the Vicksburg problem from the north including another attempt at a canal across the peninsula in 1863. Again, the Union soldiers and black laborers undertook the backbreaking labor of digging the ditch. **Two dredges were brought in to help but their late arrival meant that the project was now doomed by the opposite problem to the first try – rising river levels. The upper dam protecting the unfinished canal broke when the river suddenly rose and the rush of water swamped the levees on the sides of the ditch.** After this failure, Grant proceeded to his ultimately successful strategy of passing his army across the river below Vicksburg. Dave said he thought the canal could have worked if the dredges had arrived sooner – before the river's rise. **Ironically, by 1872 the river had itself broken through the base of the old peninsula, doing with seeming ease what man could not accomplish!**



MRRT Minutes for June 25, 2018: The minutes will be printed in our August 2018 newsletter.

Quiz Questions: This month's questions and answers pertain to Michigan in the Civil War:

1. Which Michigan infantry regiment lost 387 of 584 men, the heaviest loss suffered by any Union regiment at the Battle of Chickamauga on September 20 1863?
2. The 1st Michigan Cavalry captured General Jeb Stuart's plumed hat. Who commanded the regiment and what happened to him during the war?
3. Who was inaugurated as the 30th Governor of Michigan on January 2, 1861?
4. Who commanded the 1st Michigan Infantry, and **who was the first volunteer from Farmington, the first soldier to enlist in the Federal Army from Michigan?**
5. On March 20 1863 Governor Blair signed a bill to establish which two courses at Michigan Agricultural College?



Civil War Essentials – Coffee

The daily coffee ration kept the Federal Army going. Coffee became a wartime staple because of President Andrew Jackson's Army General Order #100, substituting coffee and sugar rations for alcohol in 1832. The Union Army issued to each soldier approximately 36 pounds of coffee each year. The men ground their government issued coffee beans on a rock with either a stone or musket butt. Veteran soldiers learned to carry a canvas bag in which he mixed his ground coffee and sugar ration. **The ration was enough to make three or four pints of strong black coffee every day. Soldiers drank coffee before marches, after marches, on patrol, and actually during combat.**

The Battle of Antietam was the scene of the “greatest” coffee run in American history. An Ohio regiment was involved in the heavy fighting all morning. Suddenly, William McKinley (the future President) appeared, under heavy fire, hauling vats of hot coffee. The men held out their cups, drank the coffee, and started firing again. Their officer recalled, *“It was like putting a new regiment in the fight”*.

Whenever the march halted for more than five minutes, the men would start making little fires and boiling coffee. Stragglers would often fall out, build a fire, boil and drink coffee, and then overtake their regiments during the night.

Cavalry and artillery referred to infantry as “the coffee boilers”.

The word “coffee” appeared in soldier's diaries more often than the words “rifle”, “cannon” or “bullet”. Almost everyone would agree with one diarist, *“Nobody can soldier without coffee”*. A Maine soldier wrote this *“subtle poison”* was as indispensable to the men as the air they breathed.



Soldiers discussed the quality of that day's brew. Their diaries would discuss *“a delicious cup of black,”* or fumed about *“wishy-washy coffee”*. Escaped slaves could find work as cooks if they were good at *“settling”* the coffee-getting the grounds to sink to the bottom of the coffee pots called muckets.

Life without coffee “was misery indeed”. One Yankee soldier said that coffee should be *“strong enough to float an iron wedge and innocent of lacteal adulteration ...it gave strength to the weary and heavy laden, and courage to the despondent and sick at heart”*.

The Confederates could not always obtain coffee and so had to make do with ground peanuts, peas, corn, or other poor substitutes for coffee. The Union blockade kept most coffee out of the Confederacy. A British observer noted that

the loss of coffee *“afflicts the Confederates even more than the loss of spirits”*. An Alabama nurse said that the craving for caffeine would be the Union's *“means of subjugating us”*. Confederate soldiers claimed that they loved the warm and brown coffee even without caffeine.

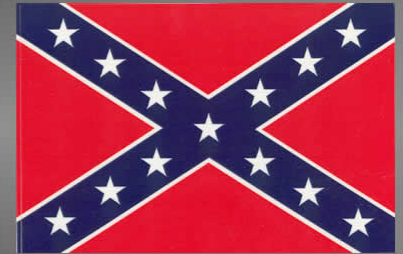
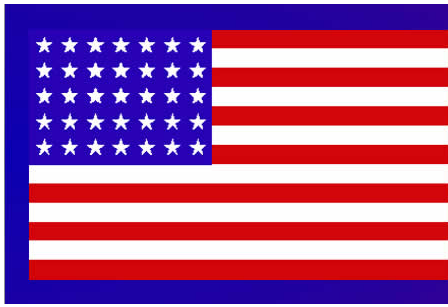
The Confederates usually received coffee from smuggling, captured, or trading with Union troops during cease fires. The Union soldiers were willing to trade coffee for tobacco. Along the banks of the Rappahannock near Fredericksburg, the locals said that Confederate soldiers sent small sailboats across the river loaded with tobacco. The Unionists sent back coffee when the wind direction changed.

General George Pickett thanked his wife for the delicious *“coffee”* she had sent, stating: *“No Mocha or Java ever tasted half so good as this rye-sweet-potato blend!”*

During General Sherman's March to the Sea through Georgia, the soldiers were eating well off the land.

However, they complained that there were no coffee beans available. “Coffee is only got from Uncle Sam,” an Ohio officer grumbled, and his men “could scarce get along without it”.

Union General Benjamin Butler considered coffee a weapon of war. He ordered his men to carry coffee in their canteens and scheduled attacks for when his men would be the most “caffeinated”. He told another general before an October 1864 battle that *“if your men get their coffee early in the morning they can hold”*.



After a Union soldier was released from a Confederate prison camp, he thought about his experiences. Drinking his first cup of coffee in over a year, he wondered if he could forgive “those Confederate thieves for robbing me of so many precious doses.” He added, “Just think of it, in three hundred days there was lost to me, forever, so many hundred pots of good old Government Java”.

Quiz Answers:

1. The 22nd Michigan Infantry Regiment.
2. The commander was Col. Thomas Brodhead of Grosse Ile, MI. He was mortally wounded at Second Bull Run on August 30, 1862, and died on September 2nd. He is buried at Elmwood Cemetery in Detroit.
3. Michigan’s wartime governor was Republican Austin Blair who defeated the Democrat John S. Barry in November 1860.
4. Colonel Orlando Wilcox commanded the 1st Michigan and the first Michigan volunteer was Andrew Crosby.
5. Military Tactics and Military Engineering

Civil War Essentials – Private Dorence Atwater (1845-1910) Andersonville Hero

Dorence Atwater was only 16 years old when he joined the Union Army in Hartford, Connecticut on August 21, 1861. He claimed that he was 18 years old. Dorence signed up for the cavalry even though he did not know much about horses. Less than a month after enlistment his outfit, the 2nd New York (Harris Light Cavalry) was sent to Washington City as part of McDowell’s Division of the newly formed Army of the Potomac. They fought in both small engagements and larger campaigns, including Second Bull Run, the Maryland Campaign, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, and Cold Harbor. They participated in General Kilpatrick’s 1864 raid on Richmond and were present at Appomattox Court House for the Confederate surrender.

Private Atwater’s beautiful handwriting resulted in him serving as a clerk for his unit’s commander. He was captured by the Confederates just after the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863. After a short stint in Belle Isle Prison near Richmond he was sent to the infamous Andersonville Prison.

While at Andersonville, Dorence volunteered to work in the medical offices. He kept an official list of Union dead and concealed it in the sleeves of his tattered uniform. Private Atwater recorded each soldier’s name, grave site location and number, his regiment, company, and date and cause of death for both the prison and his private list. On average, over 50 men were dying each day.

Private Atwater was finally released from Florence prison in South Carolina on February 27-28, 1865 after losing half his body weight and being extremely ill. He went to Washington with his Andersonville list and knocked on door after door, but no one was interested.

He finally went to see Clara Barton, who was running the Missing Soldiers Office. She was able to get Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to issue Special Orders No. 12, to send a delegation to Andersonville to identify remains and mark the graves of the Union dead.

Dorence returned home to Terryville, Connecticut very ill with diphtheria during the spring of 1865. **He disagreed with the U.S. government’s opinion that his Andersonville list was government property. After a trial, the government gave him a dishonorable discharge for “stealing his own list of the Andersonville dead” and put him in prison at hard labor for not providing the list.**

Clara Barton rescued him from prison in December 1865 and he was pardoned by President Johnson. After a tough period of six years, Dorence Atwater accepted a position from President Grant as U.S. consul in Tahiti in 1871. A monument to Dorence Atwater was erected in Terryville, CN in 1907. He died in San Francisco in 1910.