

Vol LXI, #4

Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

April 2021

MEMBER RENEWAL

The MRRT celebrates its 61st year in 2021 – 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**. Those of who have not paid your dues yet, please help us out so that when we get going again, we will be ready.

The April 2021 meeting was cancelled because of the pandemic. We are optimistic that we will be able to meet during 2021 (in person or maybe virtually) and travel to the Culpepper, Virginia area for our field trip.

The Farmington Library remains in Phase 4 of their re-opening plan. The restrictions on the number of people in the library, 25, and only 30 minutes per visit is far short of what we need for a Roundtable meeting.

Please visit our website at <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt>. Links to interesting Civil War programs are available.

Civil War Essentials - Henry Sibley – Confederate General and Inventor

One of the lesser Confederate leaders, whose Civil War experience has been largely forgotten, also developed several pre-war inventions to improve the life of the American soldier in the mid-Nineteenth Century. Henry Hopkins Sibley is best remembered for a type of tent still available today.

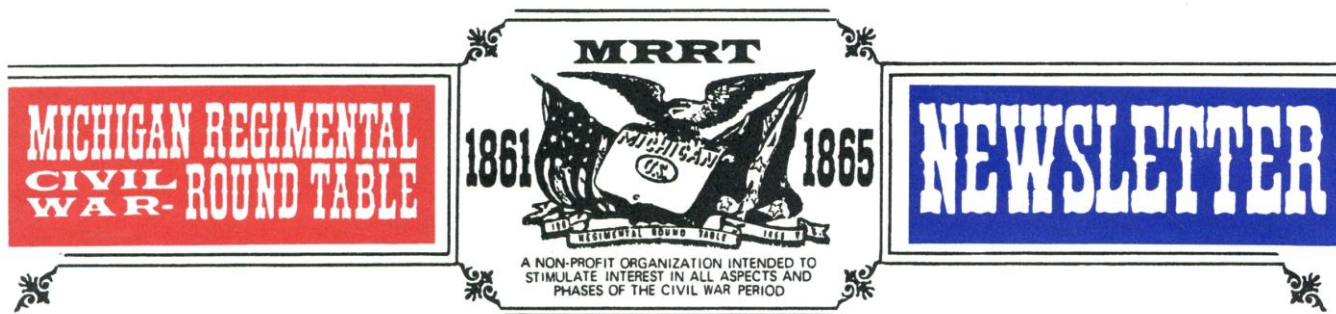
Sibley was born in 1816 in Mississippi but moved to live with an uncle in Missouri after his father died. Appointed to West Point, he graduated in 1838 and entered the army as a dragoon. Dragoons rode horses like cavalymen but originally fought on foot with infantry long guns rather than carbines and sabers. US Army dragoons were reorganized as cavalry before the Civil War. **Like other future Civil War leaders, Sibley served against the Seminole Indians and in the Mexican American War.** In the 1850s, he served on the frontier including in the 1857 expedition against the Mormons in Utah.



During his time on the frontier, he invented the Sibley tent to shelter a squad of soldiers (see his patent drawing on page 2). The tent may have been inspired by the Indian teepees he saw in the plains. His patent was issued in 1856 and the design was used in the Utah expedition. It was considered a notable improvement over other squad tents of the time so an 1858 agreement with the War Department ensured Sibley a \$5 royalty per tent used by the US. Although the War Department ultimately purchased about 44,000 of these tents, Henry Sibley would not realize any of the money because of the advent of the war and his decision to side with the Confederacy. **As a companion to his tent, Sibley also developed a conical sheet iron camp stove** (see second photo on page 2). The stove would prove to have a longer life in the US military than the tent – it was still being used in the 20th Century.

In May 1861, Henry Sibley resigned his commission in the US Army and was given command of a Confederate cavalry brigade of Texan volunteers. He conceived a campaign in the Southwest which, if successful, would deliver both short term and more strategic benefits for the Confederacy. He planned to first conquer those parts of New Mexico and Arizona not already in Confederate hands then swing into Colorado to seize the gold and silver mines there to provide wealth to finance his new country's war for

independence. From there he would drive the Yankees out of California to stymie the Union blockade of the Confederacy's East and Gulf coast ports by providing another way to import needed materials. How practical this last



achievement would have been unclear given the great distance imported goods would have to be transported overland from California to the Confederate heartland.

The key to the strategy's success was to capture most supplies from the enemy as Sibley's regiments had neither sufficient supplies nor munitions for a long campaign.

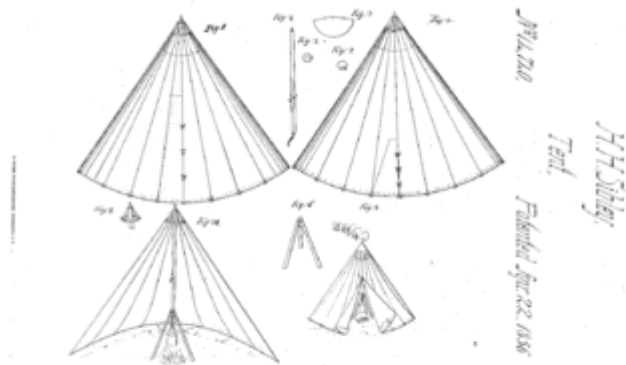
Indeed, the rebel force was short of weapons with many soldiers armed only with shotguns (some had *no* firearms, only lances) as they left San Antonio in late October 1861.

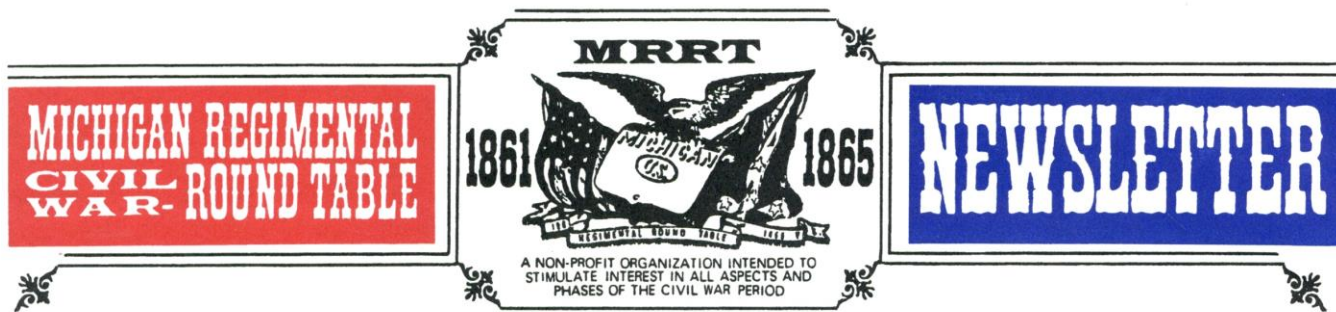
The campaign started on a positive note as the Confederates won a battle at Valverde, New Mexico in late February 1862 against a slightly larger Federal force under Colonel Edward Canby. But lacking adequate artillery, they were unable to follow up by capturing the real objective, nearby Fort Craig, where the supplies they needed were stored. Unable to stay and besiege the fort without enough food, Sibley was forced to move on toward other Union positions where he hoped to acquire the supplies he desperately needed. The Yankees stayed ahead of him trying to move or destroy the

supplies he needed before his force arrived. They failed to complete the destruction of the supplies at Albuquerque in time and Sibley's force obtained enough of them to keep going.

Volunteer Union troops from Colorado under Colonel Slough entered the picture as Sibley moved into northern New Mexico. After an inconclusive clash at Apache Canyon on March 26, 1862, **the pivotal battle of the campaign took place two days later at Glorieta Pass. The battle between the two main forces resulted in a tactical victory for the rebels, but the small precious supply train painstakingly accumulated by the Confederates during their march was destroyed by a Federal flanking force which discovered its location at Johnson's Ranch 3-4 miles southwest of the main battlefield.** Although they held the Glorieta Pass battlefield, the Confederates were now unable to stay where they were or to advance further north. They had to retreat to Santa Fe where Sibley hoped to receive reinforcements. Soon however Canby moved up from Fort Craig and threatened Albuquerque. **This forced Sibley to abandon his campaign completely and retreat to Texas.** Sibley's reputation plummeted both because of his lack of success and because he had failed to personally lead his forces during the battles in the campaign. He appears to have had a drinking problem which might have accounted for this.

The retreat was even more disheartening than the battles. In order to avoid Fort Craig, Sibley decided to cross broad stretches of the aptly named *Jornada del Muerto* Desert and the retreating army suffered terribly. By the time it returned to San Antonio in the late summer of 1862, of the 2500 men who had left there in October about 500 had died and 500 more were captured. Almost of its animals and equipment had been lost. **Sibley's dream of conquering the Southwest was over.**





Interestingly, although Sibley’s career as a CSA general was largely over, after the war he wound up serving in the Egyptian Army!

Quiz Questions: This month’s questions pertain to the Battle of Shiloh (April 1862)

1. Which 19-year-old future famous African explorer fought with Co. E of the 6th Arkansas Infantry? Which famous drummer boy was incorrectly reported to have fought with the 22nd Michigan Infantry at Shiloh and died as a retired general just three months before his 86th birthday on May 13, 1937?
2. Where was Grant at the time the battle began? How did he get to the battlefield later that morning?
3. Which Michigan units participated in the battle?
4. Which two Federal gunboats fired their guns from the Tennessee River on the night of April 6th against the Confederate army?
5. Which of Grant’s divisional commanders, stationed at Crump’s Landing, took 7 hours and 15 minutes to his 5,800 men only 6 miles to the battlefield? How did he earn lasting fame during the 1880’s?

Our thanks to “Old Sarge” for his help with these questions.

Civil War Essentials – Captain Sewell Gray, Sixth Maine Infantry



Sewell Gray was from Exeter, Maine, northwest of Banger, Maine. He was a “laborer” who stood six feet tall and was blue-eyed, fair-skinned, and brown-haired.

Gray enlisted on April 24, 1861, twelve days after Fort Sumter, with Company I of the Sixth Maine Infantry, from Down east Maine. He was mustered into service on July 15th for a three-year term, already a first sergeant. By late-January 1862, he was a captain. Lt. Colonel Charles H. Chandler described Gray as “He is a man of strictly moral & temperate habits, of undoubted courage, a good disciplinarian, fine command well TRUSTED in the duties of an officer and universally beloved and respected by the officers and men of his company.”

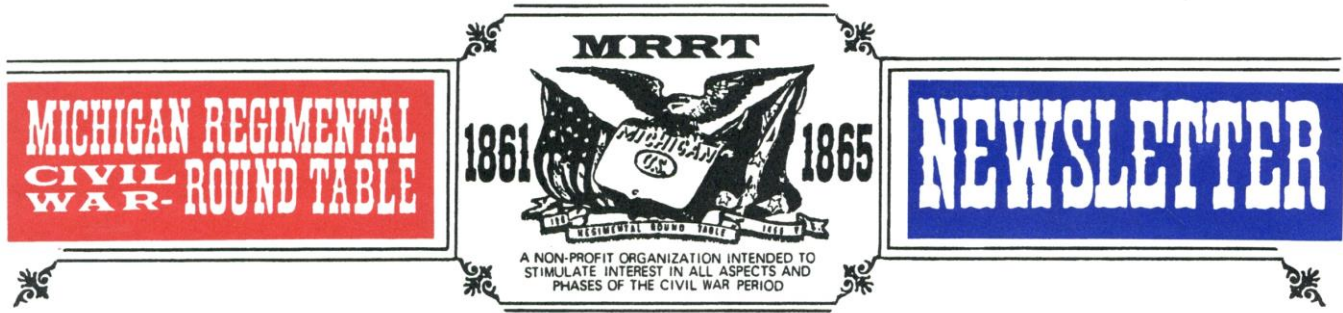
The Sixth Maine participated in most of the early battles of the Civil War, including the Seven Days Campaign in the Richmond, Virginia area. **Before the 1863 campaigns began Captain Gray went home on leave and married his hometown sweetheart, Bodicea, “the object of my love and my love and hope”. They were able to enjoy only two days of their marriage before Captain Gray had to return to the**

Army of the Potomac.

Captain Gray wrote on Sunday, May 3, 1863 that “Sabbath and a lovelier day never overtook a soldier” That day, the 22-year captain was ordered to storm Marye’s Heights along with 4,700 soldiers during the Second Battle of Fredericksburg – a very tough position to carry as learned the previous December. Captain Gray wrote just before the assault, “God strengthen our arms that we may be victorious. If we fall God strengthen the bereaved”.

Regimental adjutant Charles Clark wrote, “As we reached the stone wall my old classmate, Captain Gray, of Company A, was shot and instantly killed”. Grapeshot hit Gray squarely in the chest.

Captain Gray’s diary was discovered at the Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitor Center in 2008. The diary, in a three-hole binder, had slipped behind one of the bookcases.



Civil War Essentials – Sarah Broadhead, Gettysburg Civilian

Sarah Broadhead, in her early thirties, and her husband Joseph, lived in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania during 1863. Prior to the battle, Gettysburg was an average county seat where life was good for Sarah and Joseph. They lived with their four-year old daughter, Mary, in a two-story brick house at 212 Chambersburg Street in town, not far from the Lutheran Seminary. Joseph worked for the railroad line between Gettysburg and Hanover. He also served as a lieutenant in a local militia unit.



Sarah wrote in her new diary on June 14th, “Today we heard that the Rebels were crossing the river (Potomac) in heavy force and advancing on this state.”

She kept a daily record of rumors, false alarms and thoughts as the battle drew near. This was unique as most Gettysburg civilian accounts were after the battle – sometimes, several years later. Her background as a schoolteacher was invaluable in writing her journal.

On June 26th, Sarah met Confederate soldiers who she described as “a miserable looking set”. That night was “. the most uncomfortable night of my life” as Joseph was gone working on the railroad. The next day the Confederates left town and Joseph returned, just as Rebel soldiers “reconnoitering the town.... (and) we were told that a heavy force of our soldiers was within five miles”.

July 1st was Sarah’s baking day. As she finished preparing her bread for the oven, she heard the cannons going off. “What to do or where to go, I did not know”. She spent the Battle of Gettysburg in the shelter of a cellar, coming

above ground during lulls in the fighting to cook and feed her family. She expressed her thoughts and fears for those on the battlefield.

During the aftermath of the battle, she cooked for soldiers, took care of the wounded, comforted the dying, helping to save nearly one hundred wounded men from drowning in the flooded basement of the Seminary, and helping a widow who came looking for her fallen husband.

Her final journal entry on July 14, 1863, were “A weight of care, which we took on us for duty’s sake, and which we had learned to like and would have gladly borne, until relived by the complete recovery of our men, has been lifted off our shoulders, and again we have our house to ourselves.”

Several years after the war Sarah and Joseph moved to New Jersey, Sarah’s home state. Joseph died in 1903 and Sarah then lived with her daughter until her death in 1910.

Quiz Answers:

1. Henry Morton Stanley and John Lincoln Clem
2. Nine miles away at the Cherry Mansion in Savannah, Tennessee and aboard the *Tigress*.
3. 2nd Michigan Light Artillery and the 12th, 13th, and 15th Michigan Infantry.
4. *Lexington and Tyler*
5. Major General Lew Wallace. He earned fame for his book, *Ben Hur*. During his tenure as Governor of New Mexico Territory, he forced the surrender of famous outlaw Billy the Kid.