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Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

July 2024

Our July 2024 meeting will be on Monday, July 29, 2024, at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library – corner of Grand River and Farmington Road. Our guest speaker, David Jordan, from Kalamazoo, 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 has done a wonderful job 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. We will explore the significant battles of Columbia, Spring Hill, and Franklin. A drive to the Carnton Plantation will conclude Saturday's stops. We will have a deli lunch at Rippa Villa. **Saturday evening's banquet will be a taste of southern cooking in Franklin.**

Our Sunday, October 27th, guide is Lee White, who led us on our tour of Chickamauga and Chattanooga in 2018. Lee is the author of *Let Us Die Like Men: The Battle of Franklin, November 30, 1864.*

Sunday's itinerary is under discussion and will be primarily devoted to the Battle of Nashville. Sites will include the Peace Monument, Shy's Hill, Fort Negley, and the Nashville National Cemetery. We will enjoy a picnic lunch in Nashville.

The cost of the tour is \$380, based on twenty-four participants. This fee includes tour guide fees, motor coach transportation on Saturday and Sunday, Saturday and Sunday picnic lunches, Saturday evening southern cooking banquet in Franklin, and water and snacks on the bus.

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. The rooms, at \$119.99 per night, include either a King Bed or two Queen Size Beds. The rooms will be held under the Michigan Regimental Roundtable name until September 26, 2024.**

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.

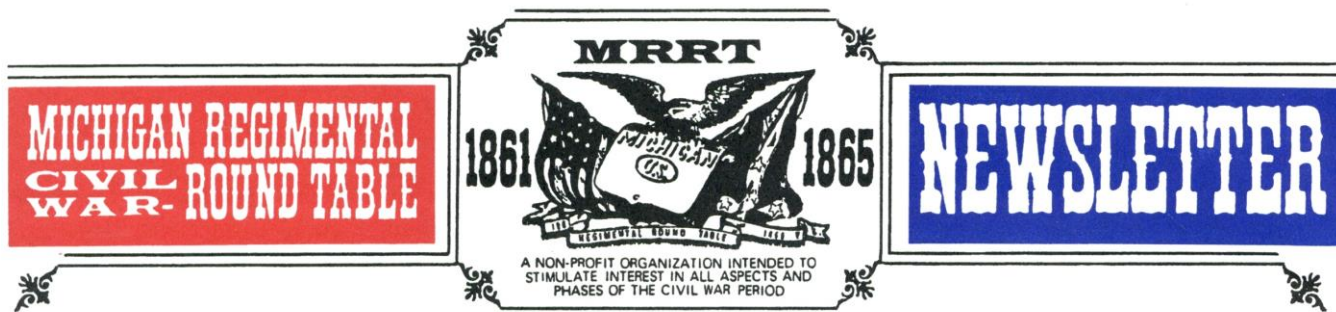
Please note that each participant must travel to Franklin and return to Michigan on his or her own. We have a bus to take us to the various Civil War sites in the Franklin/Nashville area on Saturday and Sunday.

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 David Jordan as our July 2024 speaker, who will share with us the events of the "Battle of Olustee, Florida – February 20, 1864." Olustee was the largest battle fought in Florida during the war. Union General Truman Seymour landed troops at Jacksonville with the purpose of disrupting the Confederate food supply. Defeat in the resultant battle caused a Union retreat and no interest in invading Florida again.

Dave spoke to our group last year on "*Meanwhile South of the Border- The French Attempt to Take Over Mexico 1862-1867*". **He is the leader and President of the Kalamazoo Civil War Roundtable.** Dave was born in Atlanta (where he was fascinated by the Atlanta Cyclorama) and is a graduate of Georgia Tech.

This will be an educational and entertaining presentation!



The Little Round Top battlefield at Gettysburg reopened to the public on June 24, 2024! Two years of work has improved parking visitor accessibility and reduced significant erosion issues and vegetation degradation. The cost of the project was \$12.9 million. Little Round Top is the number one attraction on the Gettysburg battlefield per the National Park Service!

Recently, President Biden bestowed the Medal of Honor on Philip Shadrach and George Wilson, two members of the “Andrews Raiders.” They were captured after the raid and then executed on June 18, 1862. Twenty-one members of “Andrews Raiders” have now been awarded the Medal of Honor. Six of the Raiders were the first Union soldiers to receive the Medal of Honor. There is a monument to the Raiders at the Chattanooga National Cemetery, which we visited on our trip to Chattanooga.

Our June 2024 Speaker - Dr. Roger Rosentreter – “The Battle of New Orleans” The Roundtable appreciates another great presentation by Roger on an important topic off the beaten path.

Admirals David Porter and David Farragut, leaders of the Union Navy during the Civil War, were stepbrothers. Both Farragut and his wife, Virginia, were born in the South.

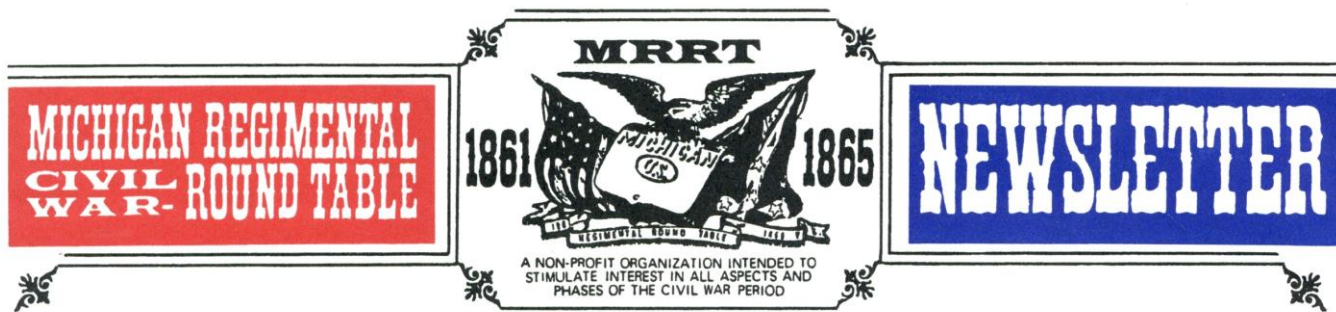
Admiral Farragut was born in 1801 in Knoxville, TN. His family then moved to New Orleans. He felt no attachment to the South. Captain David Porter (Admiral Porter’s father) adopted him after his father and mother died. Captain Porter changed Farragut’s name from James to David. Farragut’s wife, Virginia, was born in Norfolk, VA. His wife stayed with him when the war began.



David Farragut (picture left) joined the U.S. Navy at age nine, serving in the War of 1812. He would spend 50 years in the Navy. During 1861 he did not receive any orders until he met with Porter in late 1861. Porter asked Farragut whether he would accept command at Norfolk, Virginia, an important Navy base where his family lived. Porter was then satisfied that Farragut was loyal to the Union. It turned out that his real assignment would be the capture of New Orleans.

Farragut and Porter discussed whether to capture New Orleans or Mobile Bay, Alabama. New Orleans was chosen because a capture was much better for the Union cause than a blockade of Mobile Bay. The two forts, Jackson, and St. Phillip had one hundred heavy guns and seven hundred men. Also, when the Confederates became aware of Farragut’s approach, they employed sixteen gunboats outside New Orleans.

The U.S Navy included 181 guns and a mortar flotilla of twenty boats, commanded by David Porter. David Porter joined the U.S Navy in 1823, when he was 10 years old, as a midshipman on his father’s ship. Before the battle began Farragut said, “I expect to pass the forts and restore them to the government or never return. I may not come back, but the city will be ours.”



The two forts were seven hundred yards apart on the Mississippi River. General Marshall Lovell was the Confederate commander in New Orleans. He did not command the forts. General Lovell was down to only 3,000 men on land, losing troops being sent North. The Shiloh campaign was going on at this time. The Confederate Navy had command issues, with a river defense fleet of forty guns and the ironclad *CSS Louisiana*, which had to be towed to the fight.

The Union Navy fired five hundred shells on April 18, 1862, at the forts, doing minor damage. Passing the forts was “almost impractical.” Captain Henry Bell then led a daring expedition to breach the river barrier. The USS *Conestoga* led the attack, surviving despite being hit forty-two times by Confederate cannon fire. The USS *Hartford* ran the gauntlet. Five hours were needed to pass the forts. Navy casualties were thirty-seven killed and a minimum number of wounded.

New Orleans was in panic as the Union fleet arrived. Residents exclaimed, “*they (Yankees) are here.*” Farragut sent two officers to accept the surrender, who walked alone and unguarded. The issue was that no one wanted to surrender the city. General Lovell said that the city was under civilian control as the troops had left. The mayor then said that he had no authority to surrender the city.

The U.S. Marines then raised the U.S. at the U.S. Mint. The Rebel Army mutinied, thus forcing the land forces to finally surrender. Two days later, Union General Butler’s Army came up the river to occupy New Orleans. **Mary Chestnut, a noted Confederate diarist, wrote, “*New Orleans is gone and with it the Confederacy.*”**

Admiral Farragut also led the attack on Mobile Bay in 1864, where he made famous statement, “*Damn the torpedoes! Full Speed Ahead!*” Admiral Farragut was the first rear admiral, vice admiral, and full admiral of the Union Navy. He died in 1870.

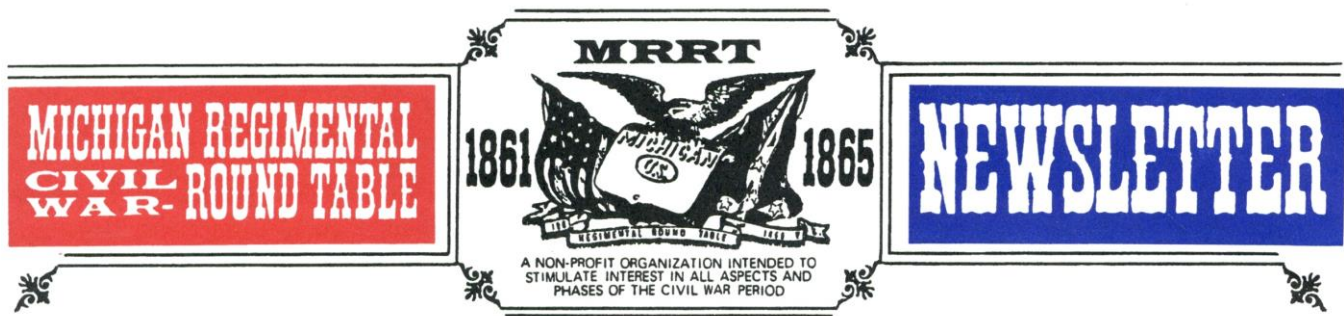
David Porter (1813-1891) passed the Vicksburg batteries on the Mississippi River in April 1863. Admiral David Porter became the second admiral in the U.S. Navy. After the war ended, he became the superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy, where he made several improvements.

Civil War Essentials – Death and Dying in the Civil War

All wars inflict death on a portion of the combatants, sudden violent death or slower agonizing death from wounds or disease. We all know, or know of, people who died in the wars of the late 20th and early 21st Centuries. **Yet the men of the Civil War, and those they left behind, viewed death in war differently than people of our own time.**

Their perceptions of death were based on the cultural and religious background of the time and were also affected by the society the soldiers came from. These differences from our own time include:

- **The immense number of those killed in the war.** The 620,000 (more) deaths in the Civil War is still the highest absolute number of fatalities of any war the US has yet endured – World War II losses were around 420,000. The death total as a percentage of the country’s population – about thirty million in 1860 – was two percent versus about 0.32 % for WWII! **This made the Civil War seem like a devouring beast to those of the time.**
- **A high percentage of violent combat deaths.** Nineteenth Century Americans experienced many peacetime deaths of those around them, but the vast majority were from illness, accidents, old age, infant mortality, etc. These they considered “natural” causes in accordance with God’s plan. Except on the frontier, violent death at the hands of other men was infrequent. We are amazed when we read that only about one-third of the 620,000 deaths



resulted from enemy action – **that high a proportion of combat loss had the opposite impact on contemporary observers. In the Mexican American War for example, the proportion had only been about 13-14 percent.**

- **Religious and moral precepts** which caused many, most, Civil War soldiers to fear causing the death of others as much or more than their own death. One Union soldier said that he “... came to this war to lay down my life.” A Confederate prayed “my first desire should be not that I might escape death but that my death should help the cause of the right to triumph.” A Michigan soldier insisted “I did not go to war to murder. No! Our dear Lord knows it and He will stand by me.” (Picture below-Gettysburg National Military Cemetery)



- **Death among strangers.** In peacetime, most 19th Century people reached the end of their lives near their families and in familiar surroundings. Modern institutions like hospices and nursing homes were unknown then, even hospitals were mostly for the indigent or the stranger. The idealized departure from life was dying quietly in one’s own bed surrounded by loved ones. **Soldiers killed outright in battle or who died soon after of wounds or disease did so far from home.** The death of a Georgia soldier was especially mourned by his brother because “he did

always desire to die at home.” A woman from South Carolina remarked that it was “*much more painful*” [to lose] “*a loved one who is a stranger in a strange bed.*” A mournful popular wartime song entitled “*Be My Mother till I Die*” expressed the comforting role female nurses sometimes performed for young men dying in hospitals.

- **Last words of the Dying.** Death from illness or old age often allowed the dying person to say goodbye to loved ones. These last messages were viewed as containing the truest thoughts and beliefs of the dying. This final act was not possible for those soldiers who died on the battlefield. A few mortally wounded men were able to write a last letter or have a friend or chaplain take down their last words. But the sudden death of a soldier in combat denied that man the contemplation and acceptance of death granted to most who died of illness – something considered crucial to people of that era.
- **Notification to next of Kin.** Unlike the wars of the Twentieth and Twenty First Centuries, there was no formal notification of the death of a soldier sent by the military or civilian government to his family. There were no “dog tags” to aid in identification. Friends, or the soldier’s officer, frequently performed this sad duty instead.
- **Proper burial.** Compared with the efforts the US has made to recover and return the remains of soldiers killed in recent wars, neither side during the Civil War had any such policy. The burial was haphazard at best. Many remains were never buried, and the location of many graves was lost over time. In 1867 the Federal government was persuaded to pass the National Cemetery Act and to fund the recovery of those bodies of Union soldiers which could be found for reburial in them. A less official effort organized by southern civilians performed the same function for the Confederate dead.

In the face of the chaos of the Civil War, contemporary Americans clung to traditional notions of a “Good Death” to try to make sense of the slaughter they witnessed. Interestingly, in the decades after the war, there was a strong upswing in attempts to communicate with the departed through seances conducted by “mediums.”