



## MEMBER RENEWAL

The MRRT celebrates its 59<sup>th</sup> year in 2019 – and this month is a great time to show your support by renewing your membership! (Or become a new member!). Membership is \$25 a year (\$5 increase to support preservation) – 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; or simply bought to the meeting and given to Jeanie. Cash is always welcomed.

Our Monday, November 26, 2018 meeting will be at 6:30 PM in the basement of the Farmington Library (corner of Farmington Road and Grand River Avenue). Our speaker will be Ms. Shayne Davidson of Ann Arbor who will speak on “A Photo Album of United States Colored Troops (USCT) Soldiers”.

Please visit our website at <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt>

We will be electing new officers in February! Mollie is retiring as Secretary after many years of service and George will be retiring as coffee sergeant. All of our positions, including President, will be up for a vote. Your assistance with the Roundtable will be greatly appreciated.

We have returned from our great trip to Chickamauga and Chattanooga! The weather was great; our 33 participants enjoyed the company of a great tour guide, Richard Manion, and terrific bus driver, Austin. The view from Lookout Mountain was terrific! Saturday’s night dinner at Polly Claire’s Restaurant was a special treat! We thank our trip committee, Jeanie, Linda, and Mollie for their great efforts in putting the trip together. Please share your stories at our November meeting.

Our Monday, November 26, 2018 program will feature Ms. Shayne Davidson of Ann Arbor discussing “A Photo Album of United States Colored Troops (USCT) Soldiers. Shayne will share with her discovery of Captain Prickett’s photo album of 17 men from from his USCT troop. She researched and identified one by one the men in the album. Then she created life-sized drawings of each man. Shayne will share with us some of the exhibitions of the project and the present status of her album. Shayne studied painting and drawing at Cooper Union in New York City and received a BFA from the California Institute of the Arts. She also received a MFA from the University of Michigan and worked several years as a professional illustrator and designer for many years. Shayne’s book Civil War Soldiers: 25<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops is available at Amazon. She lives with her family in Ann Arbor.



The Michigan Regimental Roundtable very much enjoyed Dave Ingalls’ insightful presentation of **The Battle of the Little Bighorn**. Dave had previously presented an account of George A. Custer’s actions in the Civil War to the MRRT. **Although not a Civil War battle, the famed Indian victory is relevant because a number of the Army commanders involved in the campaign had played prominent roles in the Union Army during the war.**

Custer was given the rank of Lt. Colonel in the post-war army and was given **unofficial command of the newly formed Seventh U.S. Cavalry Regiment**. From about 1871 to 1873, the 7<sup>th</sup> was scattered in the South on duty during Reconstruction. It had engaged Western Indians in battle only once before the Little Bighorn disaster. While



Custer and other senior officers had prior combat experience, many of the enlisted men were recently arrived immigrants.

**The discovery of gold in the Black Hills pressured the Grant administration to find a pretext to force the Sioux and other tribes out of the area.** After failing to get the Indians to sell the region to them, the government decided to force them onto reservations. A mistaken attack on a Northern Cheyenne village in March 1876 drove that tribe to support the Sioux resistance. **Sitting Bull, a Sioux chief, had a vision that he interpreted to mean that the Indians would overcome the soldiers in a battle and thus keep the whites out of the Black Hills.** Many reservation Indians joined the warriors under Sitting Bull after this revelation so the size of the hostile Indian force swelled well beyond the estimates the army used to make its plans.

**The campaign to force the Sioux to submit had been planned to start in mid-winter when the Indian ponies would have little to eat.** However Custer was ordered to Washington to testify to Congress regarding alleged War Department corruption. He earned the President's ill will by suggesting his brother was involved. By the time the acrimony subsided, it was mid-May before the force departed from Fort Lincoln. Custer's wife was said to have experienced a premonition as she watched the column ride away over some distant hills. **Because the army expected the Indians to scatter rather than fight, their chief concern was to try to round them up rather than to prepare for a pitched battle.** This led the District commander, Sheridan, and regional commander, Gen. Alfred Terry, to a three prong strategy with Gen. George Crook moving north toward the suspected Indian concentration while Col. John Gibbon came from the west and Custer came from the east. **This overly ambitious plan, difficult to coordinate communicating only by messenger, started to fall apart when the Indians violently attacked Crook on June 17 at Rosebud Creek and stopped him from any further movement north.** Crook failed to notify Custer or Gibbon of his setback. Terry, Gibbon and Custer met in Crook's absence and revised the plan but separated again with Terry accompanying Gibbon. Not knowing of the Indian attack on Crook, their belief remained that the Indians would scatter and preventing this was still the top priority.



When several Indians were spotted by 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry soldiers examining discarded army supplies on June 25, Custer assumed the Indians had been alerted to his presence and decided to attack at mid-day rather than the favored dawn timeframe and without real knowledge of the enemy's strength or dispositions. Leaving a detachment to guard the packs, he sent Major Reno to attack the village from the south while he tried to pass around the village to head off what he expected to be the flight of Indians from the north side of the village. Reno was repulsed, retreated to a wooded area, then panicked and fled across a ford onto a bluff where he was surrounded. Custer's main force was strung out along bluffs and destroyed by the overwhelming numbers of Indians.

**The 7<sup>th</sup> consisted of about 640 officers and men at the time of the battle. The Indians concentrated about 7000 people, including about 2000 warriors, in the village Custer was seeking.** The cavalrymen were armed with a short barreled carbine version of the Springfield "trapdoor" single shot rifle and a Colt revolver (sabers were not carried in this campaign). **Many, if not most, of the Indian warriors had Henry, Spencer (many Civil War surplus) or Winchester repeating rifles sold to them by corrupt traders.** This firepower disadvantage compounded the uncoordinated three prong strategy, Custer's unwise decision to split up his command and Major Reno's loss of nerve at critical times. Together with the difference in numbers, all these factors assured that the five companies with Custer would be wiped out while the detachments under Reno and Benteen were badly cut up. **So about 270 soldiers died and many others were**



wounded in the most remembered (but not the worst) defeat suffered by the US military against the Native Americans.

**MRRT Minutes for September 24, 2018:** **Call to Order** 6:40 pm. Approximately 30 people present for the business meeting. More people arrived for the outstanding speaker. **Pledge** dedicated to General George Custer **Introduction of Guests and New Members** Rich Duntley, Dean Moening, and visitor Tom Nanzig **Treasurer's Report Dues for 2019 will be accepted, beginning in November. A motion to increase dues to \$25 for the year passed unanimously.** **Secretary's Report** accepted **Preservation** None **Newsletters** Bob shared with us the Cincinnati Canister, the Indianapolis Hardtack, and the Cleveland Charger **WEB report** Up to date. There will be no October meeting. The next meeting will be Monday, November 25<sup>th</sup>, the Monday after Thanksgiving. **Program** Jim has completed the 2019 speaker program! **Fall Trip** 34 people have signed up for the trip, 2 short of capacity. **Items of Interest** Ken Baumann said that the Mobile, Alabama roundtable has started up again. The Civil War Monitor asked five historians to draft their best top command: Army Commander, Corps Commander, Division Commander, and Artillery/Cavalry Commanders. The results were interesting. **New Business** New officers will be nominated in January and voted on in February. Mollie is retiring (!) after 16 years. George has been coffee sergeant for 25 years and would like a backup. Jeanie Graham has three jobs. We need new people to help us out. **Old Business** A vote on a contribution to the Olustee Battlefield was postponed. **September's Program** the Roundtable thanks David Ingall for his outstanding presentation on the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

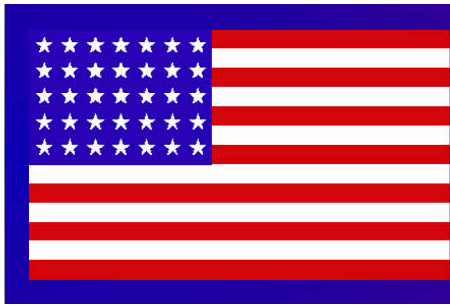
**Quiz Questions: This month's questions and answers pertain to the Chickamauga / Chattanooga Campaigns:**

1. Which Michigan infantry regiment lost 387 of 584 men, the heaviest loss suffered by any Union regiment, at the Battle of Chickamauga on September 20, 1863? Also, which commander of Battery A of the Michigan Light Artillery was killed the preceding day, September 19th?
2. Which 85' foot tower honors an Indiana colonel and his brigade who were armed with Spencer repeaters at Chickamauga near the widow Eliza Glenn house? Which 95' foot tall monument with statues of a Union and Confederate soldier shaking hands at Point Park on Lookout Mountain?
3. September 28, 1863: Which two Union generals, leaders of the XX and XXI Corps at Chickamauga, were relieved of command by General Rosecrans?
4. September 19, 1863: At Chickamauga Confederate and Federal forces began the fighting in the morning between which bridge and which road?
5. What is the elevation of Lookout Mountain?

**Chickamauga & Chattanooga Trip** - The Roundtable enjoyed an outstanding tour of the Chickamauga & Chattanooga battlefield sites. Our tour guide, Richard Manion, explained the complexity of the Chickamauga battlefield on Saturday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>. Chickamauga was the largest battle in the Western Theater and the second bloodiest of the war. Saturday's stops included the Chickamauga Visitor's Center and the monument for the Loomis Battery of the 1<sup>st</sup> Michigan Artillery.

We also visited the Viniard Farm, which was the deadliest portion of the battlefield. Richard shared with us a letter written to a brother of an 101<sup>st</sup> Ohio soldier killed at the farm. Our last stop was at the Wilder's Lighting Brigade Monument. After Saturday's tour, we stopped at Polly Claire's Restaurant in the Dent House for a terrific dinner. The Dent House was built in 1854.

We enjoyed a great tour of Lookout Mountain on Sunday. The weather allowed us a great view of Chattanooga and the surrounding area. The other major stop was at Chattanooga National Cemetery where the Andrews' Raiders executed by the Confederates are buried. Richard shared with us the diary of a Union soldier buried in the cemetery.



**Quiz Answers:**

1. The 22<sup>nd</sup> Michigan Volunteer Infantry and 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant George W. Van Pelt of Coldwater, Michigan
2. John T. Wilder and the New York Peace Memorial
3. Generals Alexander McCook and Thomas Crittenden
4. Reed's Bridge and the La Fayette Road
5. 2,392 feet

