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Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

July 2022

**Sadly, long-time friend and MRRT member George Allen passed away on May 16th at the age of 93. He and his surviving wife, Muriel, were members for many years and went with us on several field trips. George enjoyed his three daughters and four grandchildren. He will be greatly missed.**

**Our July meeting will be on Monday, July 25, 2022, at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library – corner of Grand River and Farmington Road. Our speaker will begin around 7:00 pm after a 6:30 pm business meeting.**

**We welcome back Dr. Roger Rosentreter, PhD, as our July speaker. Roger will speak on “Michigan at Gettysburg”.** Dr. Rosentreter is the “*Civil War Historian*” at Michigan State University. He worked with our late friend Dr. Weldon Petz on *Michigan Remembers Lincoln* and *Seeking Lincoln in Michigan: A Remembrance Trail*. Roger was the editor of the *Michigan History Magazine* for 22 years (1988-2010).

Michigan played a major role in the greatest battle ever fought on the North American continent, The Battle of Gettysburg. General Custer and the Michigan Cavalry Brigade played a major role in stopping General Stuart’s attack on July 3<sup>rd</sup>. Other Michigan heroes were the 24<sup>th</sup> Michigan on July 1<sup>st</sup>, the 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan on Little Round Top working with the 20th Maine and General Alpheus S. Williams.

**This will be a great presentation!**

#### **October 14th to 16<sup>th</sup> Field Trip to Culpepper, Virginia**

**Yes, we are planning for our October trip to Culpepper, Virginia, where we will tour the Brandy Station Battlefield and other Civil War sites! We already have 25 signed-up (late June) for the field trip!**

**The tour dates are Friday evening, October 14<sup>th</sup> through Sunday afternoon, October 16<sup>th</sup>.**

Our tour guide will be Chris Army – with assistance from Susan Ralston and Chuck Laudner. Chris and Susan operate the new “Culpepper Battlefield Tours”. Their website is <https://www.culpepperbattlefields.org/>

**Hotel – Best Western Culpepper** (block of rooms has been reserved at \$119.99 per night plus taxes. **To reserve a room (Block under MRRT Bus Tour), call 540.825.1253**

#### **Tour:**

##### **FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2022**

7:30 pm to 8:30 pm Meet and greet with guides at the hotel to discuss the tour.

##### **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2022**

9:00 am to 4:00 pm

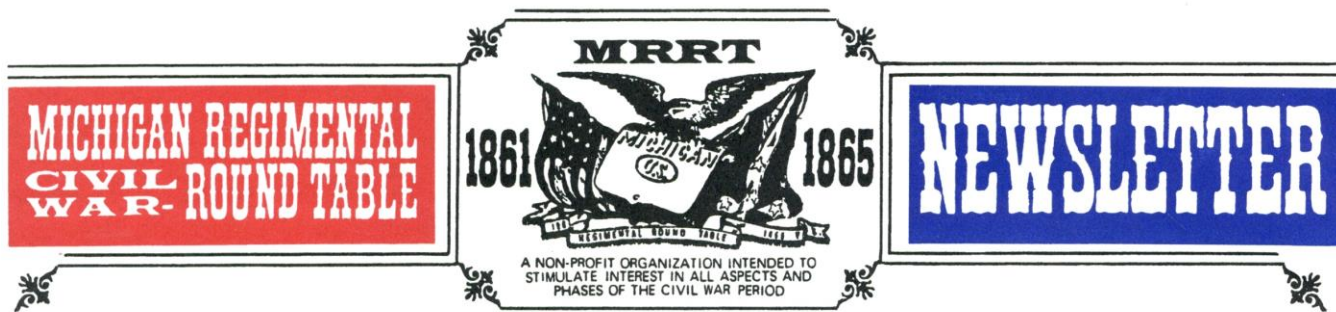
- Campaign Plan and beginning of the Brandy Station battle
- Buford’s Knoll (approximately one mile each way) and Fleetwood Hill
- Lunch – Linn Park (Stevensburg) – box lunch delivered by Deli-icious Deli.
- Stevensburg Action and Hansbrough’s Ridge

5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

- Banquet at a still to be determined location.

##### **SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2022**

- Sites of the Federal Winter Encampment and Culpepper National Cemetery
- Clark’s Mountain (provisional)
- Lunch – Linn Park (Stevensburg) – box lunch delivered by Subway.
- Continued sites of Winter Encampment and USCT Monument (dedicated November 2021)
- Visit/hike to Germanna Ford



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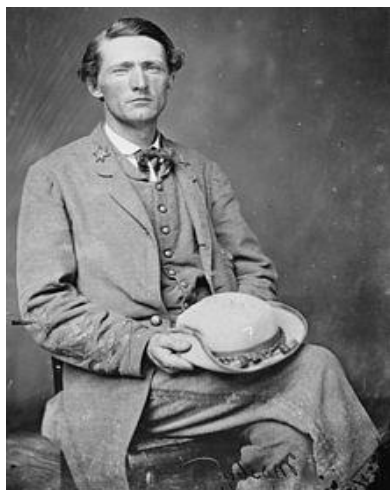
The final price is TBD. This will be a great trip. **If you want to sign up or have question(s) please contact Jeanie Graham at [grahamjeanie@hotmail.com](mailto:grahamjeanie@hotmail.com), 248.225.7596, or Linda Gerhardt at [lindagerhardt@comcast.net](mailto:lindagerhardt@comcast.net) 586.588.2712. We will send via e-mail or with the monthly mailing any updates to the trip.**

**Please note that each participant must provide their own transportation to and from Culpepper, VA, as in prior years.**

**Wearing a mask during our meeting is a personal decision. Masks will be available for your personal use.**

**June 2022 Speaker – The Roundtable thanks and appreciated Dan Packer’s presentation on “A Study in Leadership: John Singleton Mosby”.** John Mosby was a 21-year-old lawyer in Bristol, Virginia, right on the Tennessee border, in January 1861. He married Pauline Clark in 1857 and had two children by 1861. At that time, John was a Union man. **The state of Virginia left the Union by the force of arms and John joined them.**

**J.E.B. Stuart was the Colonel of the 1<sup>st</sup> Virginia Cavalry after the Battle of Bull Run. J.E.B. became a general and John Mosby became the chief scout for him and the Adjutant for the 1<sup>st</sup> Virginia Cavalry. John’s war career as a partisan began.** He was short, plainly attired with powerful very dark blue eyes that seemed to look through people. Most of his men were 18-20 years and never married. A couple of his “men” were only 14. The men were very well organized, there was no fooling around with John Mosby. They wore something gray – never a full uniform when they were called together. After each successful raid, the loot would be divided among the men. They would share their take with the very pro-Confederate residents of “*Mosby’s Confederacy*”. Warrenton was the largest town in the “*Confederacy*”.



**Mosby’s men would take the initiative against their Union opponents using speed and surprise as important weapons.** There was no formal headquarters as the men would blend into the local population afterwards. John Mosby quickly adjusted to changing conditions as organization and discipline were crucial to success. Union Generals Grant and Sherman used his playbook for intelligence gathering and planning.

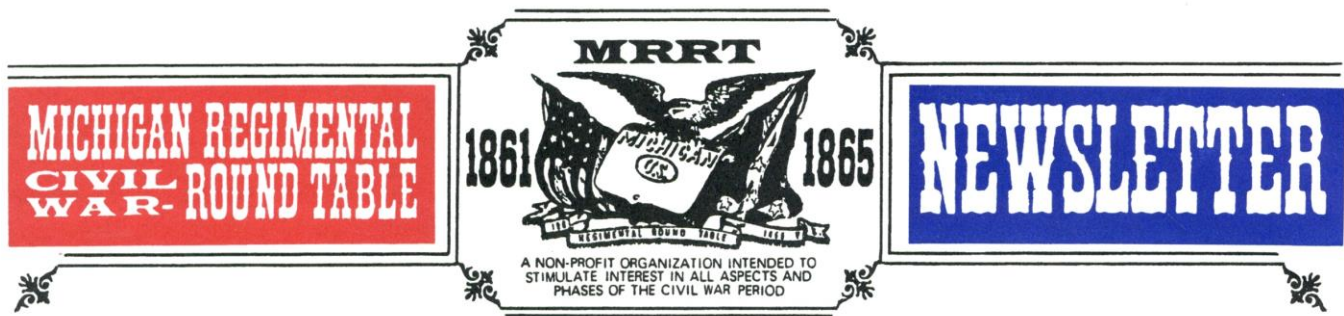
**Battle of Aldie Mill – March 1, 1863.** Mosby’s men charged, causing the Union men to panic and flee. Mosby captured 19 Union soldiers. The Union commander accused Mosby’s unit of horse theft. The Confederates were clearly outnumbered when the battle began.

**Fairfax Courthouse – March 9, 1863.** This was probably Captain Mosby’s most famous action during the war. Mosby’s men entered the town at 2:00 AM and went to the Union headquarters. The Union commander, General Stoughton, was captured in his sleep. The General was spanked with a sword. Mosby exclaimed, “*I have caught you!*” Another 30 Union men and 50 horses were captured.

**President Lincoln was upset by the loss of so many horses.**

**Dranesville Raid – April 1, 1863.** The Union men charged at a gallop toward Mosby’s men from a hill across a river. The Confederates charged back and completely surprised their enemies. The Union men fled as their leader died. “*When the enemy saw us, they halted and were lost*”. The Union contingent lost 83 prisoners while the Confederates had one killed. Mosby then became a Major the next day, April 2<sup>nd</sup>. He eventually became a Colonel but not a General.

**During the Gettysburg campaign Mosby meet with General Stuart on June 24<sup>th</sup>. He told Stuart that the Union Army was not in motion at the time. This helped set up General Stuart’s ill-fated ride around the Union Army. The Union Army began moving North shortly after the 24<sup>th</sup>.**



After the war John Mosby had a law office in Washington. General, then President Grant gave him the same pardon that General Lee received. Mosby never actually worked for Grant. He became a Republican after the war ended.

**This month's quiz questions pertain to the Cavalry:**

1. Who commanded the Union cavalry at the Battle of Brandy Station? Which battle, fought merely six miles outside of Richmond on May 11, 1864, cost General Jeb Stuart his life?
2. Which three Federal "*boy generals*" were promoted to the rank of brigadier general on the eve of the Battle of Gettysburg?
3. Only two Confederate generals were buried in Arlington National Cemetery. One was a cavalryman; the other was not. Name them both.
4. On which of Jeb Stuart's raids did he send a telegraph message to the Union quartermaster complaining about the "*bad quality*" of mules and horses, promising not to steal anymore unless the quality improved? And who was the quartermaster that Jeb sent the note to?
5. Which London-born cavalryman claimed that he fired the fatal bullet that killed John Wilkes Booth? And what was his final outcome?

**Civil War Essentials – Silas Stringham and his Navy Merry-go-round**

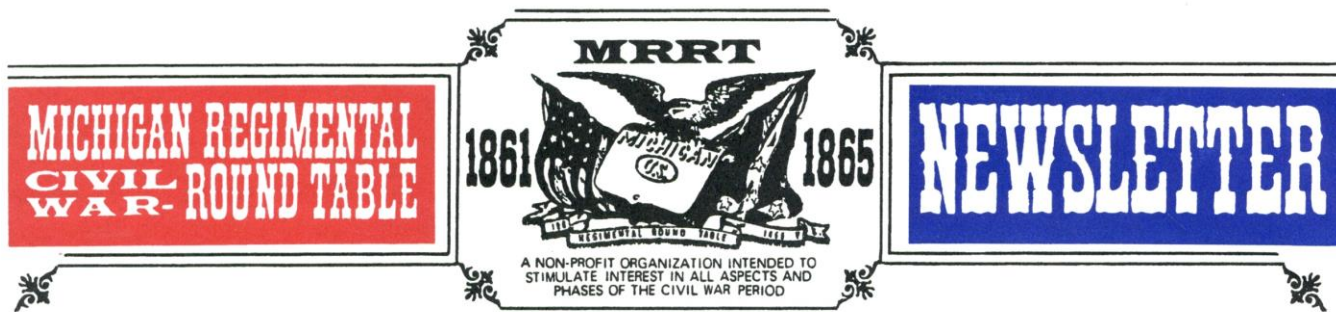
Silas Stringham was the first Flag Officer appointed to lead the U.S. Navy's Atlantic Blockading Squadron in the Civil War. **Stringham was elderly by 1861 having been born in 1798 but not the oldest-one captain was 75 that year. All officers were a product of the Navy's rigid seniority promotion system copied from the British Royal Navy.** This system taught its participants to follow orders, make no mistakes, and use only time-tested strategies and tactics. If they did that, they would continue to rise through the ranks as their superiors moved up or died. Nonetheless, **he contradicted the notion that an officer from this risk-averse background could not be capable of innovation.**



Stringham joined the Navy in 1810 as a midshipman, saw action in the War of 1812 and slowly climbed the ladder of rank, holding successively more important ship and naval base commands. He commanded the large warship *USS Ohio* during the Mexican-American War of the mid-1840's. In the interwar period, his progression continued including heading the Brazil Squadron and the Mediterranean Squadron.

Stringham took command of the new Atlantic Blockading Squadron in April 1861. **The 4-man Blockade Strategy Board, created by Secretary Gideon Welles in June 1861, concluded that the job of cutting the Confederacy off from the rest of the world would be made easier if at least some coastal enclaves could be retaken by the Union.** Doing so would be doubly valuable by denying those areas to rebel ships and turning them into havens for Union blockaders instead.

**As a first step, Stringham began to plan for an attack on the Hatteras Inlet off the North Carolina coast.** This capture would give the Yankees access to Pamlico Sound and deny it to Confederate blockade runners and to rebel raiders which were preying on US merchant vessels traveling along the coast. The area was defended by two Confederate earth and log bastions – Forts Clark and Hatteras – manned by North Carolina soldiers. Stringham had 6 large navy warships, 5 of which had auxiliary steam power. He also had the revenue cutter *Harriet Lane* and an armed steam tug available. The army, three New York infantry regiments and an artillery battery under General Ben Butler, would need to be put ashore to attack the forts after the Navy bombarded them. They would arrive in several old transports.



On August 28, 1861, the Yankee fleet began the attack on the Inlet. It was Stringham's scheme for bombarding the forts that showed that an old dog could indeed learn (or develop) new tricks. **Instead of anchoring offshore from the enemy forts as tradition dictated, Stringham used the auxiliary steam power of his big ships to travel on an oval-shaped course. Each ship would fire a broadside as it passed opposite Fort Clark, then continue around while its guns were reloaded and run out again as it came around once more.** This tactic was intended to make it difficult for the fort's gunners to home in on the position of each Union ship as it constantly changed. Of course, it also made the job of the ships' gunners harder for the same reason, but the Yankee gunners were more experienced and had many hours of live fire practice, a benefit denied the Rebels due to their limited supply of powder. In fact, although novel, this tactic proved unnecessary as the rebel guns were found to lack the range to reach the warships and Fort Clark was abandoned after being pummeled.

The subsequent amphibious landing by Butler's men was interrupted by a sudden squall which permitted only a few hundred soaked Yankees to make it ashore before the operation had to be suspended. Had the Confederate defenders been aware of this and had been more aggressive, things might have gone badly for the Union. Fortunately for the New Yorkers stranded overnight, they were not attacked the landing resumed the next day.

The rest of the operation, including the bombardment of Ft. Hatteras, proceeded smoothly. Casualties were light on both sides except for the 600+ Rebel prisoners taken by the Union.

**This action was the first significant Union victory after the Manassas debacle in July and marked the first recovery of territory from the Confederacy.** Admiral David Porter judged the action by later writing "*This was our first naval victory. . . it was a death blow to blockade running in that vicinity*". **Stringham's tactic of a moving circle of ships would be effectively employed by other commanders however, notably by Flag Officer DuPont at Port Royal in November 1861.**

But, **in general, both sides seem to have undervalued the strategic importance of the coast.** The Richmond government was loathed to provide enough men and guns; it sent few cannons and mostly relied on local militia to garrison the forts along the coast. The result was that the Yankees could concentrate its forces on capturing a coastal area and bag its few defenders and their few precious guns as well. **But the Union carried out only one more major attack on the Carolina coast when General Ambrose Burnside captured Roanoke Island and the Albemarle Sound coast in early 1862** (see Feb. 2018 *MRRT Newsletter*). But the promise of that campaign died when most of Burnside's troops were withdrawn and sent to reinforce General McClellan's army.

As for Stringham, he was criticized for not continuing to attack adjacent parts of the coast after his success at Hatteras. In fact, the original orders to Stringham and Butler were to attack Hatteras, destroy the forts, block the channel, and then withdraw. They were bold enough to realize that the Inlet should be held and got this order changed. **But Stringham, disgusted by this unfair criticism, decided to retire.**

#### Quiz answers:

1. General Alfred Pleasonton and the Battle of Yellow Tavern
2. Generals George Custer, Elon Farnsworth, and Wesley Merritt
3. General Joseph Wheeler – cavalryman, and Marcus Joseph Wright
4. Dunfries, Virginia Raid ("*Christmas Raid*") and Montgomery Meigs
5. Boston Corbett and he escaped from a mental institution on May 26, 1888 and was never seen again.