

SPECIAL REMINDER: This month only we will meet at the Farmington Hills Public Library on 12 Mile (between Orchard Lake and Farmington Road). Next month it's back to our normal surroundings.

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On the morning of Sunday, September 14, 1862, the outcome of the Confederate invasion of Maryland hinged on the passes through South Mountain. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia lay west of the mountains in five widely scattered increments. To the east, George McClellan's powerful Army of the Potomac began moving. If the Federals penetrated South Mountain, Lee's army faced the possibility of being carved into pieces with defeat assured. One of the North's newly recruited regiments, the 17th Michigan Infantry, was about to receive its baptism under fire. Captain Frederick W. Swift of the 17th Michigan gave the following description of the fighting at South Mountain:

Far up the mountain the enemy with their batteries were awaiting our advance. On the crest a lane extended from the left of the road, and at right angles with it, flanked on each side by a strong stone wall; behind each of these walls....lay dense masses of the rebel infantry....Our men having lain so long exposed to the fire of the enemy without being able to reply to it...had grown impatient of delay, and the order to move forward and charge upon the enemy was received with shouts of enthusiasm. We moved out from our sheltered position through an open field and upon the enemy's position, exposed to a storm of lead from the stone fence in front and from the enemy's batteries on the right of the gap. Our regiment was the extreme right of [Gen. Orlando] Willcox's division, which was composed mainly of old troops, and our men moved upon the enemy as if jealous of the laurels their veteran coadjutors might win. With cheer after cheer sent up in defiant answers to the rebel "yell," they advanced to within easy musket shot, when they opened a murderous fire upon the enemy, which was kept up for some time, the regiment steadily advancing, and its extreme right swinging around and getting an enfilading fire upon the rebels entrenched behind the two walls....Unable to stand this murderous fire, the rebels broke in dismay, the left of [our] regiment charging with shouts of triumph over the walls and pursuing the fleeing remnants of [the rebels] over the crest and far down the slope of the mountain, thus gaining the key-point of the battle.

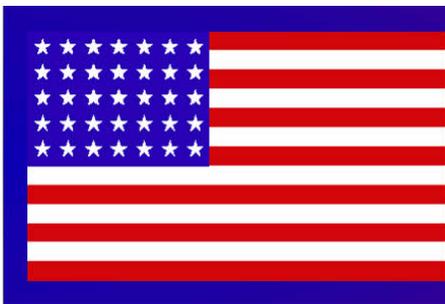
Of the less than 500 men of the 17th Michigan actually engaged 27 were killed and 114 wounded. In turn they captured about 300 prisoners, the Confederates leaving their dead in large numbers. Gen. Willcox reported: "*The 17th Michigan... performed a feat that may vie with any recorded in the annals of war, and set an example to the oldest troops.*" The gallant charge gave the regiment its immortal nickname, the "*Stonewall Regiment.*"

The 17th Michigan fought again three days later at Antietam. It would eventually fight in the Western Theater before being transferred back to the East. At the end of the war the 17th, commanded by Col. Frederick W. Swift, participated in the Grand Review on May 23, and arrived back in Detroit on June 7. During nearly three years of service, its 1079 men suffered 289 deaths, including 135 killed or mortally wounded and 154 who died of disease.

On **MONDAY, AUGUST 25**, the MRRT will welcome guest speaker, **Bill Christen**, who will present, "*The 17th Michigan at South Mountain.*" Bill, who has spoken to us before, is a retired automotive engineer and the author of *Pauline Cushman: Spy of the Cumberland*. He is also the publisher of *The Watchdog*, a quarterly journal for enactors and interpreters of the 1850 to 1875 era. Bill will include a history of the regiment with photographs. You'll want to be in attendance for this program.

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A special thanks goes to last month's speaker, **Dr. Michael Stevens**, for his discussion of the "*Literature of the Lost Cause.*" It was a delightful talk with numerous questions and positive statements afterward.



FALL FIELD TRIP: Room still remains on the bus for our trip to Vicksburg (Saturday/Sunday, October 11-12). Simply contact Jerry Maxwell (248-363-1710) if you are interested. It's guaranteed to be the year's highlight, and you'll kick yourself for not signing up. We are still waiting for two delinquent bus deposits [\$90], and seven people to pay for the lunch/dinner. All checks are to be made out to Jerry and should be handed over to him at this month's meeting.

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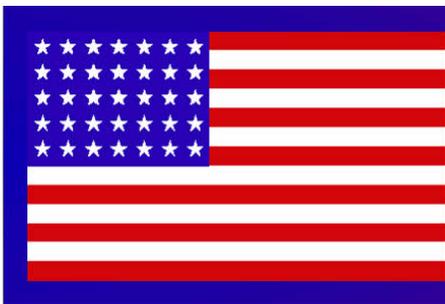
QUIZ: All questions pertain to Michigan in the Civil War....

1. Which colonel commanded the 1st Michigan Infantry and was wounded and captured at First Bull Run? And, what is the significance of Private Mathias Wollenweber of the 2nd Michigan Infantry?
2. On October 5, 1861, which former Michigan governor, now a U.S. Senator, died at his home in Green Oak, Livingston County? And, which Detroiter replaced him on January 4, 1862, by a vote of 28-2 in the U.S. Senate?
3. Which colonel of the 4th Michigan Infantry was killed on July 1, 1862, at Malvern Hill? And, which law, signed by President Lincoln the following day, established Michigan's agricultural college, presently MSU?
4. Which brigadier general, the son of a former Detroit mayor, was killed while leading Union forces at Baton Rouge, Louisiana on August 5, 1862? And, ten days later the 24th Michigan Infantry was mustered into Federal service in Detroit. Who was its colonel?
5. Which Democratic candidate was nominated for governor in 1862 to oppose Austin Blair, and who was his running mate for lieutenant governor?
6. Which Michigan regiment ran from the attacking Confederates at Little Round Top on July 2, 1863? And, which Michigan regiment claimed to be the first to scale Missionary Ridge on November 25, 1863? [Extra Credit: Which commander of the latter regiment was killed in the assault?]
7. Which prominent Flint lumberman was nominated for governor on July 7, 1864, to succeed Austin Blair? And, who did he defeat on the third ballot by a narrow margin of 106 to 103?
8. Besides the Michigan Cavalry Brigade, which Michigan infantry regiments were present at Appomattox for the surrender?
9. Which four Michigan cavalry units accompanied William Tecumseh Sherman on his infamous March to the Sea?
10. Which Michigan regiment helped save the Union army from total disaster at Snodgrass Hill in the Battle of Chickamauga on September 20, 1863? And, who was its commanding colonel captured at this battle?

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His men called him "*Fighting Dick*" or "*Greasy Dick*" because of his utter disregard for danger. Born in Fairfax, Vermont on December 26, 1815, Israel Bush Richardson was the descendent of Revolutionary War hero Israel Putnam. Richardson graduated from West Point in the celebrated Class of 1841 (number 38/52). He then fought in the Seminole Wars in Florida and later distinguished himself in the Mexican War with two brevets for his heroics at Contreras, Churubusco, and Chapultepec. Richardson resigned from the army in 1855 to take up farming in Pontiac, Michigan.

When the Civil War broke out, Richardson recruited and organized the 2nd Michigan Infantry and was mustered in as its colonel. His regiment was only slightly engaged at First Manassas, but he was one of the few officers to bring his command off the field in good order during the Federal rout. With the reputation as an organizer and disciplinarian Richardson was promoted to the rank of brigadier general on August 9. The iron courage displayed during the spring and summer of 1862 in the Peninsula Campaign prompted another promotion to major general on July 5. Richardson had the uncanny knack of knowing how to get the most from his men who appreciated his toughness. One of his Irish soldiers accidentally kicked Richardson in the chest injuring his ribs on September 13. Richardson ignored any disciplinary action and the two of them simply took a pull from the Irishman's flask before resuming their duties. As historian Stephen Sears



has noted: “[Richardson] had an informal, common sense attitude toward military routine....that his men greatly admired....He often assured [them] that he would never take them where he was not willing to go himself.”

At Antietam Richardson led a division of 4000 men. As he pushed his men forward toward “Bloody Lane,” little cooperation was received from other Federal units. Richardson’s impatience showed as he brought his men toward the Sunken Road. One of his officers described him as “on foot, with his bare sword in his hand, and his face as black as a thunder cloud.” When informed that one of his generals, John Caldwell, was at the rear behind a haystack, “Fighting Dick” roared, “God damn the field officers!” and led his men onward at the double-quick.

While talking to Captain William M. Graham, Richardson was mortally wounded by a ball from a spherical case shot fired from a Confederate battery. Various accounts disagree, however, as to the exact nature and locale of the wounding. In *Mr. Lincoln’s Army*, Bruce Catton dismisses the matter with the comment that he was “hit by a rifle bullet and was carried off the field—only slightly wounded, it seemed, but in a few days an infection set in and the wound killed him.” Contemporary accounts include Winfield Scott Hancock’s report that Richardson was “severely wounded,” and borne from the field. “No one but a soldier,” wrote one of his men, “could understand our sorrow at seeing him carried off the field.” In fact, Richardson was taken to George McClellan’s headquarters and placed in Philip Fry’s bedroom. Jonathon Letterman and another surgeon examined him. However, they became so busy that their subsequent visits became infrequent. Richardson’s sister visited him in October and after a few days felt that although he was weak and depressed, he was improving. The surgeons finally agreed his case was hopeless, although there was disagreement about the pleuropneumonia he had developed. Most felt it was unrelated to his wound, while others thought the projectile had entered his lung. Richardson died at age 47 on November 3. He was taken to Pontiac for burial.

In *The Gleam of Bayonets* historian James Murfin writes: “When the final analyzation of the strategy and tactics of the Battle of Antietam is made, the name of Maj. Gen. Israel Richardson may well gain new, and certainly deserved, prominence. From the viewpoint of troop direction and performance, Richardson’s star rose high at the Sunken Road. It is difficult to imagine what might have taken place had he not been put out of action as the fight reached its climax. Richardson has remained in obscurity too long. In contrast to other divisional commanders....Richardson emerges as a soldier’s soldier, far too little appreciated by his superiors and by history.”

QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. Orlando B. Willcox and reportedly Wollenweber was Michigan’s first casualty in the Civil War (wounded on July 18, 1861 at Blackburn’s Ford, Virginia)
2. Kingsley S. Bingham and Jacob M. Howard
3. Dwight A. Woodbury of Adrian and the Morrill Land-Grant College Act
4. Thomas Williams and Henry A. Morrow
5. Byron G. Stout of Pontiac and Henry H. Riley of Constantine
6. 16th and 11th [Extra Credit: Major Benjamin C. Bennett of Burr Oak]
7. Henry H. Crapo and Henry P. Baldwin of Detroit
8. 1st, 5th, 16th, 26th
9. 2nd, 4th, 8th, 9th
10. 22nd and Heber LeFavour of Detroit

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