

On February 21, 1862, P.G.T. Beauregard lamented the recent calamities that had befallen the western Confederacy and warned of the results: “The Tennessee River is in possession of the enemy since the capture of Fort Henry. The evacuation of Bowling Green and subsequent fall of Fort Donelson, with large loss of officers, men, arms, and munitions, have so weakened us on that line that Nashville can only be held by superhuman energy, determination, and courage....the position at Columbus is so endangered....that its fall must be regarded as certain....I need not dwell upon the consequences of such a disaster. Suffice it to say it would involve the immediate loss to the Confederate States of the Mississippi River and Valley.”

At the outset of the Civil War the Confederacy had established a defensive line, over 400 miles in length, from Cumberland Gap in the East to Columbus, Kentucky on the Mississippi River. South of this line was a region of more than 150,000 square miles containing vital manufacturing centers, an irreplaceable source of raw material, invaluable livestock, food supplies, iron works, munitions factories, gunpowder mills, supply depots, railroad lines, and important river passages.

Crucial cities rested behind this defensive perimeter as well. Nashville was the great storehouse and arsenal of the western Confederacy and its loss would be staggering to the Rebel cause. Its munitions plants produced 100,000 percussion caps daily, and a wide variety of articles were manufactured and housed there—powder, cartridges, sabers, caps, cannon, small arms, saddles, blankets. Memphis, a cotton emporium on the Mississippi River, was also noted for its capacity to build locomotives as well as its foundries, which by November of 1861 were turning out six artillery pieces per week. Deeper into the Tennessee Heartland, Chattanooga provided the precious railroad artery linkage to Virginia and was the “gateway” to the city of Atlanta—the most important rail hub in the Deep South—100 miles distant.

The defense of Department No. 2, as this region was titled, became the duty of the Army of Tennessee. It would be a daunting task as the area was simply too vast and too vulnerable to invasion with wide rivers cutting nearly indefensible swaths throughout the expanse. The construction of Forts Henry and Donelson, although built with good intentions, was merely a stop-gap measure against the tens of thousands of Federals soon to be moving southward. Personality clashes and differences in military philosophies of the Confederate generals and politicians from this area further weakened the effort as did the “Virginia first” attitude of the Richmond government. It was a situation that literally spelled doom for the hopes of the Confederacy.

This month—**MONDAY, AUGUST 29**—guest speaker Greg Biggs will present “The Crack of Doom: The Collapse of Confederate Department No. 2.” Greg has spoken to the MRRT twice before—on the Atlanta Campaign and the generalship of Nathan Bedford Forrest. A former Associate Editor of *Blue & Gray Magazine*, Greg is a prolific author of various books and magazine articles. He recently moved to Clarksville, Tennessee where he started a Civil War Round Table which has nearly 50 members. Greg’s talk will assess the leadership of the two sides, politics and strategies, as well as the battles of Wild Cat Mountain, Mill Springs, Forts Henry and Donelson, and the collapse of the Confederate’s defensive line. Greg promises to include slides to enhance the presentation.

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FALL FIELD TRIP: IMPORTANT NOTICE: The bus is full and everything is ready for the trek to Harpers Ferry/Antietam. However, some folks still owe for the Saturday dinner (\$20) and the Sunday lunch (\$9.50). Since our Trip Chairman will not be in attendance at this month’s meeting, please mail your check to: Jerry Maxwell 1952 Tiley Cir. Commerce 48382.

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The MRRT wishes to thank **Margaret LeBlond** for last month’s program, “*The Legendary Clara Barton.*”

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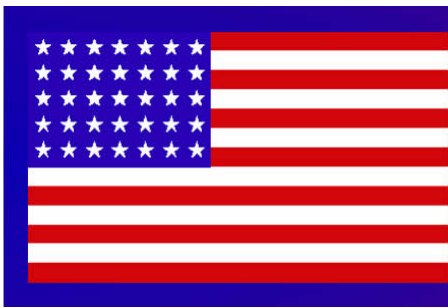
QUIZ: All questions pertain to the month of August....

1. Which foreign nation recognized the Confederate States of America as a belligerent on August 1, 1861? And, on the same day, who did President Lincoln appoint as Assistant Secretary of the Navy?
2. Which Union general declared martial law in St. Louis on August 14, 1861? And, on the same day which regiment of New Yorkers mutinied near Washington D.C., refusing to obey orders from their commanding officer?
3. On August 28, 1862, Stonewall Jackson’s corps had completed a 55-mile/2 day march and positioned themselves near Groveton to face the Federal army under John Pope. Along which road and near which farm did Jackson deploy his men?
4. The following day at Second Manassas which Federal general failed to attack and was later court-martialed and removed from command? Also, which Confederate general took a bullet through the kneecap incapacitating him for months?
5. In an August 9, 1863, memo to General U.S. Grant, what was President Lincoln referring to when he spoke of “a resource which, if vigorously applied now, will soon close the contest”? Also, on the following day, which Western general did Lincoln give a vote of confidence to but chastised for his delay near Chattanooga?
6. On August 25, 1863, in reprisal for the Quantrill-led raid on Lawrence, Kansas four days earlier, Federals ordered the evacuation of three Missouri counties in order to destroy the homes and property of Pro-Southerners. Name the general who issued this notorious decree and name it. [EXTRA CREDIT: Name the 3 counties soon to be called the “Burnt District.”]
7. Which outspoken Union general was relieved of corps command at Vicksburg by U.S. Grant on August 12, 1863? And, which former U.S. Secretary of War (under James Buchanan) and incompetent Confederate general who failed in holding Fort Donelson died on August 26, 1863?
8. On August 19, 1864, the III Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia hit the Federal V Corps south of Petersburg, Virginia near the Weldon Railroad. The Confederate commander would later be killed the last week of the war; the Federal commander would be relieved of his command one day earlier. Name them both.
9. On August 25, 1864, the same Confederate corps commander successfully attacked the II Corps of the Army of the Potomac. Name the battle and the Federal leader.
10. At the Democratic convention on August 31, 1864, which noted Ohio Copperhead moved that George McClellan’s nomination be unanimous? And, on the same day who received the nomination for Vice-President?

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In the closing days of August 1862 the great battle of Second Manassas was fought yielding Federal losses of 1747 killed, 8452 wounded, and 4263 captured or missing for a total of 14,462. The following is a story of one of the Federal dead.

Colonel Fletcher Webster, commander of the 12th Massachusetts Infantry, hailed from one of the most renowned families of the New England area. His father, the “Godlike” Daniel Webster, had been a member of Congress for nearly forty years, an unsuccessful Presidential candidate, a brilliant Secretary of State in three administrations, and possibly the best public speaker of his generation. Fletcher, the eldest of three children, was now the only survivor. Younger brother Edward, known for his waywardness, had died of typhoid fever as a major during the Mexican War in February 1848. Sister Julia died of tuberculosis merely two months later in April. Fletcher, who had also served in the Mexican War as a Colonel, now led his regiment into battle in August of 1862.



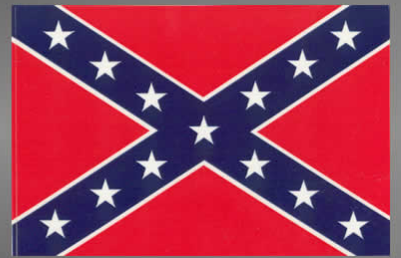
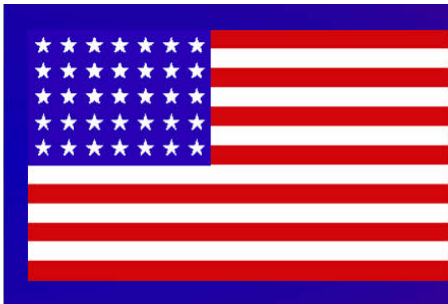
After James Longstreet's corps arrived to assist Stonewall Jackson's men, the Federals stood no chance of winning, but the bluecoats fought on with as much heart as before. Into the bloody struggle along Chinn Ridge Fletcher Webster brought in his brigade sometimes described as "genteel urbanites" on the Federal right. The 11th Pennsylvania Infantry anchored the center; the 13th Massachusetts held the left. Confusion reigned as the armies slugged it out. "Wounded men were everywhere," described one Massachusetts soldier. "Some were being helped away, others trying with all their strength to get away a safe distance. [One] wounded man begged piteously for us to take him to the rear; he was wounded in the neck, or head, and the blood flowed freely; every time he tried to speak the blood would fill his mouth and he would blow it in all directions....At the time I thought he was the most dreadful sight I ever saw. We could not help him, for it was of no use."

Confederates continued to attack in strength upon the Federal lines. One man of Webster's regiment remembered that "flesh and blood could not withstand the massed thousands of the enemy who charged upon our thin lines of battle." Federal artillery, supported by riflemen, however, was able to stun the advancing Rebels and momentarily drive them back in confusion. A firefight raged along a front of four hundred yards. Smoke blinded those who fired from both sides. One Confederate noted, "Half the time the smoke was so thick that we could not detect the blue forms of our enemies—and could only tell where they were by their cheers and the occasional glimpse we caught of their flag." The Rebel bullets continued to take their toll. "Our boys dropped like ten pins," wrote a member of the 13th Massachusetts. "Ten feet to my left the tall sergeant of Company F sank down in a heap, shot squarely through the head....My left hand mate whirled, shot through the shoulder. [Another] went down with a bullet through the face. [While another] was swearing like mad, shot through the thigh. A man I did not recognize dropped just in front. I heard the bullets chug into his body; it seemed half a dozen struck him. I shall never forget the look on his face as he turned over and died."

Meanwhile, Fletcher Webster struggled to keep his men in line. Although not a professional military man, Webster was a leader of ability. Earlier that morning he had sensed his own demise and took the time to explain his feelings in a letter to his wife. "This may be my last letter, dear love; for I shall not spare myself—God bless and protect you and the dear, darling children." Now as his men came under devastating fire, Webster rode along the line, waving his sword and encouraging his beleaguered men to hold. Then a bullet struck him in the arm and chest, and he rolled from his horse. His adjutant and others ran to him and started carrying his body to safety, but one of the bearers was shot and a second panicked and ran off. The adjutant and Webster, now barely breathing, were caught for a time between the two lines. Relief came only when the Confederates swept over them. Webster would survive in captivity for less than an hour. He would be the battle's most famous and most lamented Union fatality.

QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. Brazil and Gustavus V. Fox
2. John C. Fremont and the 79th New York Volunteers
3. Warrenton Turnpike and the Brawner Farm
4. Fitz-John Porter and Richard Ewell
5. Negro troops and William S. Rosecrans
6. Thomas Ewing and Order No. 11 [EXTRA CREDIT: Jackson, Cass, and Bates Counties]
7. John A. McClernand and John B. Floyd
8. A.P. Hill and Gouverneur Warren
9. Reams' Station and Winfield Scott Hancock
10. Clement L. Vallandigham and George H. Pendleton



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A last reminder to come see Greg Biggs present “The Crack of Doom: The Collapse of Confederate Department No. 2” on **MONDAY, AUGUST 29** at the Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road). It’s one you won’t want to miss. The meeting will begin at 6:30 P.M.

Also try our website: <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.