

Vol LXIII, #6

Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

June 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 June 2023 meeting will be on Monday, June 26, 2023, at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library – corner of Grand River and Farmington Road. **Our speaker, Dr. Roger Rosentreter, PhD 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.**

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 back as our speaker, Dr. Roger Rosentreter, who will share with us his passion for the Battle of Gettysburg as he will speak on “Federal Artillery at Gettysburg”. The Federal artillery was a key participant in the Union victory, not just at Pickett's Charge. Dr. Rosentreter will discuss the personalities and tactics of the Federal artillery. Last year, Roger spoke on *Michigan at Gettysburg*. He was the editor of *Michigan History Magazine* for 22 years (1988-2010). Our deepest sympathies to Dr. Rosentreter and the Michigan State community for the recent shootings. Dr. Rosentreter had to move his classes from the building where most of the shooting took place. **This will be a very interesting evening!**

Fall 2023 Roundtable Trip – The Roundtable will be visiting 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)

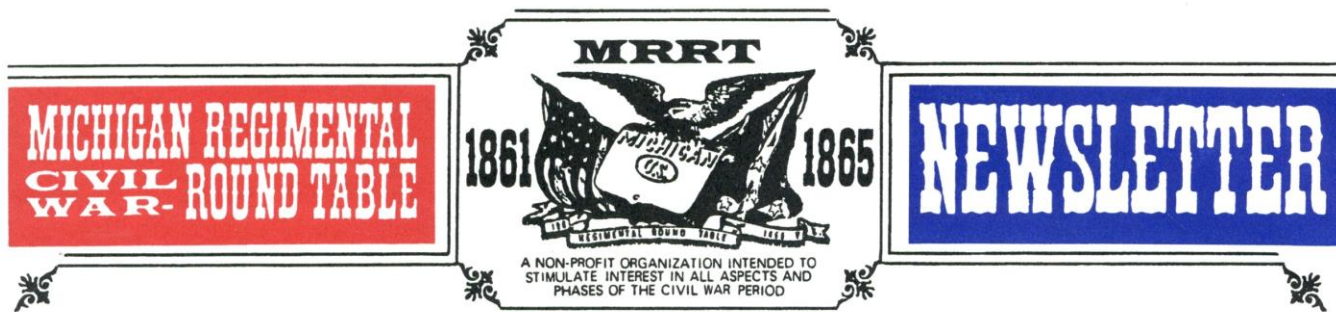
HOTEL – Linda is working on the hotel. A Hampton Inn is across from the park entrance. Comfort Suites and Holiday Inn are a few blocks away.

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.

We can sign up for the trip at the May, June, July, August 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.

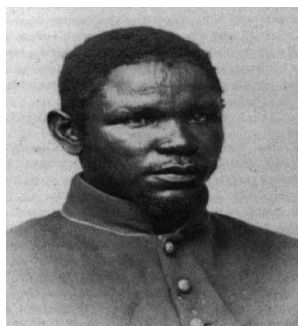
May 2023 Presentation – Dean Calbreath – discussed his new book “The Sergeant” the exciting story of Nicholas Said, a Union Army sergeant born in Africa. Nicholas Said, born Mohammed Ali ben Said, was born in the country of Borno in Africa. Borno was the size of Spain during the 1800’s. His father was one of the greatest generals in the history of Borno. Borno’s army created a cavalry unit, the first in the world at the time,

Early Life and Moving to Detroit

Nicholas’ family was very wealthy. He graduated from boarding school at age 13 where he learned Arabic.

Eventually, he would learn 13 languages.

He and 20 friends were captured into slavery. They walked 2,000 miles barefoot across the Sahara Desert. This was the first time he had to work at hard labor. Nicholas asked to be sold to someone else, which was allowed. He was sold to



a Turk to become a highly trained tobacco server which was part of a great ritual like serving tea in Japan. Nicholas was then sold to a Turkish Foreign Minister in Constantinople who needed an outstanding tobacco server. He was very pleasant and spoke four languages.

The Foreign Minister took him to Russia where he was immediately freed. Nicholas became the personal assistant to a Russian prince. Nicholas toured Europe with the Prince, learning all of the European languages. He met both Louis Napoleon of France and the Russian Czar.

Next, Nicholas went to England where he met a Dutch nobleman. He traveled to North America with the nobleman as his personal assistant. The nobleman and his wife were broke, so all three of them stayed in Detroit during 1860.

Nicholas and the American Civil War

Nicholas wanted to join the Union Army when the Civil War began in 1861. He knew that the Confederacy was worse than the Union because it wanted to extend slavery to the western half of the country. Unfortunately, only whites were allowed to enlist at that time. A Presbyterian minister, Rev. George Duffield, helped him get a job at a colored school. Nicholas was at the school for two years. During the March 1863 Detroit race riot 30 buildings were destroyed, including the school Nicholas was teaching at.

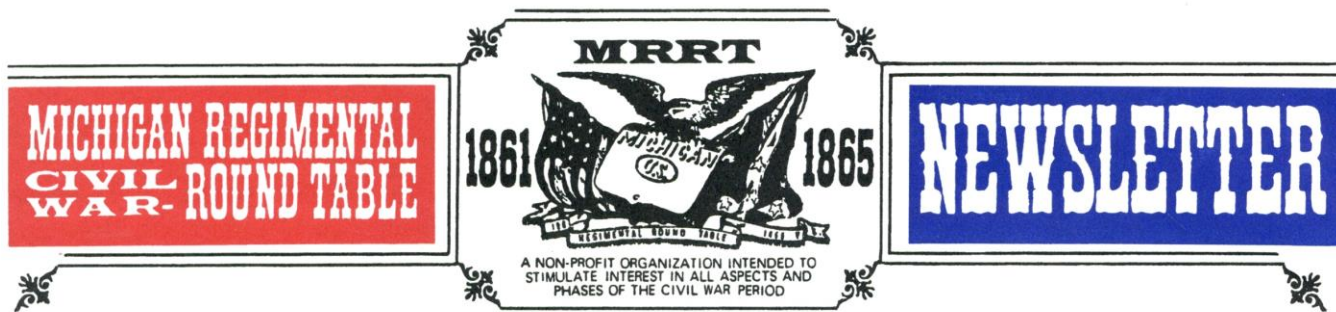
Massachusetts recruiters were recruiting black regiments. This regiment did not treat blacks equally as the white soldiers made \$13 a month while black soldiers only made \$7 a month. White sergeants made \$21 a month while black sergeants still only made \$7 a month. There were no black commissioned officers. **The famous black regiment, the 54th Massachusetts made a suicidal attack on Fort Wagner near Charleston, South Carolina. A week earlier, a white attack also failed. The 54th made it farther than the white soldiers.**

Nicholas Said joined the second black regiment, the 55th Massachusetts. The black soldiers built a “swamp” battery that shot cannon balls five miles into Charleston but did little damage. Northern morale did improve as a result of this bombardment.

The 56th Massachusetts participated in several small battles, including Honey Hill during the middle of 1864. The black soldiers had not been paid for a year and there was no state aid for the soldiers’ families. Several companies of the regiment went on strike – pay us or send us home. The U.S. Army did neither, the men were sent back into the war.

After the war ended several of the black soldiers wanted to stay in the South, where they wanted to teach. They created the first black voting register.

Nicholas became a lecturer after the war ended. He wrote a memoir of high literary quality. He wrote articles for various newspapers including the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine in 1873. Nicholas wrote an eleven-page article “A Native of



Bornoo” for the magazine. He wrote his autobiography in which he did not discuss the war. **Nicholas had become a celebrity.**

The year 1882 was the last record of Nicholas – he was a sharecropper and teacher in Tennessee. He had an affair with Annie that resulted in a daughter named Nancy. Nicholas probably did not know about Nancy as he was hundreds of miles away when Nancy was born.

We thank Dean for his great presentation.

Quiz Questions: This month’s questions pertain to the Battle of Gettysburg.

1. What time did the Confederate bombardment of Cemetery Ridge (before Pickett’s Charge) begin on the third day and how long did it last? A) 1:07, 1’40” B) 2:08, 1’10” C) 1:45, 2’30” D) 12:37, 1’30” E) 1:50, 2’40”
2. Who was the commander of the Federal artillery at the Battle of Gettysburg?
3. During General Meade’s War Council on the night of July 2nd, which Union commanders voted to retreat from Gettysburg and not remain on the field? And which important general slept through the entire discussion and vote?
4. Which general said, *“It took a great many mistakes to lose that battle and I myself made most of them”*? And, who said, *“You men have done all that they could do. The fault is entirely my own”*?
5. Which Confederate general was shot in the head and knocked senseless on July 1st, but lived thanks to folded newspaper in the sweatband of an oversized hat? Which young Union general, thought to be mortally wounded, was given water and assistance by Confederate general John Brown Gordon?

We thank “Old Sarge” for these questions and answers

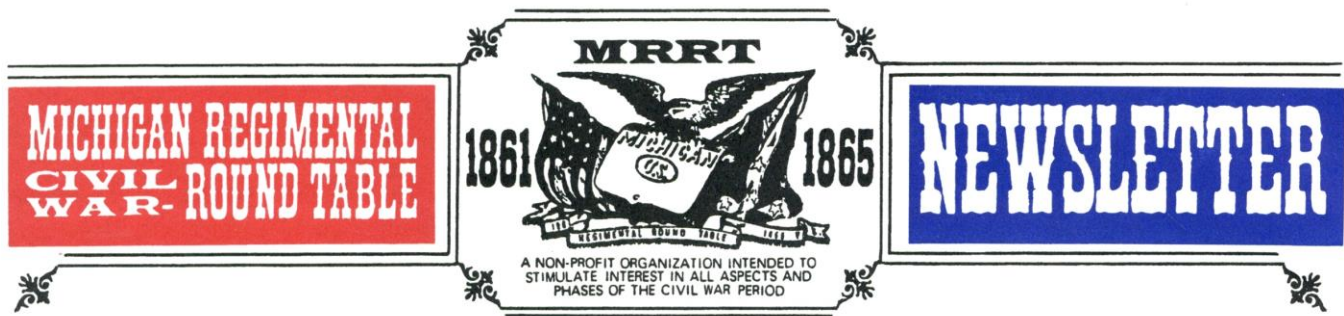


Civil War Essentials – The Battle of Buffington Island-Fighting in Ohio This battle, in July 1863, marked the beginning of the end of **General John Hunt Morgan’s famous raid into Indiana and Ohio.**

Although named after an island in the Ohio River (see map), the fighting took place on the Ohio side next to the island. The battle was marked by the use of naval gunboats to support the Union troops engaged in the battle.

The Raid: Morgan’s Raid was intended to distract and delay any movement by the Union Army of the Cumberland under General Burnside against Confederate forces commanded by General Braxton Bragg in Tennessee. **Morgan (see picture) began his raid on July 2, 1863, by invading Kentucky. After moving north through that state, his cavalry force of over 2,000 men crossed the Ohio River into Indiana by seizing two steamships.** Five days later they entered the state of Ohio and continued to spread terror by pillaging towns and farms in that state as they headed east. They reached Harrison, a small-town northwest of Cincinnati and near the Indiana state line on July 13th. Morgan’s men plundered the town in a few hours, then continued east passing to the north of Cincinnati which was guarded by Burnside’s Yankees.





Three brigades of Yankee cavalry under the command of General Edward H. Hobson had been pursuing Morgan's column from the time they entered Indiana, now they were joined by a force sent out from Cincinnati. Following the southeast course of the Ohio River, Morgan sought a way to cross back over into Kentucky but was unable to do so at Ripley or at West Union. After these failures, **Morgan believed his best chance to ford the river would be to travel over one hundred miles to the east and pass over into West Virginia. After again being denied a chance to ford at Middleport, Morgan next headed 20 miles further upstream for a ford near the north end of Buffington Island.** His column arrived late on July 18th and went into camp to rest his tired men and horses until the next morning.



In the meantime, a mix of Union naval vessels had moved upstream from Cincinnati to try to head off any attempt by Morgan to cross back over the Ohio River. The vessels ultimately involved in the battle were the *USS Moore* (flagship), the *USS Imperial*, and the *USS Alleghany Belle* (see photo) under the command of Lt. Commander Leroy Fitch. These ships were generally known as “Tinclads” being civilian steamboats armed with cannon and protected by a combination of added wood and ½ inch iron armor—far less than the 2.5-inch-thick armor on the Eads ironclads, for example, but generally enough to stop small arms fire.

The Battle: At daybreak on July 19, 1863, the Federal troops, which had caught up with Morgan's force during the night, managed to approach the raiders undetected under the cover of a thick morning fog. **The larger Yankee force (including two Michigan regiments and a Michigan battery) attacked and two of their gunboats managed to pass through the narrow channel on the left (Ohio) side of the island and fired on the rebels.** By mid-morning, Morgan realized that he had no chance of fording at Buffington Island. His command had been cut into several groups by the Federal charge and about 700 of the Confederates under Col. Basil Buke were forced to surrender. Most of the wagons carrying the “souvenirs” acquired at Harrison and other towns visited by the Rebels were also captured as were several guns.

The remainder of the Confederate force was pushed further north past the village of Portland with the Yankee soldiers and warships in pursuit. Approximately 300 rebels managed to successfully cross over the Ohio River to Belleville, West Virginia but Morgan himself chose to stay with the remainder of his force. **On July 26, Morgan and remaining exhausted troopers finally surrendered far to the north at Salineville, Ohio. Salineville represents the northernmost point ever reached by armed Confederates during the war.** The great 1100-mile raid was over.

Today There is a small memorial park located along the Ohio River Scenic Byway—Route 124—just south of Portland, Ohio which commemorates the battle. *The American Battlefield Trust*, with a local preservation partner, has just acquired 108 additional acres of the battlefield.

Quiz Answers:

1. A) 1:07 pm and 1 hour, 40 minutes
2. General Henry Hunt, born in Detroit, Michigan (1819)
3. None (all voted to remain on the field) and Gouverneur K. Warren
4. Richard Ewell and Robert E. Lee
5. Henry Heth and Francis Barlow