

Vol LXIII, #1

Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

January 2023

MEMBER RENEWAL

The MRRT celebrates its 63rd year in 2023 – and now is a great time to show your support by renewing your membership! (Or become a new member!). Membership is \$25 a year – 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**. Cash is always welcome at our meetings.

Our January 2023 meeting will be on Monday, January 30, 2023, at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library – corner of Grand River and Farmington Road. **Our speaker, Jim Epperson from Ann Arbor**, will begin around 7:00 pm after a 6:30 pm business meeting. **We must leave the library by 8:45 pm.**

The Roundtable is proud to welcome Jim Epperson of Ann Arbor as our January 2023 speaker. Jim will speak on “Grant and Rosecrans---it all started at Iuka”. Jim will discuss several issues that resulted in a serious breach between the two Union generals that lasted several years after the war ended. The rift began at the Battle of Iuka, Mississippi that occurred on September 19, 1862. General Rosecrans was upset that General Grant’s men did not attack the Confederates.

Jim is a retired mathematics editor with a life-long interest in the Civil War. He maintains three Civil War websites, including *Causes of the Civil War*, *The Siege of Richmond and Petersburg*, and *Civil War Chronologies*. He serves as the webmaster for the Ann Arbor Civil War Roundtable.

Wearing a mask during our meeting is a personal decision. Masks will be available for your personal use.

November 2022 Speaker – Susan Nenadic – “Seeing the Elephant”

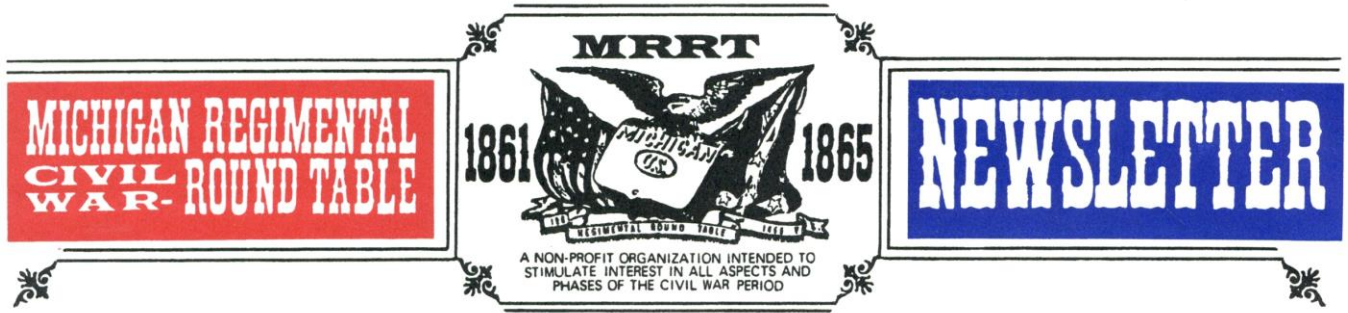
The MRRT enjoyed Susan Nenadic’s presentation of “*Seeing the Elephant*”. Her willingness to step in on short notice due to the illness of the scheduled speaker was especially appreciated. Susan’s talk centered on the role of women in the Civil War which went far nursing and other traditional female occupations. She believes that there were many women who served **in uniform** just in the Union Army- perhaps one thousand or more. Others were employed in several important positions during the war.

One of the most important was **Anna Carroll who openly advocated the Union cause in Maryland**, her home state, when others were strongly advocating secession. So great was her influence that an empty chair in the famous painting of the Cabinet watching while President Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation was symbolic of her impact on events.

A modern woman, Lauren Cook, created a sensation when she dressed as a Union soldier during a 1989 reenactment – she ran afoul of the authorities who thought that she must be an imposter. In fact, she was demonstrating the actual history of women in uniform during the war.

Several notable females in Union blue included:

- **Bridget Divers (or Deavers)** who enlisted with her husband in a Michigan cavalry regiment and was known for “his” horsemanship.
- **Anna Etheridge** who enlisted to serve as a battlefield nurse.
- **Sarah Wakeman** who, like others, joined to receive the bounty money paid to recruits, an act which reflected the limited financial opportunities open to women in the mid-Nineteenth Century. Although a real incentive, money was not a reason which elicited praise from her contemporaries or from historians.



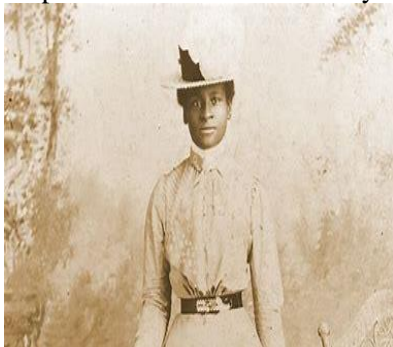
- **Albert Cashier (Jeannie Hodges)** who was born in Ireland and stowed away on a ship to reach America. She was wounded at Vicksburg and her true gender discovered as a result, but she retained her male identity even after the war was over. (Picture left)
- **Francis Clayton** enlisted in Minnesota with her husband and was wounded at the Battle of Stones River, where her gender identity was discovered.
- **Francis Hook** who enlisted in several different regiments exactly as male bounty-jumpers did but for more patriotic reasons.
- **Melinda Blaylock**, who was born in the Carolinas and served as a cook, first in the Confederate Army, then after being discovered as a woman (she was pregnant) and sent home, enlisted in the Union Army!
- **Julia Silk** from Canton, Michigan, who enlisted with her 2nd husband.

The relatively baggy uniforms used in the war helped conceal the gender identity of these women warriors. Female soldiers who were captured generally chose not to reveal their gender to the prison camp commander even though doing so would have resulted in their immediate repatriation – a real *Get of Jail Free* card!

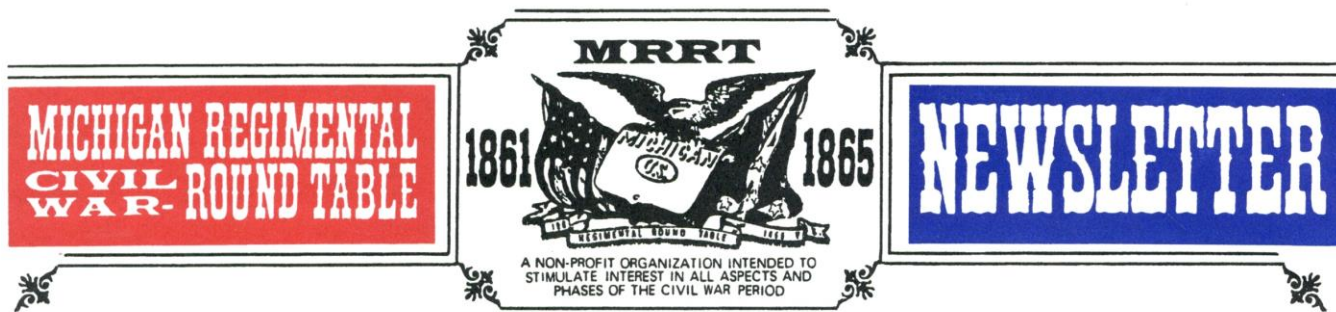
Women also functioned effectively as spies. Indeed, they could exploit male perception of women as simple, innocent beings to insert themselves into situations where they could access vital information without being suspected. Their voluminous clothing and everyday accessories provided safe hiding places shielded by male respect for female modesty.

Some of the Union lady spies included:

- **Kate Warne** who became a Pinkerton operative before the war and who arranged for President-elect Abraham Lincoln's safe passage through Baltimore on his way to Washington in 1861. Later, she uncovered the Confederate lady spy, Rose Greenhow.
- **Sarah Edmonds**, a Canadian – born woman who adopted masculine mannerisms as a child to please her father who had wished for a son. She successfully used skin dyes to pass as a black woman or man (“Frank Thompson”) to conduct her wartime spying.
- **Elizabeth Van Lew**, a Virginia native who smuggled food and clothing to Union prisoners held in Libby Prison in Richmond and overheard valuable information from their Confederate guards which she passed on to the Yankees. Van Lew pretended to be demented in order to infiltrate Confederate building without arousing suspicion. She was assisted by a black servant, Mary Bowser.



- **Mary Bowser**, whom Elizabeth Van Lew had freed from slavery, was able to find a job as a maid in the Jefferson Davis Presidential mansion. There she could overhear conversations between senior Confederate officials which she passed back to Van Lew to transmit to the Union Army. (Picture left)
- **Pauline Cushman** was an actress who, after being offered money by two Confederate men to toast Jefferson Davis, decided to become a spy for the Union. She was arrested in 1864 and sentenced by General Braxton Bragg to be hanged but was rescued by Union troops. She was said to have been made an honorary Major by President Lincoln.



- **Hattie Lawson** was also a Pinkerton operative who traveled to Richmond disguised as Mrs. Timothy Webster. her “husband” was another Union spy. Their activities were discovered, and both were arrested. Webster was executed and Hattie was imprisoned and later exchanged.

President Lincoln praised the many accomplishments of women during the war – some of which neither he nor others knew of at the time!

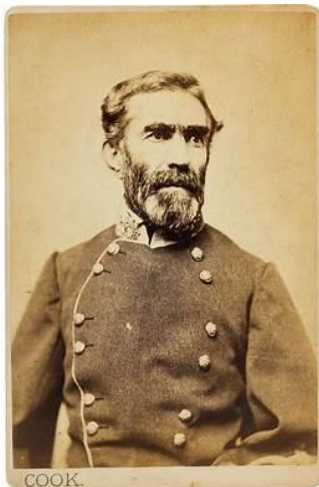
We thank Susan for her very interesting talk on a great topic!

Quiz Questions: This month’s questions pertain to Confederate and Union Generals in the format, “What did you do after the war?”

1. Wounded 6 times and awarded the Medal of Honor, this general was elected governor of his home state 4 times. And, at which college was he the President?
2. He served as commandant of cadets at West Point from 1870-1875. Suffering from migraine headaches in San Francisco, he committed suicide with a pistol ball to the brain in 1881. Where was his most notable action during the Civil War in 1864?
3. This Tennessean was severely wounded at Franklin. After the war he was elected as Democratic governor, became President of the Texas & Pacific Railroad, and President of the Tennessee Coal, Iron & RR Company. And which well-known Tennessee politician defeated him for the U.S. Senate in 1875?
4. He served 3 terms as Governor of Ohio, and later won a higher office where he removed Federal troops from the Reconstructed South. Who did he defeat in the closest Presidential election in American History?
5. This non-West Point general once had a fist fight with a common private. A hard drinker, he was one of the Confederacy’s toughest fighters. After the war he was an unsuccessful candidate for Congress in 1872, but later he served as superintendent of Tennessee’s state prisons and postmaster of Nashville. And, in which battle did he clash with John Bell Hood, spurring a controversy that lasts to the present day?

Our thanks to “Old Sarge” for these great questions!

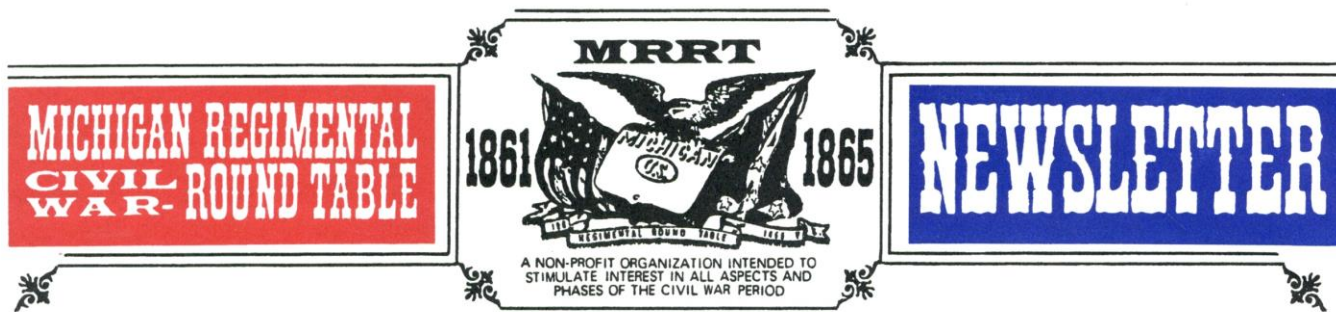
The Colonel’s Column – Confederate General Braxton Bragg



Colonel,
I can't, for the life of me, figure out how Gen. Braxton Bragg rose to such prominence in the Confederate Army. From all I have heard, he lost almost every battle he fought, didn't he?

Well, sonny, it's no secret that old Bragg was no favorite either among his officers or his men. He spent a lot of time and energy fighting with his under generals and I hear he was hell-on-discipline with his troops. But when you see how close he came to routing our Western armies in at least two or three battles, you know he was a fighting man's general.

Let me tell you about a couple close calls we had with old Break. Of course, you know he had an infantry corps at Shiloh when they nearly pushed us into the Tennessee River. At another river, Stones River, he had Old Rosey's army hanging on by his fingernails and one more push might have won the day.



Another real close one was in September 1863. Old Rosie had us all spread out chasing Bragg's army through the mountain gaps of North Georgia. That's just what Greg wanted. He actually had a whole Federal division (Negley's) trapped near Dug Gap by two southern divisions. One of Bragg's own man said it was an opportunity "which comes to most generals in their dreams." Poor old Bragg had a bird's eye view from atop a nearby mountain and none of his troops attacked Negley. Each was waiting for the other to attack first. It must have driven old Bragg buggy.

Finally, at the Battle of Chickamauga Creek, the Rebels had pushed us pretty darn hard on the first day. Early the next morning, Brag told General Polk to have his troops attack Gen. Thomas' weakened lines as soon as daylight allowed. When Bragg heard no guns at daybreak, he sent a courier who found old Bishop Polk sitting with his staff eating a leisurely breakfast and reading a newspaper! Greg won the battle later in the day but not because of anything the bishop did.

So, don't assume you know the whole story just for idle talk at your Round Table. Get yourself a copy of Steven Woodworth's "Davis and His Western Generals" if you want to know more about poor old General Bragg.

Our thanks to Tom Nanzig of Ann Arbor for letting us borrow one of his "Ask the Colonel" columns, this one from November 1996.

Quiz Answers:

1. Joshua Chamberlain and Bowdoin College (Maine)
2. Emory Upton and the "Bloody Angle" at Spotsylvania Court House
3. John Calvin Brown and former President Andrew Johnson
4. Rutherford Hayes and Samuel Tilden
5. Ben Franklin Cheatam and Spring Hill, TN

Soldier Life at West Point

Morris Schaff, an 1862 graduate of West Point, and a Union soldier related a story that occurred while a cadet at the Academy pertaining to Harold Borland, who graduated last in his class after six laborious years in 1860.

"Ginger" as Borland was nicknamed because of the color of his hair, was called upon by a professor in Ordnance class. "Mr. Borland, how many pieces will a 12-pound shell burst into? – (the average number having been determined well by numerous experiments.) "Ginger's blue eyes stared at the floor for some time as he deliberated. He slowly lifted his eyes toward the ceiling and finally responded, "Not less than two."

On Christmas Day, 1851, J.E.B. Stuart, nicknamed "Beauty" at West Point, wrote a letter to his cousin in which he briefly described fellow cadet (and a future Union general) William Rufus Terrill. "The cadet whom you saw at the Springs is named Terrill; he enjoys the reputation of being the ugliest man in the Corps, and so I hope you will not consider him as a fair specimen as far as looks are concerned. But he is a very good-hearted fellow (even) if he is ugly."

Young Adelbert Ames, a West Pointer from the class of May 1861, told the story of his unwanted tent-mate- "a large rat"- during his first winter with the Army of the Potomac in 1861. Ames stated: "I ruled supreme during the day, and he during the night. He treats me very badly, wakes me up, runs through the mud and drags his tail over my pillow, walks on my letter paper, and pokes his nose into my private affairs, for his rudeness I am feeding him bread and butter spiced with arsenic."