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Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

July 2023

MEMBER RENEWAL

The MRRT celebrates its 63rd year in 2023 – and now is a great time to show your support by renewing your membership! (Or become a new member!). Membership is \$25 a year – or \$5 for students. Checks should be made out to Treasurer **Jeanie Graham** (the bank does NOT like checks made out to the RoundTable) and can be mailed to her home at **29835 Northbrook, Farmington Hills, MI 48334-2326**. Cash or checks to pay for membership are always welcome at our meetings.

Our July 2023 meeting will be on Monday, July 31, 2023, at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library – corner of Grand River and Farmington Road. Our speaker, Larry Hathcock, will probably begin his presentation shortly after 7:00 pm after we complete our 6:30 pm business meeting. We must leave the library by 8:45.

The Roundtable's great website is 20 years old in 2023. Please visit our website at <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt>

The Roundtable is proud to welcome back as our speaker, long-time member Larry Hathcock, who will share with us his story of a Grand Army of the Republic Post (GAR) in northern Alabama that was formed by men who had served in the 3rd Tennessee Cavalry (Union). They had been on the Sultana and were captured by General Forrest in the battle of Sulphur Creek Trestle in September 1864. Over the years Larry became our expert on the Naval War during the Civil War. Larry was our President!

This will be a very interesting evening!

Fall 2023 Roundtable Trip – The Roundtable will be visiting Vicksburg, Mississippi on the weekend of November 4th and 5th! Our tour guide will be Terry Winchel, who long-time members may remember as our guide in 2008, on our most recent trip to Vicksburg. Terry is the retired chief historian at the Vicksburg National Military Park. He is the author of *Triumph & Defeat the Vicksburg Campaign, Vicksburg: Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar* and almost 50 articles on the Civil War.

COST

\$290 per person

Tour Cost includes the following: Tour guide fee, Bus transportation in and around Vicksburg, Banquet at Achuca Historic Mansion and Inn on Saturday evening, Lunch at a local diner on Saturday afternoon, Picnic Lunch at the military park on Sunday afternoon, and water and snacks on the bus.

TOUR

. **Friday** – meet and greet at the hotel with Terry at about 7:00 pm.

. **Saturday** – Significance of Vicksburg. Significance of the Mississippi River



. *USS Cairo* Gunboat (picture left) and Museum

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoDVJB1aUy8>

. Grant's Canal - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m75NBEUaAnA>

. Lunch (Quick Table Service Meal at Local Diner)

. Champion Hill Battlefield

<https://www.battlefields.org/visit/battlefields/champion-hill-battlefield>

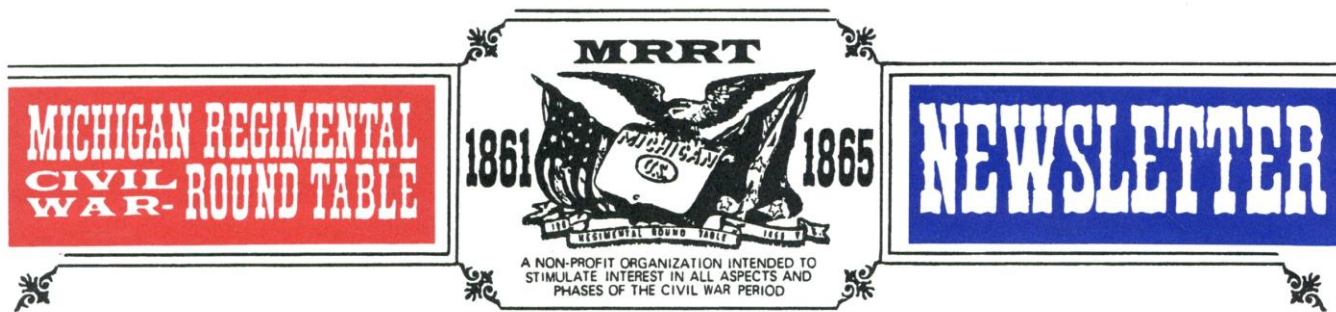
. Big Black River Bridge

<https://www.battlefields.org/visit/battlefields/big-black-river-bridge-battlefield>

. **Sunday** – Vicksburg National Military Park

<https://www.battlefields.org/visit/battlefields/vicksburg-battlefield>

. Lunch (box lunch at Gunboat Museum Pavilion)



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. Additional potential sites: Vicksburg Old Courthouse Museum, Vicksburg Civil War Museum, Vicksburg National Cemetery.

HOTEL:

Hampton Inn & Suites Historic Park District – Vicksburg

Located at the entrance to the Vicksburg National Military Park

Address: 3330 Clay St., Vicksburg, MS 39183/Phone: (601) 636-6100

Block of rooms (King Bed Non-Smoking and 2 Queen Beds Non-Smoking) reserved under MRRT

For reservations, call 1-800-HAMPTON or go online www.vicksburgsuites.hamptoninn.com

Cost is \$149 per night and block of rooms will be held until October 13, 2023

Comfort Suites and Holiday Inn are a few blocks away.

We can sign up for the trip at the May, June, July, August meetings. We can send an email to Linda Gerhardt, lindagerhardt@comcast.net or call her. Linda's number is 586.588.2712

Please bring your \$290 fee to our July, August, or September meeting. Checks should be made out to Jeanie Graham as the bank does not like checks written to the Roundtable. We can mail our checks to Jeanie Graham (made out to her) at 29835 Northbrook, Farmington Hills, MI 48334-2326.

Please remember that each participant must provide his or her own transportation to Vicksburg. There is NO group bus taking us to or home from Vicksburg.

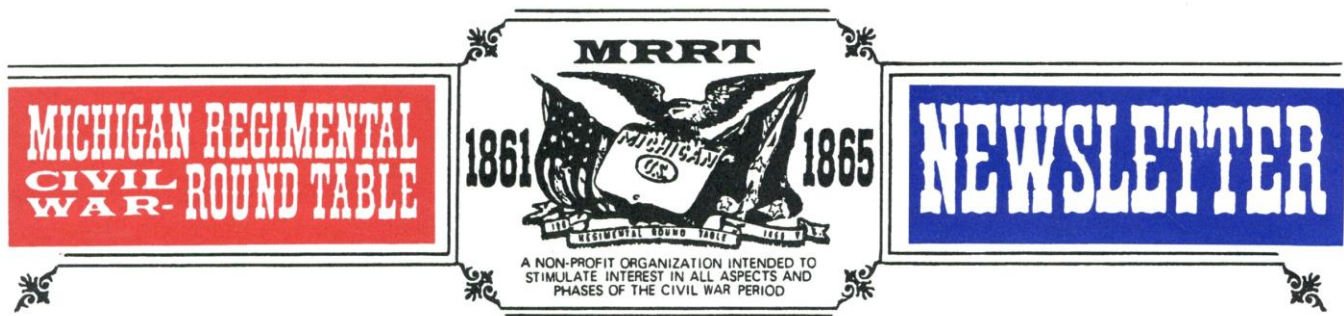
June 2023 Presentation – Dr Roger Rosentreter, PhD, The MRRT is very appreciative of Dr. Roger Rosentreter's informative presentation of "*Federal Artillery at Gettysburg*". Dr. Rosentreter is an expert on the famous battle and has presented other aspects to us in the past.

Roger began his talk by showing a short clip from the movie "*Gettysburg*" in which General Lee gives General Longstreet his fateful order to attack the center of the Federal line on the 3rd day. Longstreet protests the order, pointing out the number and positioning of the Federal artillery which his attacking force will face. Lee is adamant and the die is cast.



The personality and skill of Henry Hunt (picture left), the Chief of Artillery of the Army of the Potomac at Gettysburg was perhaps the key factor in the elevated effectiveness of this branch of the army in deciding the outcome of this great battle. Hunt, a Michigan native and 1839 West Point graduate, had struggled throughout his career to give the field artillery branch the scope and leadership needed to become truly effective on the battlefield and he achieved this for the first time on the field at Gettysburg. **Prior to this, artillery units had been subordinated under the command of infantry generals who, Hunt believed, failed to use them effectively.** The last major action of the 1862 Seven Days battles – Malvern Hill – had demonstrated the devastating power of cannon when used properly. Unfortunately, in subsequent battles, army commanders again compromised this power by insisting that batteries be subject to the orders of the infantry units they supported.

After repeating the same mistake as his predecessors at Chancellorsville, Joseph Hooker had acknowledged that Hunt was correct and had given him the authority



he needed (Order 129) to ensure that the guns would be commanded and directed by artillery officers. When Meade superseded Hooker as army commander, he was fortunately willing to continue the organization set up with Hooker's orders.

The confused fighting on the **First Day** of the battle did not afford the opportunity for the Union artillery to show its true potential. Nonetheless, several units displayed the kind of performance which would be so evident on the Third Day. Hunt was not yet present—the battle was, after all, the result of an unexpected collusion between Buford's Federal Cavalry and Lee's advanced forces. Hunt would blame several infantry officers, notably General James Wadsworth, for the heavy losses (20% of the guns in the 1st and 11th Corps) suffered by his batteries on this day.

Hunt arrived on the battlefield with Meade around midnight. He spent most of the night replacing or relocating the 67 batteries that he commanded. He warned his battery commanders to avoid firing off their ammunition too quickly.

After Sickles ignored Meade's orders and moved his III Corps forward from Cemetery Ridge to the high ground near the Emmittsburg Pike, the Confederates attacked him, and **Colonel Freeman McGilvery's guns were positioned on the "Plum Run Line" desperately trying to stave off the rebels as they closed on the open flank of the III Corps.** So many horses were killed that the surviving gun crews were forced to try to pull their guns back by hauling them back with ropes. John Bigelow's 9th Massachusetts Battery of six smoothbore guns was ordered to stay and try to cover the rest of McGilvery's guns. A bugler with this unit, who had been told to leave the field, instead returned, and began acting as a staff officer, he proved to be component in this role and would later join the army's Typographical Engineers!

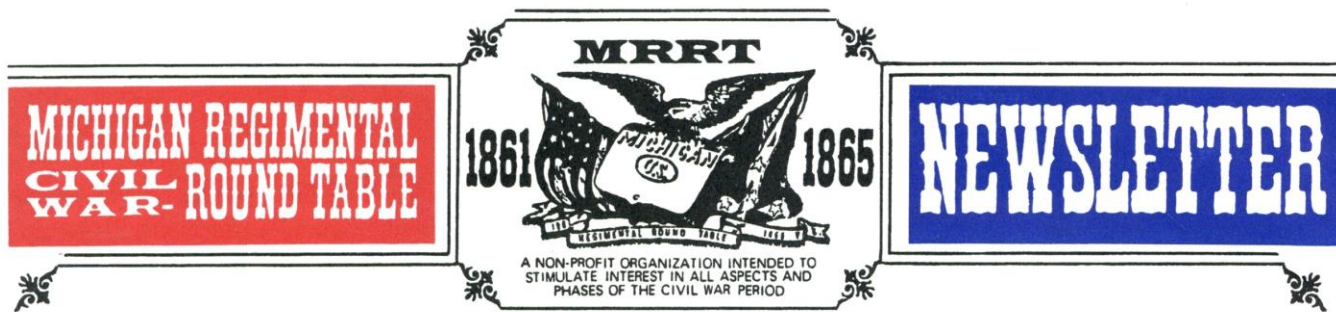
For the second night in a row, Hunt spent most of his time shifting batteries to prepare for the 3rd Day's anticipated climatic battle. **He carefully positioned his guns so that an enemy force crossing the fields from the Seminary Ridge toward the Union lines would be subject to a fiendish crossfire from the long line of cannon on Cemetery Ridge.** He also confirmed that the reserve batteries and extra ammunition was located where it was needed.

At about 1PM on July 3rd, the Confederates' massive 150-gun barrage began. Lee, and William Pendleton, Hunt's Confederate counterpart, believed that they could knock out enough Federal guns as well as Yankee infantry to enable the three Rebel divisions to successfully cross over and pierce the Union line. Someone, either Hunt or Charles Wainwright, decided **to taper down the Federal counterbattery fire in order to give the Confederate commanders the impression that their barrage was working.** This tactic worked and Pickett's famous charge quickly ran into the renewed heavy defensive artillery fire from Hunt's guns. As the Rebels came closer, Hunt's guns changed from solid shot and explosive shells to canister. So many Confederates were killed or wounded in front of the Union line that the few who entered the line were quickly overwhelmed and the "*High Tide*" of the Confederacy receded.

Finally, east of the main battlefield, the Federal cavalry clashed with Stuart's horsemen as they tried to attack the Union Army from the rear. **As the Rebel horse artillery opened fire on Custer's men, he ordered his West Point chum, Alexander Pennington, to eliminate that threat.** The counterbattery fire from Pennington's Battery of the 2nd US Artillery quickly suppressed the Confederate guns, knocking several out of action.

Our thanks to Roger for another great presentation!

Quiz Questions: This month's questions pertain to Union and Confederate generals, in the format, "*What did you do after the war*"?



1. This general reluctantly presided over the execution of the four Lincoln conspirators. Badly wounded at Gettysburg, he recovered and unsuccessfully ran for President from the Democratic Party in 1880. And which former Federal general defeated him in his run for the White House?
2. This often-wounded general fought the Sioux and Nez Perce Indians and led the troopers who rescued Custer's remaining cavalymen after the Little Big Horn?
3. This Georgian began his Civil War career as a captain of a mountain company, the "Raccoon Roughts" and conclude it as a possible Lieutenant General. After the war he was a 3-time U.S. Senator and Governor. He was the first commander-in-chief of the United Confederate veterans.
4. He was the brother of Jefferson Davis' first wife. A Yale graduate, he served under Stonewall Jackson during the Shenandoah Valley Campaign before returning to Louisiana where he fought in the Red River Campaign. What book did he author after the war in 1879?
5. This Confederate general was born on the Choctaw Agency, Indian Territory in 1835. After the war he entered the Overland Mail Service in Texas and was Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1893-1895. And what was unusual about him at the Battle of First Bull Run?

We thank "Old Sarge" for these questions and answers

Quiz Answers:

1. Winfield Scott Hancock and James Garfield
2. John Gibbon
3. John Brown Gordon
4. Richard Taylor and *Destruction and Reconstruction*
5. Frank Crawford Armstrong and he fought on the Union side at First Bull Run

Colonel Columns- General Ben Butler (Our thanks to Tom Nanzig of Ann Arbor for this article.)

Colonel, I have been reading about this fellow, Gen. Benjamin Butler. Was he really as big a joke as he seemed to be? Ben There---Didn't Do That!



Well, Gen. Butler was no big success that is for darn sure. It managed to fumble about every battle he was involved in from Big Bethel in 1861 to his mismanaged Ford Fisher campaign in 1864. But you know, he was not a failure at everything he tried.

For instance, **he started a spying operation in the Richmond, Virginia, area and managed to put two spies, a cook, and a gardener, right in President Jefferson Davis' house!**

Old Ben use signal Corps troops all along his lines in Richmond and Petersburg later to keep an eye on Confederate activity.

And even though some thought of him as a bit of a crank, the crank that ordered those Gatling guns was no joke to the men who faced those fast-shooting weapons.

He was real concern for the health of the fort-slogging soldiers. He had one of the best medical departments in the war and his chief of nurses was none other than Clara Barton.

He also saw that the mail system got letters to the soldiers. No, he was not the best military man by a long shot, but he was not all bad, either. Like many of us, he had his vices, and he had his virtues.