

Vol LXIII, #5

Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

May 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 or checks to pay for membership are always welcome at our meetings.

Our May 2023 meeting will be on Monday, May 22, 2023, at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library – corner of Grand River and Farmington Road. Our speaker, Dean Calbreath, will probably begin his presentation shortly after 7:00 pm after we complete our 6:30 pm business meeting. We must leave the library by 8:45 pm.

The Roundtable's great website is 20 years old in 2023. Please visit our website at <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt>

The Roundtable is proud to welcome as our speaker, Dean Calbreath, who will speak on his new book, "The Sergeant", the biography of Nicholas Said, a Union Army sergeant. Sergeant Said has an incredible story. He was born in Africa and then traveled throughout the Middle East and Europe before landing in Detroit on the eve of the Civil War, where taught French at a private "colored school". After unsuccessfully trying to join the Union Army in Detroit (which at the time had a whites-only policy), he eventually joined the 55th Massachusetts Infantry (African Descent) to fight in the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida. **"The Sergeant" is a present selection of the History Book Club.** Copies will be available for purchase at our meeting.

Dean is an award-winning teacher, writer, and journalist. **Dean was part of a three-person team that won a Pulitzer Prize for uncovering the largest individual bribery case in U.S. Congressional history!**
This should be a very interesting evening!

Fall 2023 Roundtable Trip – The Roundtable has voted to go to Vicksburg, Mississippi on the weekend of November 4th and 5th! Our tour guide will be Terry Winchel, who long-time members may remember as our guide in 2008, on our most recent trip to Vicksburg. Terry is the retired chief historian at the Vicksburg National Military Park. He is the author of *Triumph & Defeat the Vicksburg Campaign*.

TOUR

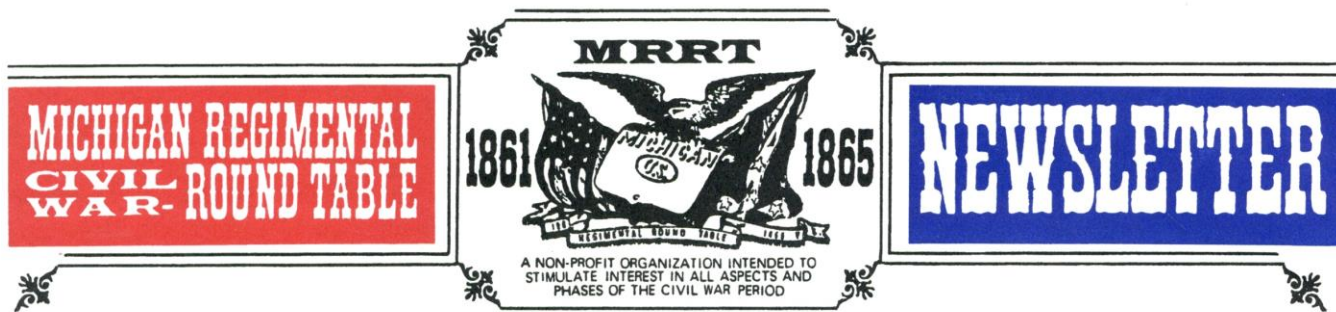
- . **Friday** – meet and greet at the hotel at about 7:00 pm.
- . **Saturday** – Significance of Vicksburg. Significance of the Mississippi River
- . USS Cairo Gunboat and Museum <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoDVJB1aUy8>
- . Grant's Canal - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m75NBEUaAnA>
- . Lunch (local restaurant)
- . Champion Hill Battlefield <https://www.battlefields.org/visit/battlefields/champion-hill-battlefield>
- . Big Black River Bridge <https://www.battlefields.org/visit/battlefields/big-black-river-bridge-battlefield>
- . **Sunday** – Vicksburg National Military Park <https://www.battlefields.org/visit/battlefields/vicksburg-battlefield>
- . Lunch (box lunch picnic delivered by local deli)

HOTEL – Linda is working on the hotel. A Hampton Inn is across from the park entrance. Comfort Suites and Holiday Inn are a few blocks away.

BUS – Linda is working on the bus to take us around on the tour. We have a recommendation.

SATURDAY BANQUET – Terry has recommended the ANCHUCA, which is a former plantation home. Both Jefferson and Joseph Davis (his brother – a general at Gettysburg) spent time there after the war ended.

We have a very good start to what should be a great trip. We thank you, Linda, for your great work.



Vol LXIII, #5

Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 2

May 2023

We can sign up for the trip at the May, June, July meetings. We can also send an email to Jeanie Graham, grahamjeanie@hotmail.com or Linda Gerhardt, lindagerhardt99@gmail.com Jeanie's telephone number is 248.225.7596. Linda's number is 248.841.1461.

Please remember that each participant must provide his or her own transportation to Vicksburg. There is NO group bus taking us to or home from Vicksburg.

April 2023 Speaker – John Simmons – Grand Rapids, MI

The MRRT was treated to an informative and extremely thought-provoking presentation by John Simmons centering on the controversial Confederate leader General John Bell Hood. It also illuminated the instances in which long-accepted “facts” about the Civil War are being challenged by new or rediscovered original source material.

A major new source of material on Hood is the recently discovered collection of his private papers. Much of this material related to his post-war correspondence with other Civil War figures from both sides which he had used or intended to use for his book, *Advance, and Retreat*. **In many instances, the comments provided to him by these men refute historians' long-established narrative of his incompetence and willfulness.**

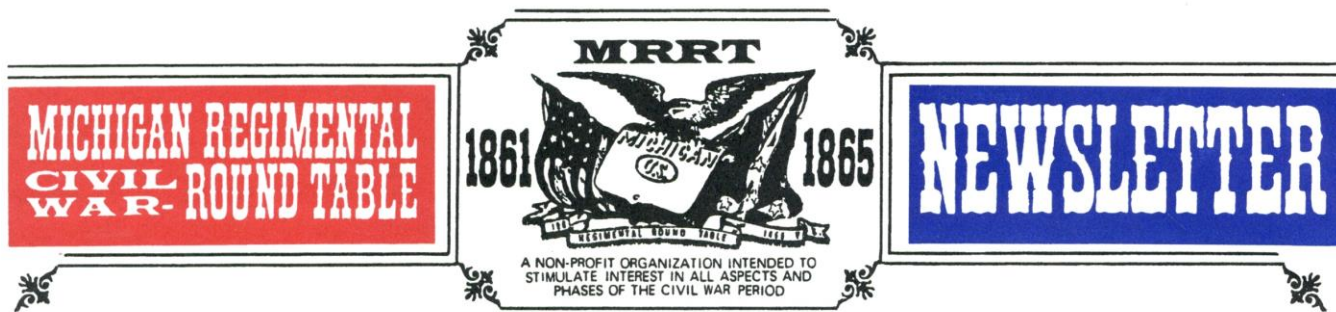


John Bell Hood graduated from West Point near the bottom of his class, and this has been used to establish the idea that he was simply a mindlessly aggressive soldier incapable of conceiving complex strategies. His pre-war Army service was in the cavalry along the frontier. **When the war came, his native state, Kentucky, attempted to remain neutral so Hood joined a Texas regiment. He progressed to command a brigade of Texas troops and has been identified with Texas as a result.**

During the Peninsula Campaign, Hood's brigade forced back a Yankee force which threatened the Confederate rear. He ordered his men to attack with unloaded muskets. He believed that this strategy led to fewer total casualties by avoiding the delay in an assault caused when the attackers paused to stop and fire before resuming their approach on the Union line. **Mr. Simmons cited statistics which contradict the long-held assumption that the Union armies consistently had a large numerical advantage over the rebels – this has been a staple contention of the “Lost Cause” movement in the post-war South.**

Among the allegations regarding Hood which Mr. Simmons believes the new or re-examined source documents refute are:

- **Hood's left arm was so badly injured at Gettysburg as to be useless.** Notes from his doctors during the months following the battle indicate a good recovery and a less serious permanent disability.
- **Due to his arm injury and leg amputation after Chickamauga, Hood needed regular doses of laudanum, and alcohol, to be able to withstand the pain; this impaired his judgment. This charge has been the most consistent criticism leveled against Hood by more recent historians.** A study of 20th century history books that refer to regular drug use shows that it first appeared in a 1940 book about Richard Ewell and was subsequently magnified in later books by other authors. Again, original source documents contradict this theme. Testimony by subordinates also challenged the notion that Hood lacked the stamina after his wounds to cover long distances by horseback.



- **Hood squandered an opportunity to attack part of General Sherman’s army at Cassville, Georgia.** In fact, Federal cavalry was detected approaching on a road which had been reported to be clear just before Hood was to begin his attack. The Confederate commander, General Johnston, decided to cancel the attack and retreat after receiving this report. A comment made by Johnston to an aide at the very end of the war suggested that, by the summer of 1864, he had lost confidence in the Confederacy’s chances to win its independence.
- **Hood blundered in ordering frontal attacks on Sherman’s army at Atlanta resulting in crippling Confederate losses.** In fact, even some Union officers agreed that Hood’s tactics were generally sound, but Generals Hardee and S.D. Lee failed to execute their orders properly. They were late and Lee failed to effectively control his attack.
- **Hood failed to remove valuable supplies from Atlanta in time and they had to be destroyed when the Confederates were forced to abandon the city.** Mr. Simmons believes that poor staff work, rather than Hood’s lack of judgment, was the cause of these serious losses.
- **Hood was either drunk or overcome by laudanum and failed to ensure that the road north from Spring Hill, Tennessee, was blocked to prevent General Scofield’s escape to Franklin.** Although the truth may never be known, the fault probably lies with a subordinate such as Generals Cheatham or Forrest. Hood’s movements to cut off Scofield’s retreat at Spring Hill were masterful despite the total lack of support given him by Generals Dick Taylor and Kirby Smith and would have resulted in a *major* Union defeat had his orders to secure the road been carried out.

Mr. Simmons believes there was a bias in favor of Virginia-born leaders among Southern historians after the war ended. He also noted that Joseph Johnston’s Army of Tennessee headquarters notes have never been found, possibly destroyed to protect that general’s reputation. Post-war books written by other Confederate leaders such as General James Longstreet criticized Hood’s actions and he felt that he must answer with *Advance and Retreat*. He died in 1879 before the book was published.

We thank John very much for his presentation.

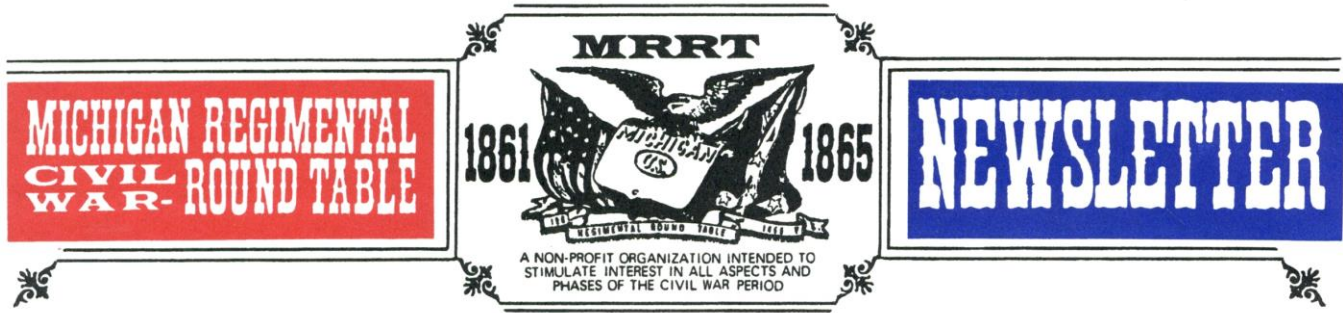
Quiz Questions: This month’s questions pertain to more questions on the state of Michigan in the war.

1. Following the war, a trooper from the 4th Michigan Calvary returned to Detroit and concocted a popular soft drink. Today this beverage is famous throughout the U.S. Name this soldier. And what was Joseph Clovese’s claim to fame.
2. Name Michigan’s two war-time governors.
3. Which Michigan woman enlisted as a nurse with the 2nd Michigan Infantry and served from First Bull Run in 1861 until General Lee’s surrender in 1865? Which medal did she earn for bravery?
4. Which Michigan regiment crossed the Rappahannock River at Fredericksburg to help drive out Confederate sharpshooters who were preventing the building of Federal pontoon bridges? Also, which Michigan unit assisted in the capture of President Jefferson Davis at Irwinville, Georgia on May 10, 1865?
5. Which native New Yorker was known for her abolition exploits and has a statue in her honor in Adrian, Michigan? Also, which Detroitier suggested to John Brown that he forego the Harpers Ferry plan and instead pushed to blow up Southern churches with assembled congregations in them?

We thank “Old Sarge” for these questions and answers.

Civil War Essentials – Frank Beard – America’s First War Cartoonist

Cincinnati native Frank Beard (1842-1905) wanted to enlist in the Union Army at Camp Dennison in Cincinnati after the Confederate capture of Fort Sumter in April 1861. Frank was intelligent, physically fit, and enthusiastic for service in the Union Army. **Unfortunately, he had one major problem, he was stone deaf.**



Joining the Union Army was difficult

Frank tried to get around this problem by memorizing the questions asked by the examiners in their proper order. A fellow candidate betrayed him, allowing officers to change the interrogation sequence. One officer then asked, “How old are you?” “Frank Beard” he replied. “What is your name?” “Nineteen years old” he replied. Another half-dozen questions followed before Frank was driven from the building as the officers laughed.

Service in the War

Later, a captain from the Seventh Ohio Infantry offered him a proposition. If Beard joined his company without pay, the captain promised him a uniform and gun. Frank agreed and served three years. **Even though he and his regiment fought at Antietam, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Missionary Ridge, and Resaca, he was never wounded.** When the regiment mustered out in 1864, 274 men had died from combat or disease.

Cartoonist

During the war, Frank Beard began sketching scenes of camp life, battles, and his own cartoons. He had previously published cartoons in the popular humor magazine *Yankee Notions*.

Frank won instant acclaim and lasting fame as creator of the first war cartoon.

General Winfield Scott was defending Washington against a Confederate invasion during the summer and fall of 1861.

Beard pinned a rough sketch picturing Scott as a bulldog opposite a skulking, emaciated hound representing Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Between the dogs was a fat rib bone labeled “Washington” (cartoon left). The image was soon distributed widely across the North.

Newspapers and popular magazines published it. He did not copyright the image, thus depriving him of a small fortune.

Beard’s sketches were in high demand for “Harper’s Weekly”



and other publications. He earned far more than he would have as a private.

After the War

Frank Beard moved to New York City after the war ended to become an illustrator and cartoonist. After struggling for a while, he illustrated numerous postwar recollections and placed his cartoons in newspapers and magazines. During the 1870’s he created the “chalk talk” lecture. Frank composed stories, delivering them orally to the audience while using colored crayons and an easel to illustrate his key characters and narrative. Frank was able to charge upwards of \$50 per event as the “chalk talk” became very popular. Twenty years later, more than one hundred lecturers toured the country giving these talks.

Quiz Answers:

1. James Vernor of Vernor’s Ginger Ale fame. Joseph Clovese was a former slave and Union soldier who died on July 13, 1951, at age 107 in the Veteran’s Administration Hospital in Dearborn-the oldest living Michigan soldier. He served in the 63rd Negro Infantry.
2. Governors Austin Blair and Henry Crapo
3. Annie Etheridge and the Kearny Cross
4. 7th Michigan Infantry and the 4th Michigan Cavalry
5. Laura Smith Haviland and George de Baptiste