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Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

August 2023

Our August 2023 meeting will be on Monday, August 28, 2023, at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library – corner of Grand River and Farmington Road. **Our speaker, David Ingall**, 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, long-time friend David Ingall who will share with us his story of "The Civil War in Mississippi". Dave will take a break from his George Custer studies, to share with us a tour of Mississippi's numerous Civil War sites. **Several Vicksburg Campaign sites including Champion Hill, Port Gibson, and Raymond will be visited.** The beautiful antebellum city of Natchez will be a highlight. Corinth and Battery Robinett are connected to the Shiloh Campaign. Dave will share with us the Jefferson Davis' homes and presidential museum.

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*, *Vicksburg: Fall of the Confederate Gibraltar* and almost 50 articles on the Civil War.

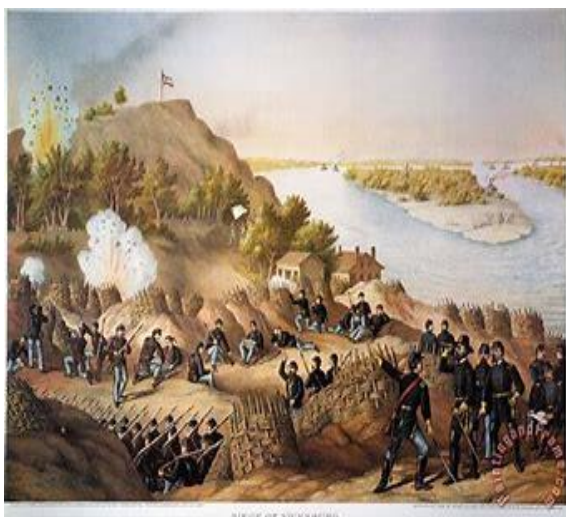
COST

\$290 per person

Tour Cost includes the following: Tour guide fee, Bus transportation in and around Vicksburg, Banquet at Achuca Historic Mansion and Inn on Saturday evening, Lunch at a local diner on Saturday afternoon, Picnic Lunch at the military park on Sunday afternoon, and water and snacks on the bus. We now have a bus!

TOUR

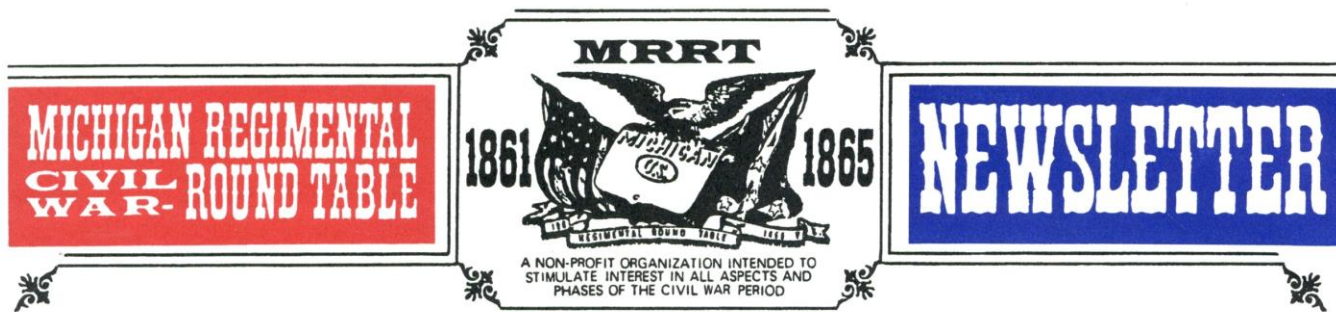
- . **Friday** – meet and greet at the hotel with Terry at about 7:00 pm.
- . **Saturday** – Significance of Vicksburg. Significance of the Mississippi River
 - . *USS Cairo* Gunboat and Museum
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoDVJB1aUy8>
 - . Grant's Canal - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m75NBEUaAnA>
 - . Lunch (Quick Table Service Meal at Local Diner)
 - . 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 (picture left)
<https://www.battlefields.org/visit/battlefields/vicksburg-battlefield>
 - . Lunch (box lunch at Gunboat Museum Pavilion)
 - . Additional potential sites: Vicksburg Old Courthouse Museum,



Vicksburg Civil War Museum, Vicksburg National Cemetery.

HOTEL:

Hampton Inn & Suites Historic Park District – Vicksburg



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Located at the entrance to the Vicksburg National Military Park
Address: 3330 Clay St., Vicksburg, MS 39183/Phone: (601) 636-6100
Block of rooms (King Bed Non-Smoking and 2 Queen Beds Non-Smoking) reserved under MRRT
For reservations, call 1-800-HAMPTON or go online www.vicksburgsuites.hamptoninn.com
Cost is \$149 per night and block of rooms will be held until October 13, 2023
Both Comfort Suites and a Holiday Inn are a few blocks away.

We can sign up for the trip at the August meeting. We can send an email to Linda Gerhardt, lindagerhardt@comcast.net or call her. Linda's number is 586.588.2712

Please bring your \$290 fee to our August, or September meeting. Checks should be made out to Jeanie Graham as the bank does not like checks written to the Roundtable. We can mail our checks to Jeanie Graham (made out to her) at 29835 Northbrook, Farmington Hills, MI 48334-2326.

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.

July 2023 Speaker – Larry Hathcock – The Roundtable appreciates very much Larry Hathcock's presentation on "The Mystery of the R.W. Thompson G.A.R. Post". Yes, there were several Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) posts in ALABAMA after the war ended.

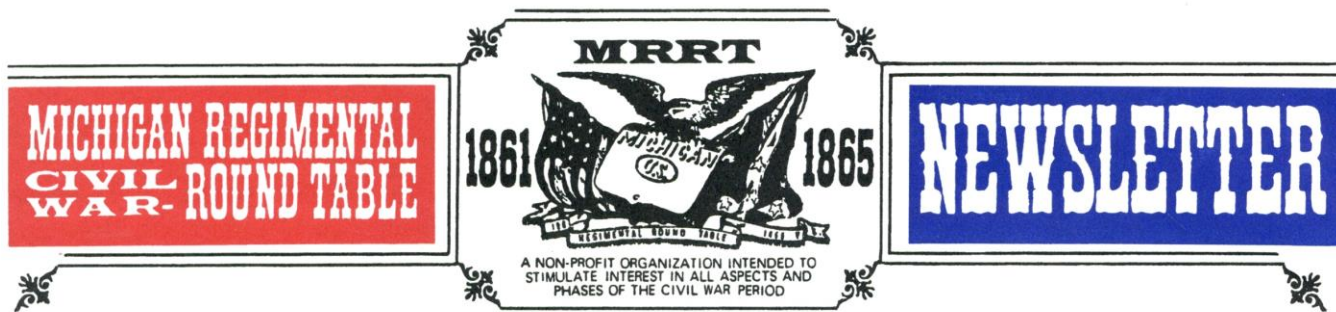
Numerous Tennessee men joined the Union Army as a result of Confederate General Kirby Smith's invasion of Kentucky in September 1862. **Tennessee provided 14 regiments to the Union cause, which was far more than any other Confederate state. There were few slaves in east Tennessee. Most of the slaves were in the Memphis area. Andrew Johnson, the future President, was Governor. His son was Lieutenant Colonel of the 1st Tennessee (Union), even though he had a drinking problem. Nashville was the first Confederate state capital occupied by Union forces.**

General Gordon Granger supervised the fortification of Nashville. He sent 100 prostitutes on a boat to other Northern cities to find a home for them. No one would accept them, so the boat came back to Nashville. Prostitution was then legalized in Nashville to minimize the passing of infections to the soldiers.

Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest was an amazing, self-taught military genius. His motto was "Firstest with the mostest". General Forrest attacked a Union garrison at the Battle of Sulphur Creek Trestle (also known as then Battle of Athens) on September 25, 1864. The Union garrison consisted of the 3rd TN cavalry, the 9th Indiana Cavalry (commanded by Eli Lilley of drug company fame) and the 111th U.S. Colored Troops, a total force of 1,100 men. This battle was the first involvement of U.S. Colored Troops in battle in the northern Alabama area.

Forrest's men surrounded the Trestle. He posted his artillery on high ground overlooking the Union fortifications. Then a brigade was sent forward to engage the garrison. After that, a two-hour bombardment forced the Union commander, Lt. Col. John Minis, to surrender.

The prisoners were sent to a prison in Cahaba, Alabama. A humane Methodist minister was the commandant of the prison, which was very over-crowded. Sick prisoners were allowed to go into town for medical care. Major Lilley was released in December 1864.



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The USS Sultana Disaster

The prisoners were moved to Vicksburg as the war ended in April 1865. **The U.S. Quartermaster in Vicksburg, Ruben Hatch, asked James Mason, Captain of the *Sultana*, if he would agree to take released prisoners north. The U.S. government agreed to pay \$2.75 for each enlisted man and \$8 for each officer transported north on a boat. This was a very lucrative and shady deal for Captain Mason, who had financial worries.**

The *Sultana* was built in 1863 in Cincinnati, Ohio. **The ship's boiler problems were worked on for 20 hours on April 23, 1865. The engineers said that everything was ok when the ship left for the trip to Cairo.**

The *Sultana* left Helena, Arkansas for Memphis, Tennessee. The ship was not stable because it was top-heavy. When the ship reached Memphis, 120 pounds of sugar were unloaded, the boat then headed up-river where three of four boilers exploded on April 27, 1865. A chain reaction cut the boat in half. After the explosion, the boat drifted down the Mississippi River.

The explosion killed 1,167 of the 2,128 men on board, 55% of the men, still the worst maritime disaster in U.S. history. Captain James Mason's body was never found. The remains of the *Sultana* were eventually found underneath a soybean field. R. W. Thompson, for whom the GAR Post was named, died in the explosion.

Jesse C.M. Johns was the GAR Post Commander. A *Sultana* monument was built in the Mount Olive Cemetery near Knoxville, TN in 1916.

Our thanks to Larry!

Civil War Essentials - Unreconciled Confederates – Part 1(Part 2 will be in September)

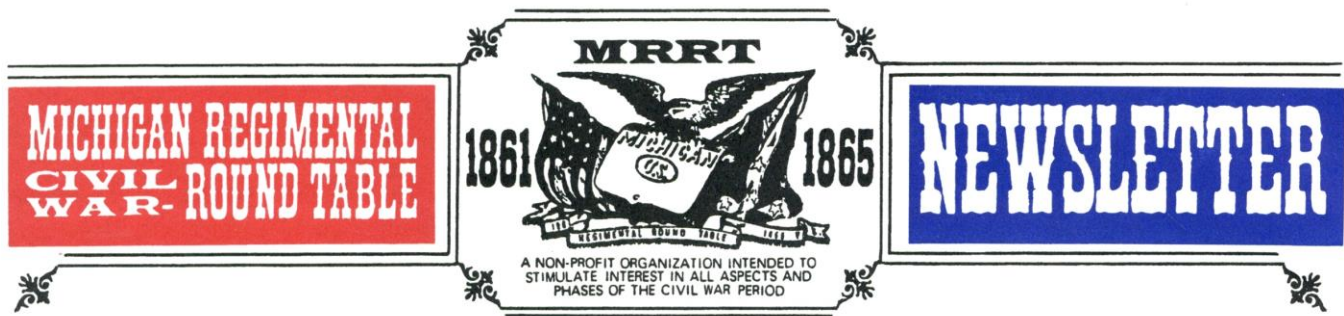
At the end of the Civil War, the vast majority of southerners who had served in the CSA armed forces or government returned to civilian life in the now reunited United States. Despite finding their new circumstances difficult or even desperate, most decided that they had no choice but to do their best to start over. **However, there were some who could not bring themselves to live in the economically devastated and culturally/politically unsettled world of the post-war South.** Many of these people, perhaps as many as 20,000, left to try a new life in other countries. Some stayed in their adoptive countries and their descendants may live there today. Others eventually returned from exile, usually after determining that there would be no retribution, and lived the remainder of their lives in the US.

Many of those who chose exile moved to Mexico or Brazil. Mexico was in the throes of its own bloody internal conflict pitting the French-supported regime of Austrian-born Emperor Maximilian against democratic forces which resisted his autocratic rule. As the US Civil War ended, Maximilian allowed ex-Confederates to enter Mexico and settle there. By 1865, Brazil was (along with Spanish Cuba) one of the last strongholds of black slavery making it appealing to die hard Confederate supporters of slavery. Slavery was finally outlawed in Cuba in 1886 and in Brazil in 1888. Today there is still an enclave of descendants of southern emigrants not far from Sao Paulo, Brazil.



Some of the better-known Confederate leaders who chose exile include:

Joseph O. "Jo" Shelby – Shelby (picture left), born in Kentucky, was educated at Transylvania University and became a wealthy rope manufacturer. However, at the onset of the Kansas border war in the 1850s, he raised a pro-slavery force and became active as a "border ruffian". During the Civil War, he showed extraordinary boldness and skill as a cavalry leader in the Trans-Mississippi area. **As the war drew to a close, Shelby refused to surrender and led about a thousand Confederate soldiers into Mexico** where they volunteered to join Emperor Maximilian's army. The emperor declined this offer but instead gave the newcomers land in the



New Virginia colony near Vera Cruz. **Unfortunately for them, Maximillian was defeated, deposed, and executed in 1867.** The victorious side revoked the land grants given them by the emperor. Possibly for this reason, Shelby moved back to the US, settled in Missouri, and lived there the remainder of his life.

James D. Bulloch - Born in Georgia in 1823, Bulloch served as a US Navy officer until 1854 after which he moved to New York City and entered the shipping business. **At the outbreak of war, he moved with his family to Liverpool in the U.K. where he became the Confederate agent there.** In this capacity he bought or had built raiders, such as the famous *CSS Alabama*. Blockade runners used to deliver needed supplies and munitions to the Confederacy were also acquired. He needed to conceal the true purpose of these ships from US diplomats there and the British government, which was supposed to (but did not always) enforce to its own neutrality laws. **Bulloch was very clever and mostly succeeded, unleashing a number of ships to stalk the American merchant marine and whaling fleets, and supplying enough contraband to keep the CSA in the fight.** When it became clear that the war was lost, Bulloch chose to stay in Britain where he was active in the shipping business until his death in 1901.



Judah P. Benjamin – Benjamin (picture left), born in the West Indies, moved to Charleston as a child with his family. He attended Yale University but did not graduate. Moving to New Orleans, he studied law and passed the bar. **Success as a lawyer enabled him to become wealthy and acquire a plantation and slaves.** He served in the Louisiana legislature before being elected to the US Senate in 1852. As a Senator he supported the pro-slavery position of the Democratic Party in the south. **At the beginning of the war, President Davis appointed him Attorney General.** His time in this position was brief as Davis soon shifted him to be Secretary of War. After he was criticized for the failure to provide enough troops to defend Roanoke Island in early 1862, he was moved to Secretary of State. Here he labored desperately to gain diplomatic recognition of the Confederacy by the British and French governments but factors outside his control, including European distaste for slavery, ultimately caused him to fail. **He left Richmond with Davis and his party in April 1865 but separated from the fugitive President and managed to escape to Britain.** Becoming a barrister, Judah Benjamin resided there for the rest of his life although he died in 1884 while on a trip to France where he is buried.

John C. Breckinridge - Born in Kentucky of an old established family with political ties, Breckinridge became a lawyer. His first political office was as a state legislator in 1849. In 1851, he moved up to the US House of Representatives. Chosen to be James Buchanan's running mate in the 1856 presidential election, he became Vice President at age 36. **The 1860 election saw the Democratic Party split along sectional lines with Breckinridge becoming the southern Democratic candidate.** As a result, Abraham Lincoln won the election which led to the Civil War. Breckinridge became a Confederate general and fought in a number of major battles of the war. Near the end of the war, he was appointed Secretary of War. **At war's end, this former US Vice-President fled to Britain.** He remained there for three years but then returned to Kentucky and resumed his law practice until his death in 1875.

George Pickett - The man immortalized as the leader of the famous failed charge at Gettysburg, Pickett fled to British North America (Canada today) at the end of the war. He was afraid he would be prosecuted for an action he took after Gettysburg while he commanded the Department of Southern Virginia and Northern Carolina. **After a failed February 1864 attack on Union-held New Bern, North Carolina, 22 captured Union soldiers were accused of being Confederate deserters and executed. There is evidence that at least some of the condemned men, who had been recruited from northeastern North Carolina, had never been in the rebel army.** He and his family stayed in British NA for about one year until Pickett was assured that General Grant had interceded for him, and he would not be arrested.