

Vol LXIV, #6

Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

June 2024

Our June 2024 meeting will be on Monday, June 24, 2024, at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library – corner of Grand River and Farmington Road. This is one week earlier than normal because of Memorial Day. Our guest speaker, Dr. Roger Rosentreter, a History Professor at Michigan State University, will begin his presentation around 7:00 pm after our 6:30 pm business meeting. We must leave the library by 8:45 pm.

Linda is making great progress organizing our October 26th and 27th trip to the Nashville area. Our Saturday, October 26th, guide is Joseph Ricci. He is the historian for the Battle of Franklin Trust. Joseph will share with us the stories of the battles of Columbia, Spring Hill, and Franklin. Our Sunday, October 27th, guide is Lee White, who led us on our tour of Chickamauga and Chattanooga in 2018. Sunday will be primarily devoted to the Battle of Nashville. We will be staying at the Best Western in Franklin, near the battlefield. Best Western's telephone number is 615.790.0570. We have a block of rooms under the Michigan Regimental Roundtable for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights.

If you want to join our tour, we may contact Linda Gerhardt at lindagerhardt99@gmail.com or Jeanie Graham at grahamjeanie@hotmail.com. Please sign up for our great trip at our next meeting.

Please note that each participant must travel to Franklin and return to Michigan on his or her own. We have a bus to take us to the various Civil War sites in the Franklin/Nashville area on Saturday and Sunday.

Great Preservation News! The state of Virginia has created Culpeper Battlefields State Park. The park includes Brandy Station, Cedar Mountain, Kelly's Ford, and Rappahannock Station. We visited several of these sites on our 2022 trip!

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: <https://www.mrrt.us>

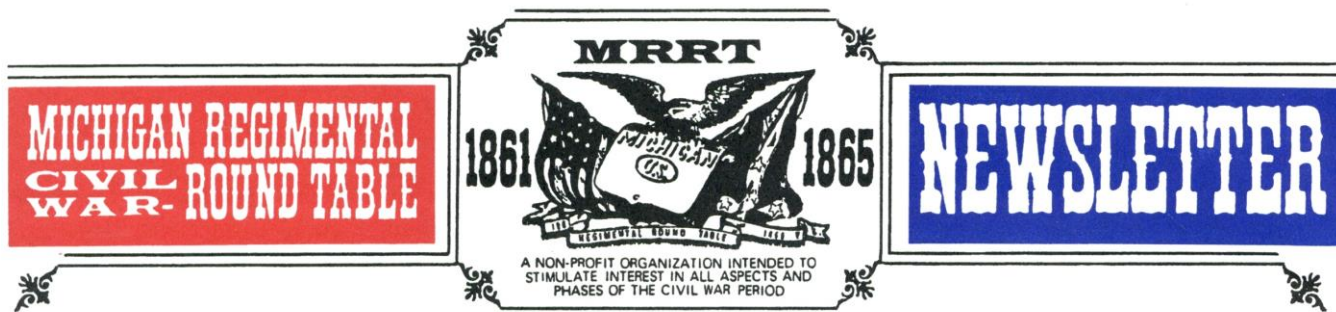
The Roundtable is proud to welcome you as our June 2024 speaker. Dr. Roger Rosentreter, who will share with us his story of the "Battle of New Orleans..." The 1862 Battle of New Orleans was a crucial battle that cleared the mouth of the Mississippi River for Union forces moving north up the river. Dr. Rosentreter will discuss the personalities and tactics of this often-neglected sea battle.

Roger is a Professor of History at Michigan State University. Last year he spoke to our Roundtable on "*Federal Artillery at Gettysburg*," a riveting presentation. He was the editor of *Michigan History Magazine* for 22 years (1988-2010).

Roger and our long-time friend Dr. Weldon Petz edited *Michigan Remembers Lincoln*. **This will be an educational and entertaining presentation!**

Our May 2024 Speaker, Dr. Roy Finkenbine, discussion of the "Causes of the Civil War". The MRRT is appreciative of Professor Roy Finkenbine's excellent presentation of **The Causes of the Civil War**. He started off by suggesting that Civil War battles have been going on, not for four years, but for 160 years – 4 years of bloody conflict and the rest of arguments over its cause.

Roy used an excerpt from the popular "The Simpsons" animated TV series in which Apu, the hardworking immigrant owner of the convenience store frequented by Homer Simpson is undergoing an oral American History exam as part of the US citizenship process. The examiner asks him "*What was the cause of the Civil War?*" Apu launches into an involved, erudite explanation of the factors which have been said to have caused the war, but the examiner cuts him short, "**Just say slavery.**"

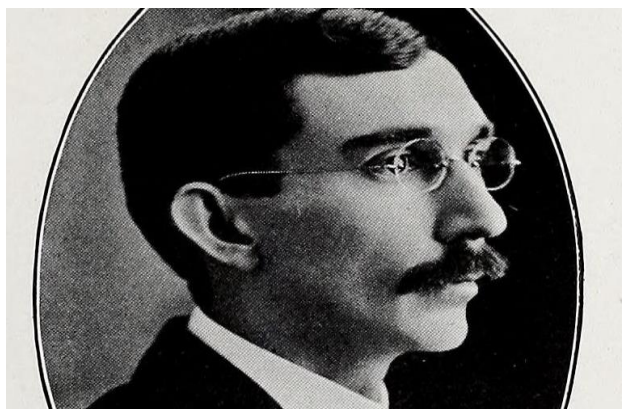


Like the bored examiner, **most historians today consider slavery to be the principal cause behind the southern secession and, therefore, the war.** But other recent surveys, including a 2011 one conducted by Pew Research, tell a different story; 48% of respondents in this survey named **states' rights** as the principal cause versus 38% for slavery. In his 1959 book, *The Causes of the Civil War*, historian Kenneth Stampp listed the following:

- **The right or wrong of slavery**
- **Blundering politicians & irresponsible agitators** – plenty of these on both sides
- **Slave power and “Black” republicans** – conspiracy theorists on both sides saw the devil lurking in the opposite side.
- **States' rights and minority rights** – “states' rights” was heralded by the south only when it supported their interests. Any legislation in northern states which attempted to protect Black people, especially runaway slaves, was met with southern insistence that the federal 1850 Fugitive Slave Act was superior.
- **Economic sectionalism** – the agricultural south produced much of the country's wealth and most of its exports before the war, but the north's industry grew faster as was its population.
- **Conflict of culture** – the movers & shakers in the south mostly owned huge plantations; in the north they were more likely from towns or cities, and from mercantile or industrial backgrounds. Their values and views reflected this. Roy pointed out that some familiar aspects of white southern culture had resulted from extended interaction with Black people including slaves.

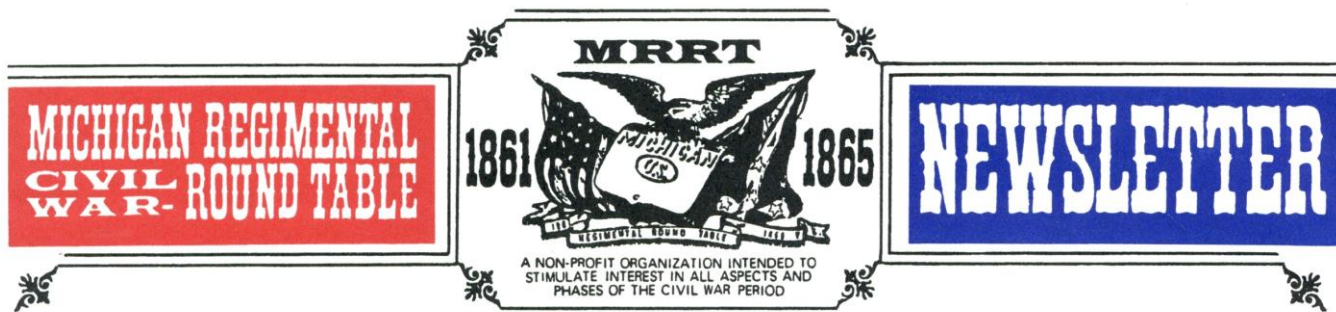
Just prior to the war, southern leaders made it clear that slavery was indeed the principal cause for secession. **Alexander Stephens**, who would become vice-president of the Confederacy, **made the case for slavery based on the “unequal abilities” of the two races in his famous cornerstone speech.** Interestingly, the CSA constitution is silent about slavery. **Ordinances of Secession** also cited the northern “conspiracy” to destroy slavery as the primary justification of their departure from the Union. South Carolina's (for example) states *“An increasing hostility on the part of the non-slaveholding states to the institution of slavery”* as evidenced by the election of Abraham Lincoln, forced the state to remove itself from the Union.

After the fall of the Confederacy, the tone of southern leaders changed dramatically. States' rights, which they claimed had been crushed by the north before, during and after the war, became the reason they professed for the south's departure and willingness to fight. **Edward Pollard**, a southern journalist, wrote two books shortly after the war in which



he again claimed the natural “*superiority*” of the white race and asserted that the threat to state sovereignty was the real reason for the war. **This was the origin of the “Lost Cause” doctrine** which became the mantra of the defenders of secession. This view was supported by groups like the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the Daughters of the Confederacy. In the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries, academics tended to embrace it as well.

One who did *not* was a professor named **Enoch Banks** (picture left) whose 1911 published article claiming that slavery was the cause of the war got him ostracized and driven from his **University of Florida history chair by his fellow professors.** Certain pop culture artifacts like movies and novels of this period



also tended to support the lost cause viewpoint.

Professor Finkenbine's remarks were followed by a **riveting Q&A session**. Among other topics, Roy stated his judgement that Abraham Lincoln started out with similar views on race and slavery as most people with his background but that unlike many, he had matured into a man who saw slavery and racial equality in a light closer to our own.

Roy's analogy was that Lincoln had become "more of a saint and less of a sinner" by the end of his life.

We thank Roy for his insight on the "Causes of the Civil War."

Quiz Questions: This month's questions pertain to the Battle of Franklin, Tennessee:

1. Which river flows north and east of the town of Franklin? Also, what is the main road leading into Franklin that John Bell Hood's forces used to reach the town?
2. Who was called the "*Angel of Carnton*" for her valorous work after the battle with the wounded after the battle?
3. Who was the 67-year-old patriarch of the Carter House? Which of his sons in the 20th Tennessee Infantry was at home with his family after being paroled? Also, which son was mortally wounded at Franklin and died in his own home.
4. Which Federal general was demoted for his disastrous performance at Franklin and later resigned from humiliation? Who was the only captured Confederate general at the battle?
5. Which generals commanded Union General John Schofield's two corps at Franklin?

Civil War Essentials – Union General Nathaniel Lyon – Missouri hero

Nathaniel Lyon was the first Union general to be killed in the Civil War, after helping to keep Missouri in the Federal Union.

Early Life

Nathaniel Lyon was born on July 14, 1818, in Connecticut, the son of a sawmill operator. He performed farm chores as a young child. He was educated in the local school system and was able to obtain an appointment to West Point in early 1837. Nathaniel graduated from West Point in 1841, ranking 11th out of 52 cadets. He joined the infantry instead of the engineers because he felt that promotions would come quicker in the infantry. His failed relationship with "Miss Tot" contributed to his decision to never marry.

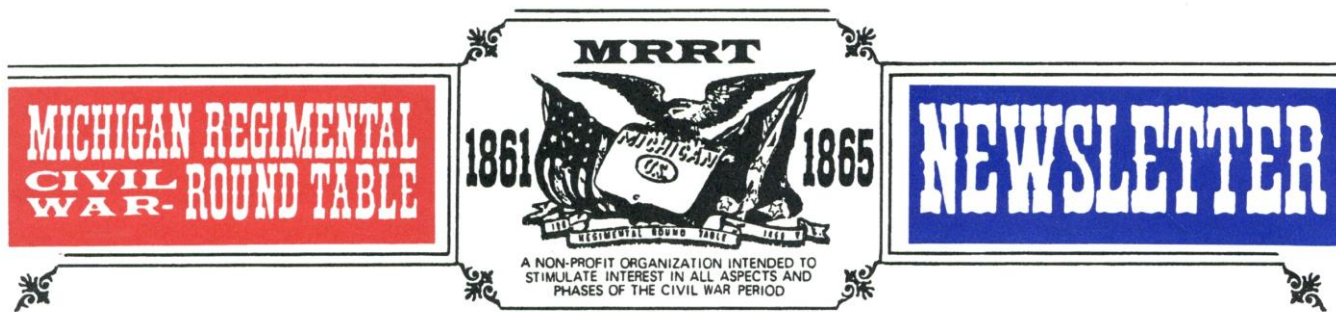
Military Career Prior to the Civil War

After graduating from West Point, Nathaniel served in the Seminole War and the Mexican War. By the end of the Mexican War, he was promoted to a brevet captain for "*conspicuous bravery in capturing enemy artillery.*"

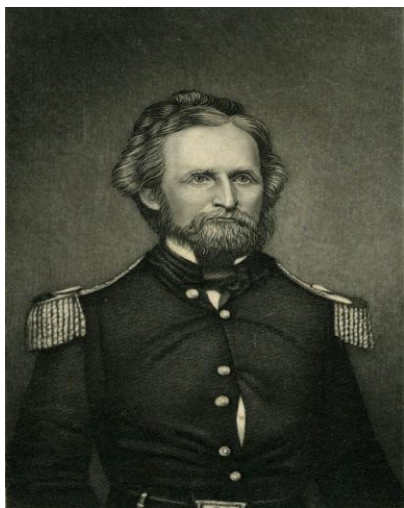
After the Mexican War ended, he was posted to the frontier. Forces under his command massacred Pomo Native Americans at Clear Lake, California in 1850, in which at least two hundred old men, women and children died. Several days later Lyon participated in another massacre in Cokadjal, California where 75 to 100 were killed. Nathaniel was then reassigned to Fort Riley, Kansas, where he became staunchly antislavery. He began to support the Republican Party while serving in "*Bleeding Kansas.*"

Arrival in St. Louis, Missouri - 1861

Captain Lyon arrived in St. Louis, Missouri during March 1861 as commander of Company B of the 2nd U.S. Infantry. Even though Missouri's population was neutral in the dispute between the North and South, Governor Claiborne Jackson was a strong Southern sympathizer as was much of the state legislature.



Captain Lyon guessed correctly that Jackson would seize the 60,000 firearms and dozens of cannons in the St. Louis arsenal if Missouri seceded. He and his weak force of five hundred men would be unable to stop the seizure. **Nathaniel was a Free Soiler from Connecticut who had a booming voice, intense blue eyes, and red beard, commanding respect despite his short height. He was brave, stubborn, resourceful, and profane.** Lyon said that rather than allowing Governor Jackson “*to dictate to my government in any manner,*” he would see “*every man, woman, and child in the State, dead and buried.*” He recruited 4,000 volunteers from the German immigrants in St. Louis. **Lyon dressed as a gentle old lady to scout the Governor’s militia encampment by riding through in a carriage. Returning to St. Louis, Lyon put on his uniform and led his troops to surround the militia camp, forcing a surrender on May 10, 1861, without firing a shot.** That afternoon, there was a battle in St. Louis as Confederate sympathizers rioted and Lyon’s men fought back, **killing twenty-eight and injuring seventy-five.** That night rioters burned African American churches, wrecking a German newspaper office, and beating, stoning, shooting and lynching immigrants. **The following morning Lyon’s men restored order, preserving St. Louis as a Union stronghold.** Lyon’s army marched on Jefferson City, the state capital, driving out Governor Jackson and his supporters in June. **Captain Lyon then won a promotion to brigadier general and given command of Union troops in Missouri on May 31, 1861, as commander of the Department of the West.**



Battle of Wilson’s Creek – August 10, 1861

Lyon’s army of 6,000 Union soldiers was encamped at Springfield, Missouri on July 13th. The Confederate State Guard met with other troops commanded by Brigadier General Benjamin McCullough near the end of July. This force of 12,000 men moved northeast on July 31 to attack Springfield. The armies met at Wilson’s Creek, southwest of Springfield, on the morning of August 10th. Lyon was shot in the head and leg and his horse was shot from under him.

Later, General Lyon, outnumbered 2 to 1, led a countercharge of the 2nd Kansas Infantry on Bloody Hill, where he was shot in the heart and died at 9:30 am. **Despite the Union Army’s defeat at Wilson’s Creek, Lyon’s quick action limited the effectiveness of pro-Southern forces in Missouri, securing the state for the Union.**

Legacy

The United States Congress passed a resolution of thanks on December 24, 1861, for the “*eminent and patriotic services of the late Brigadier General Nathaniel Lyon. The country to whose service he devoted his life will guard and preserve his fame. . .*”

Quiz Answers:

1. The Harpeth River and the Columbia Pike
2. Carrie McGavock was the “*Ange of Carnton.*”
3. Fountain Branch Carter was the patriarch of the Carter House. Moscow Carter was at home on parole and Theodrick “Tod” Carter was mortally wounded and died in his own home.
4. George Wagner was demoted and resigned from the army. The Union Army captured George Gordon.
5. IV Corps – David Stanley, XXIII Corps – Jacob D. Cox