



Palm Sunday, April 9, 1865, spelled the virtual end of the Confederacy. That morning, Robert E. Lee left his camp to ride to the Wilmer McLean House in Appomattox for the formal surrender to Ulysses S. Grant—a devastating task that Lee “*would rather die a thousand deaths*” than conduct. Behind him, Lee left his shattered and defeated Army of Northern Virginia under the temporary command of Lt. Gen. James Longstreet. The dejected “*Old War Horse*,” as Lee called him, sat, probably thinking of the lost effort of the past four years, awaiting Lee’s return.

Suddenly, a well-dressed Federal general riding under a white flag appeared in the Confederate camp. It was 25-year-old George Armstrong Custer who approached Longstreet. The flamboyant and brash Custer called out, “*I have come to demand your instant surrender. We are in position to crush you, and unless you surrender at once, we will destroy you.*” Glaring contemptibly at Custer, Longstreet demanded: “*By what authority do you come in our lines? General Lee is in communication with General Grant. We certainly will not recognize any subordinate.*”

Not to be outdone, Custer replied, “*Sheridan and I are independent of Grant today, and unless you surrender immediately we are going to pitch in.*” Without pause, Longstreet challenged: “*Pitch in as much as you like,*” and turning to a staff officer, barked: “*Take this gentleman and conduct him back to his lines, and he may consider himself lucky to get back safely after his impertinent errand.*” Other eyewitnesses heard Longstreet’s words differently. “*I suppose you know no better and have violated the decencies of military procedure because you know no better, but it will not save you if you do it again. Now, go and act as you and Sheridan choose or I will teach you a lesson you won’t forget!*” The heated repartee between Custer and Longstreet was the talk of the Confederate army. One claimed that Custer sneered, “*I’ll be back. You can stake your life on it!*” To which Longstreet snarled, “*If you do that, I’ll do my best to meet you.*” A Confederate staff officer who was present asserted later that “*if ever I saw a man with his tail between his legs it was Custer.*” Although Custer defenders have dismissed the story as false, Confederate accounts provide a version that seems creditable, supported by ample documentation, and all agree the conversation was “*animated.*” Either way, the crest fallen Custer was escorted out of the Confederate camp as the “*Old War Horse*” went back to his personal thoughts.

This month—**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25**—the MRRT is pleased to welcome speaker **John Gibney** whose presentation will be, naturally, “James Longstreet.” John is currently the Assistant Director of the Monroe Historical Museum. He is also an adjunct Instructor in the Graduate Historic Preservation Program at Eastern Michigan University, where he teaches courses in Living History Techniques for professional interpreters, and the Civil War Instructor at Washtenaw Community College. John is also a Civil War re-enactor and possesses an expertise in diorama making. Some of you will warmly remember John’s father, Abbott Gibney, who was a long-time MRRT member (he served as Old Sarge for many years), and a noted expert on James Longstreet. The enigmatic Longstreet remains a controversial subject today—perhaps John will clear up some of the discrepancies. You’ll want to be in attendance for this one!

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The Michigan Regimental extends its thanks to **Robert Vane**, last month’s speaker for his program, “*How Lincoln and Grant Won the Civil War.*” Hopefully, you stuck around long enough to hear his talk.

FALL FIELD TRIP: Everything appears ready for our Annual Field Trip. We will have a full bus load for our Franklin/Spring Hill/Nashville venture on Saturday/Sunday, October 14-15. Don’t forget we will have a preliminary meeting at 7:30 P.M., Friday, October 13 at the Best Western Motel in Franklin. Have a safe trip! If you have any questions, please contact Jerry Maxwell at 248-363-1710.



QUIZ: All questions pertain to James Longstreet and George Custer.....

1. At which battle did Longstreet assure Lee: “I will kill them all before they reach my line”? A) Fredericksburg B) Antietam C) Wilderness D) Groveton E) Williamsburg And, at Chickamauga, Longstreet’s men broke through the Federals at: A) Snodgrass Hill B) Kelly Field C) Brotherton House D) Horseshoe Ridge E) Poe’s Field
2. Custer graduated last in the West Point class of June, 1861. Who graduated Number 1 and Number 12 in his class. Both were killed at Gettysburg, one at Little Round Top and one at Cemetery Ridge.
3. Name Longstreet’s three Divisional Commanders at Gettysburg.
4. Name Custer’s four relatives who were killed at the Little Big Horn River.
5. Longstreet died at age 82 on January 4, 1906, and is buried at which cemetery in Gainesville, Georgia? A) Elmwood B) Alta Vista C) Mt. Carmel D) Oakwood E) Calvary of Christ And, what ailment caused Longstreet’s death? A) Typhoid B) Heart Attack C) Tuberculosis D) Pneumonia E) Cancer
6. Which three books did Libbie Custer write on her husband after his death?
7. Name the other three Confederates who were killed when Longstreet was badly wounded at the Wilderness. And, on which part of the body was Longstreet wounded?
8. Custer led the charge which ended the life of Jeb Stuart. What was this battle and which of Custer’s troopers fired the fatal shot? [Extra Credit: In which unit did this Federal trooper serve and where was he killed seventeen days later?]
9. Besides “Old Pete” and “Old War Horse,” what other nickname did Longstreet pick up at Chickamauga? And, who did Longstreet describe as “the truest as well as the bravest man that ever lived”?
10. On September 30, 1864, who did Custer succeed as commander of the 3rd Cavalry Division? And, how many horses did Custer have shot from under him during the Civil War, and how many wounds did Custer incur in the war?

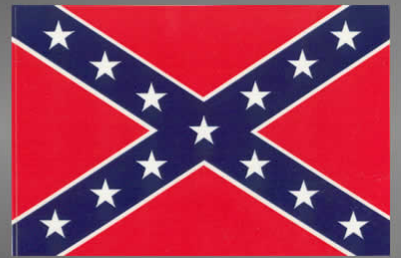
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Tales from the Battle of Nashville.....

Federal officer, Captain Job Aldrich of the 17th U.S. Colored Troops, had a bad feeling about the coming fight. He seemed convinced that he would die, and gave his money, watch, and personal belongings to his brother-in-law’s wife, who was visiting in Nashville at the time. Aldrich then wrote an emotional letter to his wife, “*the most affecting I ever read,*” later said his brother-in-law, Colonel William R. Shafter. Aldrich’s letter concluded: “*The clock strikes one, good night. At five the dance of death begins around Nashville. Who shall be partners in the dance? God only knows. Echo alone answers who? Farewell.*”

Later on December 14 Shafter’s troops were trapped beneath the guns of the Confederates behind a strong lunette. Some of Shafter’s men were as close as thirty yards when the Rebels opened fire. Another Confederate battery began spraying canister across their entire front. Shafter, on the right of his regiment, was unable to halt the spreading disorder, and his entire line became fragmented and began to fall back in disarray. Indeed, during the next few moments Shafter’s command simply vanished. The officers and men trapped in the railroad cut were nearly annihilated. In less than ten minutes Shafter lost 110 men and 7 officers from his two principal regiments, including his premonitory brother-in-law, Captain Job Aldrich, who had been shot in the head and instantly killed.

The following day Colonel Shafter found Aldrich, lying on his face, stripped of “*all his clothes—everything.*” Near Aldrich’s body was the corpse of another white officer, Captain Gideon Ayers. A wounded black soldier related how Ayers was still alive when the Confederates had stripped him, with Ayers begging them not to hurt him so much as they roughly removed his belongings. Ironically, according to Shafter, the wounded blacks had been left alone and not bothered by the enemy, even as the corpses about them were being pilfered.



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Colonel Edmund W. Rucker of Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry was known as an ardent fighter. With darkness at hand on December 16, Rucker had just posted one of his regiments and was returning across the Granny White Pike when he encountered a body of mounted troops. Thinking they might be his own men, Rucker, saber in hand, rode up to an officer giving commands. "Who are you?" Rucker demanded. The unknown horseman replied that he was an officer of the 12th Tennessee Cavalry. Immediately Rucker knew he was in the presence of the Yankees. Quickly swinging his saber, he struck the rider across the forehead with a glancing blow and then again lashed out with his blade. Yet his horse reared, and Rucker, thrown off balance, dropped his saber as he lunged to regain his saddle. His adversary, Captain Joseph C. Boyer of the 12th Tennessee (Union) Cavalry, by now had recovered sufficiently to draw his own sword and grapple with Rucker. Rucker soon grasped the saber and wrenched it from Boyer's hand. During the melee, Rucker noted some of the enemy's troopers closing in. He struck spurs to his mount to avoid further conflict against overwhelming odds. Boyer shouted for his men to shoot the man on the white horse, and a volley of shots zipped past. One pistol ball struck Rucker in the left elbow, shattering the bone, and his mount leapt wildly, throwing him to the ground, where Rucker was soon made a prisoner.

Rucker's kind treatment mirrored that of the Confederate generals captured that day, Ed Johnson, Henry R. Jackson, and Thomas B. Smith. All were taken to George Thomas' field headquarters and feted to officers' mess. When proffered some cigars and a flask of spirits by one of Thomas' staff officers, a Confederate Brigadier (probably Henry R. Jackson) related how the Yankees had marched up to and over his works as "*cool as fate.*" Remarkd the general, "*It was astonishing, sir, such fighting.....it was really splendid.*"

QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. A) Fredericksburg and C) Brotherton House
2. Patrick O'Rorke and Alonzo Cushing
3. Lafayette McLaws, George Pickett, and John Bell Hood
4. Thomas Custer (brother), Boston Custer (brother), Henry Armstrong Reed (nephew), James Calhoun (brother-in-law)
5. B) Alta Vista and D) Pneumonia
6. *Boots and Saddles, Tenting on the Plains, Following the Guidon*
7. Captain Alfred E. Doby, orderly Marcus Baum (of Joseph Kershaw's staff), Brig. Gen. Micah Jenkins and a bullet struck his throat, passing through his shoulder, severing nerves
8. Yellow Tavern and John Huff [Extra Credit: 5th Michigan Cavalry and Haw's Shop]
9. "Bull of the Woods" and U.S. Grant
10. James Harrison Wilson and 11 horses/one wound in the foot

Make certain you're on hand for the **MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25th** meeting for **John Gibney's** program on "*James Longstreet.*" We begin at 6:30 P.M. at the Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road). See you there!

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