

MEMBER RENEWAL

The MRRT begins its 55th year in 2015—and this month would be a great time to show your support by renewing your membership.

Membership remains \$20 a year—or \$5 for students. Checks should be made out to Don Kadar and can be mailed to his home at 61895 Fairland Drive, South Lyon, MI 48178; or simply brought to the meeting and given to Don or Jeanie Graham. Cash is also welcomed.

On MONDAY, November 24, the MRRT welcomes long-time member Bill Seger to present “Little Round Top, Fact or Fallacy?” Of all the strategic landmarks fought over during the most famous battle of the Civil War, none gained the fame of a small hill two miles south of town called Little Round Top. The focus of Bill’s presentation is to expose and dismiss the fallacy of Little Round Top. Specifically, the fallacy refers to the history of speculation on the significance of what happened there. Examining the written record of the last 150 years and the military situation in July 1863, Bill will show that the popular story of Little Round Top is indeed a myth. Whether you agree or disagree with Bill’s opinions, it should prove to be a lively discussion.



Bill has been a member of the MRRT for over 20 years and has visited Gettysburg at least once a year for the last 15 years. He is retired after working over 50 years as a tooling engineer in the auto industry. He is also an avid golfer.

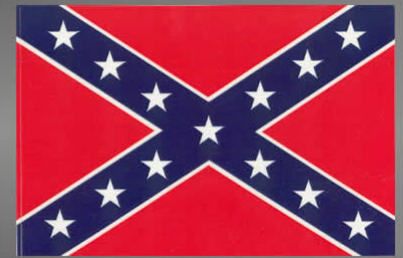
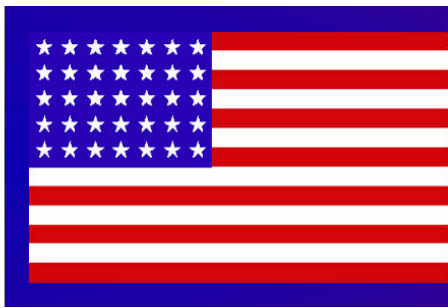
The Roundtable would like to thank long-time member Don Garlit for an engaging evening for his presentation, “Southerners Speak Out on Secession”. The election of Abraham Lincoln as President was the final straw for the Southern states, resulting in South Carolina leaving the Union on December 20, 1860. It was soon followed by ten additional Southern states.



In general, the seceding state would issue a secession ordinance providing the reasons on why they chose to end their relationship with the Union. A widely expressed reason was the passage of “*Personal Liberty Laws*” by many Northern states that, in effect, nullified the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. Several seceding states wrote that the North had utterly broken the compact that the Founding Fathers began and two states named Abraham Lincoln as being partially due to their reason for secession. Surprisingly, or perhaps not, the perpetuation of slavery was not openly stated as the prevalent reason for succession.

Confederate President Jefferson Davis’ inaugural address was brief, non-combative and positive. He did not detail the reasons why the Southern states’ succeeded but said “*all we ask is to be let alone*”. Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens’ made his so-called “*Cornerstone Speech*” on March 21, 1861. This speech had been considered by many to be the definitive statement of the Confederate policy. Stephens explained, “*Our new Government is founded upon exactly the opposite ideas; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the Negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and normal condition.*”

Following the war, a political correctness set-in to explain the reasons for the Southern states’ secession and the resulting War Between the States. The Southerners’ new line of reasoning is exemplified by Confederate General John Gordon who wrote in 1904 that slavery was not the sole cause of the war; the two sides simply had differing concepts of the



Constitution. He further stated that Union soldiers fought to preserve the Union, not to free the slaves. By 1917, this viewpoint had evolved as a struggle between different concepts of sovereignty—and that both sides fought honorably. In the Southern view, each state was free, sovereign and independent—just like an independent country. However, the North believed that Constitution did not allow for a state to secede simply because that state did not agree with a Federal policy or law.

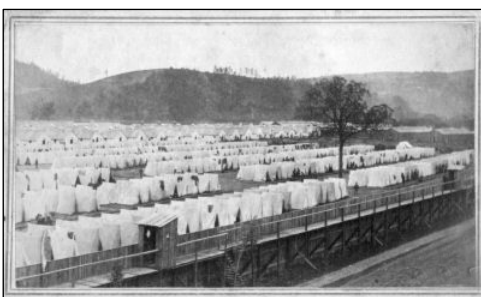
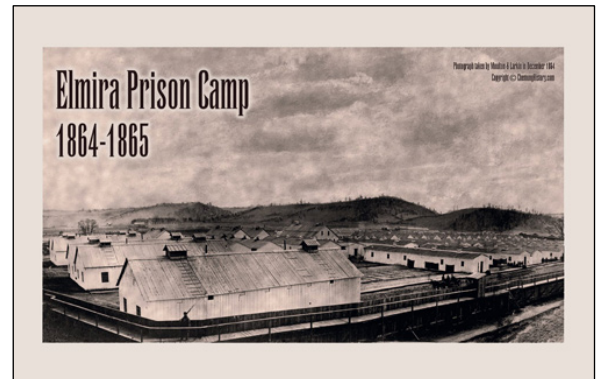
In contrast to this new Southern take on the war's causes, R.M.T. Hunter states in the "*Origin of the Late War*" that slavery was the main cause of the war. Southerners felt that the rights of the slavery minority were trampled on by the majority and the North's non-compliance with the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 were significant factors leading to secession.

Don ended his discussion with data mining he had conducted. In determining which states seceded first, he looked at a number of factors but found the highest correlation to be one in which the states with the highest percentage of slaves in the population. He was also clear to state that 'correlation' and 'causation' don't necessarily make a finding a fact.

Quiz Questions: This month's questions and answers pertain to Little Round Top – July 2, 1863:

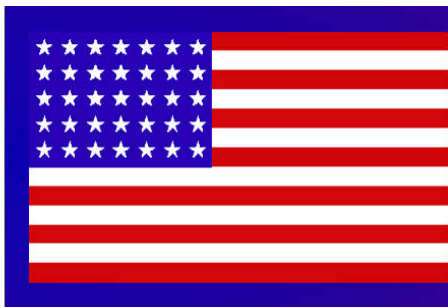
1. How many Confederate regiments were engaged on Little Round Top on July 2nd?
2. How many Union regiments were engaged at this time?
3. What type of cannon did Hazlett's Battery have on Little Round Top?
4. What were the strength and losses of this battery?
5. Major General George Sykes is one of the few Corps Commanders at Gettysburg without a statue in his likeness, yet his 5th Corps fought valiantly on Little Round Top and elsewhere. Who were the other Corps Commanders without statues?

Civil War Essentials: We turn our attention this month to Elmira Prison Camp, Elmira, New York. Of the approximately 12,000 Confederate soldiers held there during 15 months from July 1864 through the autumn of 1865, roughly 25% of the prisoners died. The reasons were common enough; malnutrition, exposure to extreme weather, disease and poor sanitary conditions. The death rate vividly demonstrates that the South was not alone in running intolerable and lethal prison camps. It should be noted that at Andersonville, the death rate was roughly 29%—albeit many more prisoners were kept there. Elmira earned the nickname of 'Hellmira' by the inmates.



The Elmira Prison Camp sprang from the former Union Camp Rathbun, which was used at the beginning of the war to muster and train soldiers. After falling into disuse, it was converted to use as a prison camp, partially due to its proximity to the Erie and Northern Central Railways. In May 1864, the camp's commandant, LTC Seth Eastman, was informed he was to "*set apart the barracks on the Chemung River at Elmira as a depot for prisoners of war.*" He was further informed that these facilities might be needed to house 8-10,000 prisoners within 10 days. He informed his superiors that the camp could only support 4,000 in barracks and perhaps another 1,000 in tents. In short, from

medical support (a tent and reliance on a local civilian doctor) to billeting and mess facilities, along with an inadequacy of potable water, the camp was simply incapable of supporting the estimated number of prisoners to be held.



By July Elmira Prison began receiving its first prisoners. Henry Colt of the 104th NY Volunteers was assigned the commandant and was considered a fair man and liked by both Union and Confederate soldiers. However, in this story the role of heavy is played by the Union Commissary General William Hoffman. Over the course of the camp's operation, Hoffman is alleged to have only authorized the building of further winter quarters when it was too late to prevent many of the prisoners from dying from exposure due to the extreme cold weather experienced that winter. As the cold weather came early, of the camp's 10,000 prisoners, the barracks had room for only 6,000. As late as Christmas, 900 were still in tents. Also key to the high death rate was the late attention given to cleaning up water drainage and a retaliatory reduction of rations that seriously impaired the health of the Confederate prisoners.

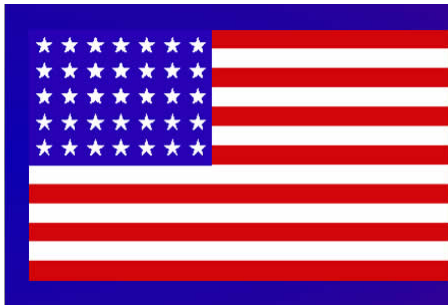
The horrors of Elmira were effectively white washed following the war. The NY Herald addressed the rumors of mistreatment as "*pure fabrication.*" Camp Douglas, located in Chicago, IL, is another Union prisoner camp infamous for the poor living conditions of the Confederate prisoners that led to a death rate estimated at 17%. In short, both sides, though largely through negligence rather than malevolence, provided sub-standard living conditions to prisoners that ultimately lead to the deaths of some 56,000 soldiers prisoners.

Civil War Sesquicentennial (November 1864): **2 Nov:** Secretary of State William Seward warns the mayor of NY of rumors of sabotage on Election Day. **6 Nov:** Col B. Sweet arrests approximately 100 Copperhead and Confederate sympathizers in Chicago for plotting against the US. Their plan was to affect the release of Confederate prisoners to disrupt the election. **8 Nov:** Lincoln is elected to a 2nd term, winning all participating states except Delaware, KY and NJ. Lincoln also wins over 75% of the soldier vote. **13 Nov:** There is fighting between Union forces and Indians near Fort Larned, KS. **16 Nov:** Gen Sherman begins the '*March to the Sea*' campaign as his 62,000 troops depart Atlanta with 20 days of ration—provisions for on-going support is to be taken from the '*land*' in-route to Savannah. Opposing him are 13,000 men under CSA Gen George W Smith and 10,000 man cavalry led by CSA Joseph Wheeler. **19 Nov:** The battle between Federal forces and Indians continues in the Nebraska Territory; on this day it's centered at Plum Creek Station. Lincoln lifts the blockade from Norfolk, Fernandina and Pensacola as these ports are now in Union control. **25 Nov:** Southern arsonists set fire to ten hotels in NY. RC Kennedy is later hung for setting a blaze at the Barnum's Museum. **27 Nov:** Gen Butler's floating headquarters, the steamer Greyhound, blows-up apparently by an act of Southern sabotage. **29 Nov:** West in the Colorado Territory, forces under Col John M Chivington, in reprisal of past Indian raids, fall upon a Cheyenne village at Sand Creek, killing almost a third of the residents to include women and children. This action will later be condemned by the Federal government. **30 Nov:** CSA Gen Hood, since the fall of Atlanta, moved north initially with the hope to draw Sherman. Although this ploy fails, on this day Hood's forces face off against 32,000 men under Gen Schofield at Franklin, TN. By the afternoon of this day, Hood's Army of Tennessee launches a full-out attack against Schofield. Numerically the forces are near even but by the end of the day, Confederate losses number near 6,300 men while the Union losses are closer to 2,300. Visit seekingmichigan.org/civil-war for Michigan events.

Quiz Answers:

1. There were five Confederate regiments: 4th Alabama; 15th Alabama; 47th Alabama (Laws' Brigade); 4th Texas; and 5th Texas (Robertson's Brigade)
2. There were eight Union regiments – 16th Michigan; 20th Maine; 44th New York, 83rd Pennsylvania (Vincent's Brigade); 91st Pennsylvania, 155th Pennsylvania, 140th New York; and the 146th New York (Weed's Brigade)
3. Hazlett's Battery had six artillery pieces, all 10-pounder Parrots.
4. Hazlett's Battery had 68 men. Battery losses were 13, 7 killed and 6 wounded.
5. General Daniel Sickles is the only other Union Corps Commander without a statue in his likeness. General Sickles claimed that the whole battlefield was his 'statue'.

Come out November 24th to hear Bill Seger present "*Little Round Top, Fact or Fallacy?*" at the Farmington Community Library. The meeting will begin at 6:30 pm. Also, check-out our website at www.farmlib.org/mrrt/.



Final Trip Report – “Five Forks to Appomattox”: An excellent trip was had by all this last October; the climatic Civil War drama on the fall of Lee’s Army of Virginia on the fields where they were fought, an outstanding tour guide in Scott Patchan, weather in the 70’s, and an excellent group dinner at the historic Crab Louie’s Seafood Tavern. Much credit and thanks must go to Jeanie, Linda and Mollie for all their efforts on organizing the trip.

