

Vol LXIV, #1

Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

January 2024

MEMBER RENEWAL

The MRRT celebrates its 64th year in 2024 – and now is a wonderful 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 November meeting will be on Monday, January 29, 2024, at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library – corner of Grand River and Farmington Road. Our speaker, Tom Nanzig 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.

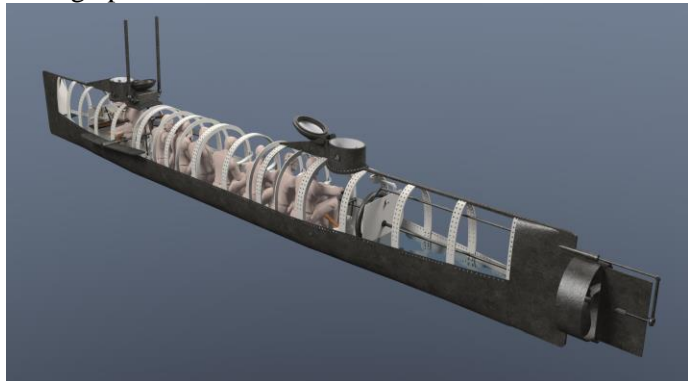
The Roundtable has a great new website, created by our friend, Gerald Furi. We are no longer connected to the Farmington Library. The website is: <http://www.mrrt.us> It is worth visiting.

The Roundtable is proud to welcome back Tom Nanzig of Ann Arbor as our January 2024 speaker. Tom will speak on “Civil War Tales with a Twist- Part 3. Tom has researched another ten interesting stories of the Civil War. He will introduce each story to us with three or four paragraphs, giving the direction of each tale. Our participation is welcome, and we are encouraged to connect-the-clues of each story. This will be another educational and entertaining evening!

Tom was born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His interest in the Civil War began, like a lot of us, when his parents took him to the Gettysburg battlefield. He is the author of three books and has been a member of Civil War Roundtables in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Tom was the editor of The Civil War Memoirs of a Virginia Cavalryman – Lt. Robert T. Hubbard, Jr.

Worley Smith – November 2023 Speaker – “CSS Hunley “Fish Torpedo Boat” The Mission, The Crew”. The Roundtable really appreciated Worley’s presentation on the fascinating story of the *CSS Hunley*.

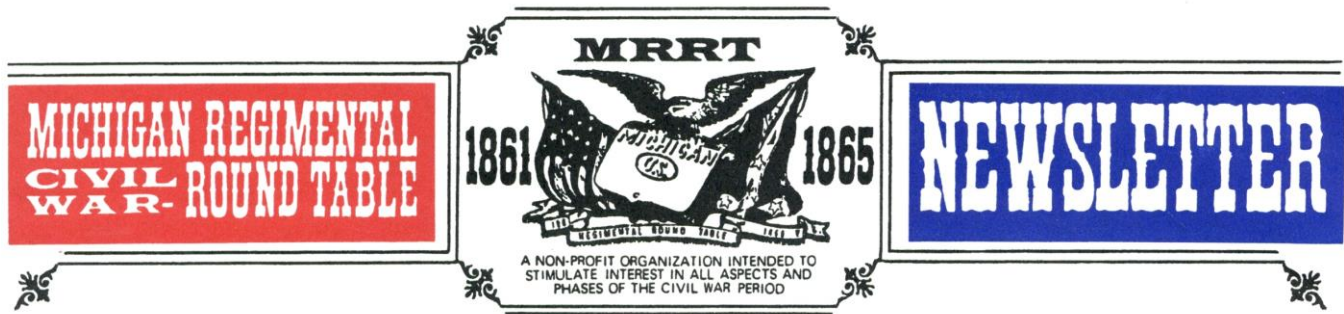
The impetus for creating a new vessel, the submarine, was a bounty by the Confederate government of up to \$50,000 for sinking a Union warship. Horace Hunley had the money needed to build a submarine for the Confederate Navy. James McClintock was his engineer and ship builder. Their first ship, the *Pioneer*, was built in New Orleans, ending up scuttled in Lake Pontchartrain. The second submarine, the *American Diver*, attempted to attack the Union Navy



blockade of Mobile Bay. The submarine foundered in poor weather and sank in Mobile Bay.

The third ship became the *CSS Hunley*, in honor of Horace. The ship cost \$15,000 to build. A successful sinking of an old barge resulted in the *Hunley* being shipped to Charleston Harbor and presented to General P.G.T. Beauregard for his use.

Five men from the first crew died during early tests when she was accidentally swamped by the wake of a passing ship her open hatches, four men escaped. Hunley recruited another crew that included experienced crew members from earlier experiments. **Hunley commanded the submarine on**



October 15, 1863, during a routine exercise. The vessel sank again and this time all eight crew members were killed, including Hunley.

The vessel was later raised and in 1864 resulted in the first successful sinking of an enemy vessel (*USS Housatonic*) by a submarine in naval history. Unfortunately, the *Hunley* sank for the third time and for the second time losing all hands. There was no further attempt to build a submarine.

Recovery of the submarine and its' artifacts resulted in the discovery that the spar torpedo exploded while still attached to the spar. The submarine was never intended to be that close to the explosion and suffered significant structural damage.

***Hunley* crew members included:**

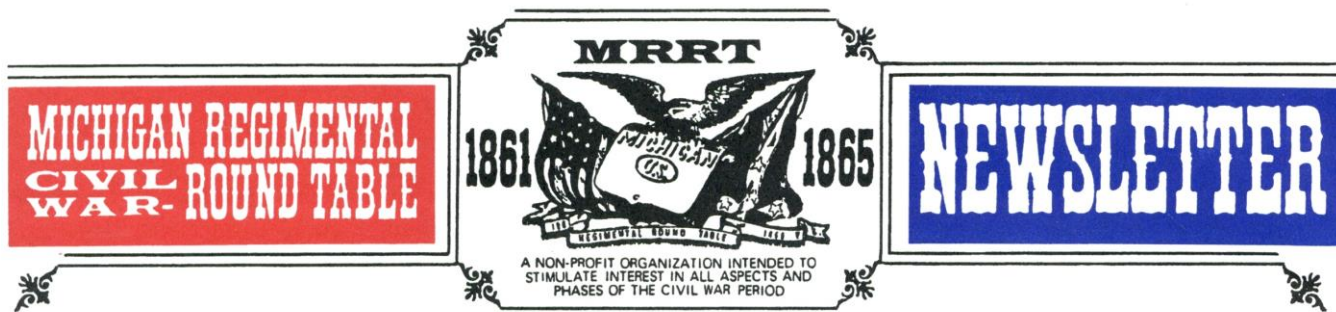
- Quarter Master Joseph Ridgeway-as the only true sailor on the *Hunley* he was the second in command.
- James A. Wicks-he was part of the original *Hunley* crew. He volunteered to join the third crew.
- Sailor Augustus Miller
- John Carlsen – he volunteered for the *Hunley*. John was a center artilleryman.
- Seaman Frank Collins-joined the Confederate Navy on the *CSS Indian Chief*.
- Seaman Arnold Becker – He was an immigrant who worked on a Mississippi River boat. He was trusted by the submarine's leadership the most.
- George E. Dixon – He was a steamboat engineer in Mobile, Alabama when the war started. He was wounded at the Battle of Shiloh as a member of the 21st Alabama. Mr. Hunley met and recruited him for the *Hunley* in Mobile.

All members of the *Hunley* crew were awarded the Confederate Medal of Honor. All three sets of crew members were buried in Magnolia Cemetery in Charleston, South Carolina.

The Mission continues as the *Hunley* is being taken apart for a reconstruction effort. All the mechanical parts are being analyzed. The Roundtable visited *Hunley* during our field trip to Charleston in 2013.

Quiz Questions: This month's questions pertain to Civil War railroads:

1. What were the two nicknames given to the railroad track those Federal forces tore up and twisted around trees during the "*March to the Sea*"?
2. Which former West Pointer, and professor at Pennsylvania College in Gettysburg, was selected by the Lincoln Administration to oversee the construction and transportation of U.S. military railroads?
3. Which U.S. officer (later a Civil War general) resigned from the Army in 1857 to become the Chief Engineer of the Illinois Central Railroad? Also, which Confederate general, who lost a leg and was captured at Gettysburg, resigned from the U.S. Army in 1832 to enter the new field of Railroad Development, later serving as an engineer?
4. Which Union official scandalized the Federal government by charging Federal soldiers a fare of 2-cents per mile for travel on Pennsylvania railroads? And, who did President Lincoln appoint as military director and superintendent of U.S. railroads?
5. During the Civil War, the Railroad Act authorized the construction of a transcontinental railroad. Which company started working eastward and from which city did it begin? Which company started westward and from which city did it begin?



Civil War Essentials -Lees in the Civil War (no, not *that* one)

Even the least interested high school student learned that Robert Edward Lee was a major figure in the US Civil War. While he is justifiably famous for his brilliant leadership of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia against daunting odds, **he was not the only man named Lee to serve in the war. Two of the others, one a Reb and the other a Union officer, are described below.**

Stephen Dill Lee

A distant relative of R. E. Lee, this Lee was born in Charleston, South Carolina in 1833. He entered West Point in 1850, graduating in 1854 17th out of 46 cadets in his class. He served in Florida during the conflict with the Seminole Indian and

then on the western frontier. In February 1861, he resigned his commission and joined the Confederate army.

Assigned to the forces in his hometown, Charleston, **S. D. Lee was sent to demand that Captain Anderson and his small force evacuate Ft. Sumter.**

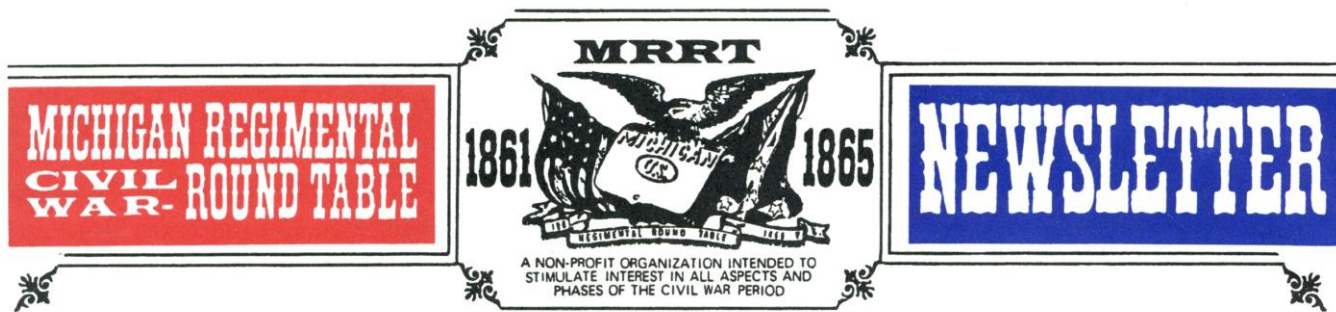


After the fall of the fort and war's beginning, Lee (picture left) served in various artillery positions for the rest of 1861. **His first major battles were during the Peninsular Campaign.** By July 1862 he was a colonel of artillery in Longstreet's Corps and fought in this capacity at 2nd Manassas and Antietam. **At Antietam, his battalion participated in defending against most of the major attacks launched by McClellan.** R. E. Lee acknowledged his critical role in preventing a total Union victory.

Promoted to brigadier general, he was reassigned to the western theater and transferred to the infantry. After briefly serving as a divisional commander where he helped defend Vicksburg against Sherman's attack at Chickasaw Bayou in late 1862, **he was reassigned to head Pemberton's artillery which he headed during the subsequent battles for Vicksburg.** He was wounded at the Battle of Champion Hill in mid-May 1863. Held as a prisoner after the surrender of Vicksburg, Lee was exchanged in mid-October. It is interesting to note that after being paroled and released before his exchange, he was promoted to major general and given command of the cavalry of the Confederate Dept of Alabama & Eastern Louisiana.

He participated in several battles, notably at Brice's Crossroads with Nathan B. Forrest, while leading cavalry before becoming the youngest lieutenant general in the Confederate army in June 1864. Taking command of a Corps in the Army of Tennessee, he fought in the battles around Atlanta. He has been criticized for failing to attack on time during the major battles around the city during this campaign. **Wounded in the foot at Spring Hill in November 1864, he nevertheless continued to lead his troops at Franklin.** His Corps, the rear guard of Hood's army, did not arrive from Spring Hill until after the major rebel attack in the late afternoon. Nevertheless, Hood ordered one of his divisions to attack which only added to the Franklin slaughter. **At the fateful battle at Nashville, Lee's troops, together with Forrest's cavalry, functioned as a rearguard after Hood's army had disintegrated on the second day and fled south.** He was with Johnston's army during the 1865 Carolina campaign but was left without a command at the end.

After the war, S. D. Lee became involved in Mississippi politics and Confederate veteran groups. He led the Vicksburg National Park Association and was president of what is now Mississippi State University. He died in 1908.



Samuel Phillips Lee

Like Stephen D. Lee, this man was distantly related to R. E. Lee but in the Civil War he chose to remain under the “Stars and Stripes.” He was born in 1812 in Virginia and entered the US Navy as a midshipman in 1825 [the US Naval Academy was created in the 1840s]. Lee was on the 1838-42 Wilkes voyage of exploration of the Pacific Ocean and Antarctica and saw action during the Mexican American War. He married Elizabeth Blair, the daughter of Francis Blair, Sr., head of the politically prominent Blair family.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Samuel P. Lee was a Commander and captain of a sloop patrolling in the East Indies. He returned to the US and joined the Union blockade of the Confederate coast. **Asked why he did not join the Confederacy, he replied “When I find the word Virginia in my commission, I will join the Confederacy”** – a pointed response to those, including R. E. Lee, who had placed their state ahead of their country.



After commanding the *Oneida*, one of Farragut’s ships in the capture of New Orleans, in September 1862 Lee (picture left) became an acting rear admiral commanding the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron. Although he was working on the challenging task of sealing off the Confederate coast north of the North/South Carolina border, he was fortunate that Charleston, the graveyard of Union admirals’ reputations, was not in his area of responsibility! **Lee strengthened the blockade and instituted a system of concentric lines of ships guarding the key port of Wilmington, N.C.** A controversy while heading the North Atlantic Squadron had to do with whether to allow the passage of contraband out of Hampton Roads; Lee was caught between Navy Secretary Welles who forbade it and Treasury Secretary Chase who promoted it. **In addition, both Gideon Welles and Grant unfairly associated Lee with Benjamin Butler’s utter failure to advance his Army of the James at Bermuda Hundred.**

By late 1864, the principal unrealized objective in his area was the neutralization of Wilmington - the last major open port on the east coast. **Welles felt Lee suffered from too much “McClellanitis” that is, he lacked the drive to capture the city and its guardian fortresses.** In October 1864, Acting Admiral Lee was therefore transferred to the Mississippi River Squadron where he remained until the end of the war.

After the war, he returned to Washington. In 1870, he was promoted to rear admiral, and he retired in 1873. His Washington home later became government property and is today the Blair House where important foreign guests of the president stay.

Quiz Answers:

1. “*Sherman’s Neckties*” and “*Sherman’s Hairpins*”
2. Herman Haupt
3. George B. McClellan and Issac Trimble
4. Secretary of War Simon Cameron, who was president of the Pennsylvania RR, and Daniel C. McCallum
5. Central Pacific and Sacramento, California Union Pacific and Omaha, Nebraska