

Vol LXIV, #8

Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

August 2024

**Our July 2024 meeting will be on Monday, August 26, 2024, at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library** – corner of Grand River and Farmington Road. Our **guest speaker, Jack Dempsey, from Plymouth, who will speak on “When Slavery and Rebellion Are Destroyed”** should begin his presentation shortly after 7:00 pm after our 6:30 pm business meeting is concluded. **We must leave the library by 8:45 pm.**

**Linda has done a wonderful job organizing our October 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> trip to the Nashville, Tennessee area.**

**Our Saturday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 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 27<sup>th</sup>, 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. **Please make your checks out to Jeanie Graham, as the Bank does not like checks made out to the Roundtable. You may bring your check to our August meeting or send it to Jeanie.** Her address is: 29835 Northbrook, Farmington Hills, MI 48334-2326.

**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.

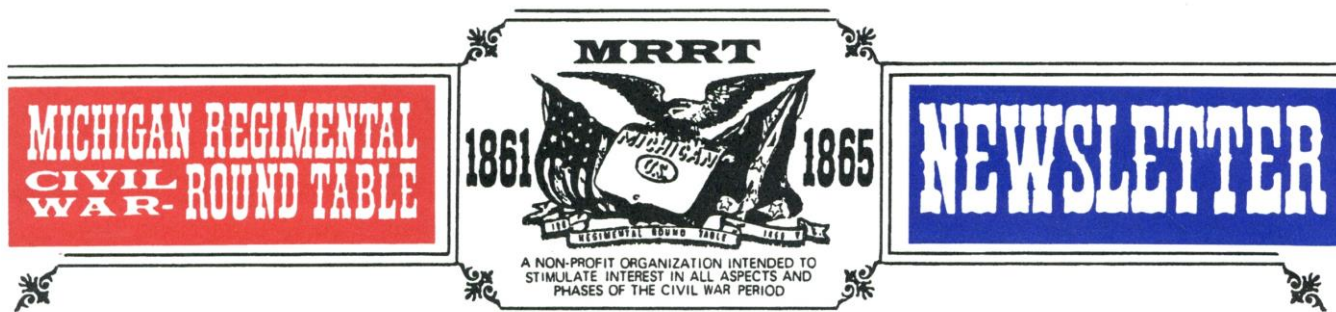
**If you want to join our tour,** we may contact Linda Gerhardt at [lindagerhardt99@gmail.com](mailto:lindagerhardt99@gmail.com) or Jeanie Graham at [grahamjeanie@hotmail.com](mailto:grahamjeanie@hotmail.com) Please sign up for our great trip at our next meeting.

**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 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 Jack Dempsey as our August 2024 speaker, who will share with us the story of “When Slavery and Rebellion Are Destroyed”** Jack will share with us the story of a rural northern woman, Ellen Woodworth, and her husband, Samuel, involved in the war. Their letters discussed home front struggles, military family struggles, and gender roles. Ellen’s interactions with Indigenous people in her rural community and Samuel’s experiences with African Americans in the Deep South were also discussed.

Jack, a Plymouth attorney, was the former President of the Michigan Historical Commission. Today, he is the President of the Michigan Civil War Association (MCWA). The purpose of the MCWA is to raise money to erect a Michigan



monument at the Antietam battlefield. Jack has published several books to support this cause. Recently, he spoke to our group on “*Heart in Tatters Eunice Hunt Tripler and the Civil War.*”

**This will be an educational and entertaining presentation!**

**July 2024 Speaker – Davud Jordan: The presentation of The Battle of Olustee by David Jordan shed light on a little-noticed or remembered clash during the Civil War.** This action on February 20, 1864, in northern Florida illustrates many of the failures of policy, training, and command which all too often characterized actions in that conflict. **It was a battle whose outcome changed nothing but cost many casualties among the forces involved.**

**Background** The battle resulted from the Union’s desire to extend its control over more of northern Florida. It was launched at the time of year when the major strategic sites of the war were quiet because of the weather or stalemate. The hope was to cut off the flow of beef and other foodstuffs from Florida to the rest of the Confederacy, to damage the railroad which crossed the state from Jacksonville, and to recruit slaves residing there into the Union army. Because of its low population, Florida was anticipated to be an easy target for a Union advance.

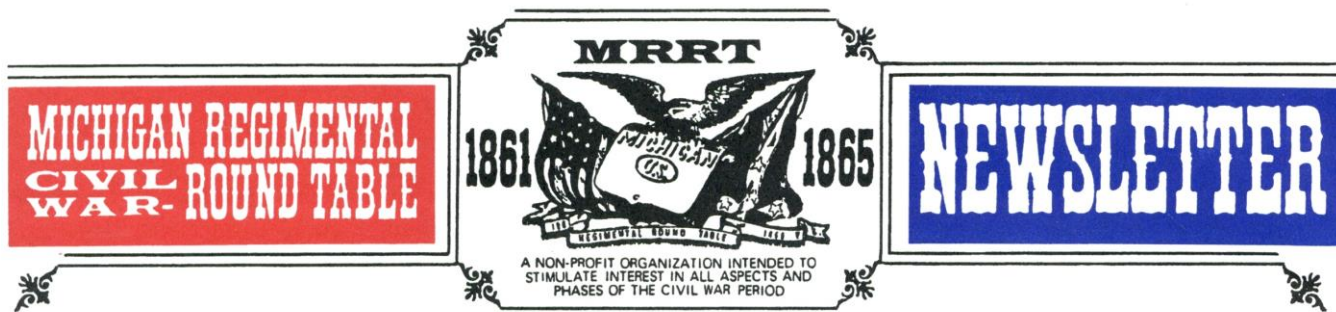
**A more subtle goal was to induce enough Florida voters to vote to rejoin the Union.** This could be accomplished if at least 10% of the eligible voters took the loyalty oath. Also, occupation of this area would allow the collection of back taxes by US Treasury agents from absent landowners, mostly Confederate sympathizers. **This achievement would especially enhance Treasury Secretary Salmon Chase’s political ambitions in the upcoming 1864 election.**

**Opposing Forces** The overall Union commander for the department which included Florida was the capable, respected Quincy Gillmore. **The Yankee force involved was commanded by General Truman Seymour (picture left).** Seymour



had three brigades - 8 regiments of infantry - and some supporting cavalry and artillery totaling about 5500 men. **His opponent was General Joseph Finegan** who had ten infantry regiments in two brigades and supporting cavalry and artillery. The Confederate force was slightly smaller, about five thousand in total. One of the rebel brigades had been sent down from Charleston to Florida by CSA area commander General P. T. G. Beauregard to reinforce Finegan when Beauregard learned of the Union planned attack. **Finegan was the only major figure in the battle without prior military training or experience.** Several of Seymour’s infantry regiments were understrength and contained many untrained soldiers including some suspect “bounty men” and draftees. Some of the men of the USCT regiment had not yet had a chance to fire their weapons! One New Hampshire regiment had been forced to give up their repeating rifles in exchange for muskets of dubious quality before the start of the campaign. The famous 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts regiment of Black soldiers under a new commander was a battle evaluated unit in Seymour’s force.

**The Union Advance** Seymour’s force was transported by sea from Hilton Head to Jacksonville which had been held by the Union since early 1862. **They started out following the Florida, Atlantic and Gulf Central railroad tracks toward the key bridge over the Suwannee River which was their ultimate target.** On the way, they were able to capture small rebel units and depots but were not able to seize a locomotive. This posed a challenge to the plan to have an adequate supply connection back to Jacksonville. Seymour became concerned that further advance might prove dangerous and so advised Gillmore by telegraph who agreed. Then, just as the reinforcing Confederate brigade under General Alfred



Colquitt was joining Finegan's force, **Seymour inexplicably reversed his decision and resumed his advance westward along the railroad toward Lake City.**

**The Battle** On the afternoon of February 20, Seymour's force approached the rebel defenders near Olustee Station. Apprised of the presence of enemy troops, he pushed forward part of his force, thinking they were just more Florida militia. Although the rebels had constructed entrenchments, **the battle was fought in the open.** Seymour's advancing formations met heavy muskets and artillery fire. Both sides committed more troops. Finegan was able to turn both Federal flanks. **The Union forces were further hampered by a failure to replenish ammunition at the front line.** Finally, the Union force began a disorderly retreat toward Jacksonville. Finegan's final attempt to destroy the Yankees was stopped by the USCT and 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts regiments acting as rearguard, and they continued back to Jacksonville.

**Aftermath** There were reports of wounded and surrendered Black soldiers being murdered by their enemies. Any captured white officers identified as leading Black troops were harshly treated and sent to prison camps for enlisted men. **At least 1780 of Seymour's men became casualties including two hundred killed; this represented over 32% of the total Union force.** The Yankees also lost several pieces of artillery. Finegan's losses were much less – 18-19% of his force. Seymour, upon his return to Jacksonville, issued a congratulatory order to his troops as if they had been victorious! **Thus, bumbling leadership, poor policies regarding training and personnel replacement, and an incomprehensible lapse in supplying front line fighters with ammunition – all in the third year of the war(!) - resulted in a humbling defeat for the Union.** After Olustee, the Federals attempted no further advances in Florida. Not surprisingly, the hoped for surge in votes for Florida's readmission to the Union failed to appear.

**The MRRT thanks Dave for this enlightening presentation!**

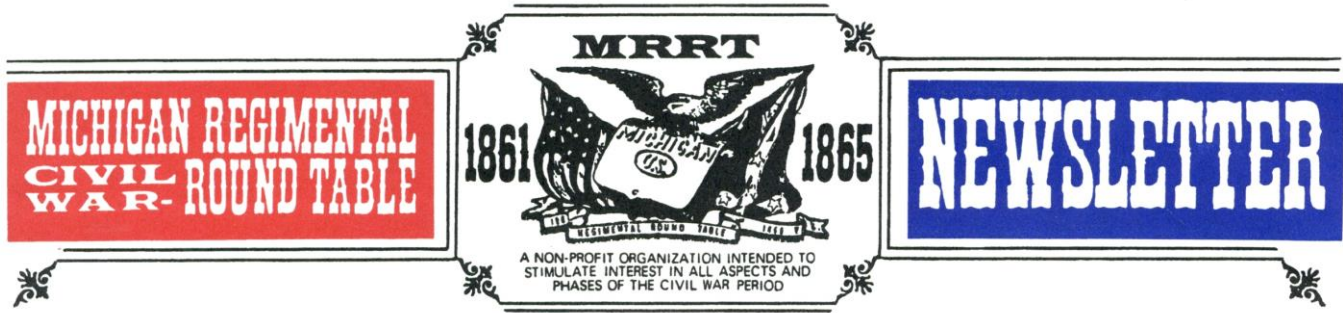
### **Civil War Essentials – Union Supply Base at City Point, Virginia**

During the 1864-1865 Siege of Petersburg, City Point (now Hopewell, VA) was the command post of the Army of the Potomac. Located at the intersection of the Appomattox and James Rivers, it was only twenty miles south of Richmond. **From June 1864 – May 1865, City Point provided the supplies necessary to support the 125,000 men and 65,000 animals of Grant's army.**

**An observer could see the sights, sounds, and scars of war, including:**



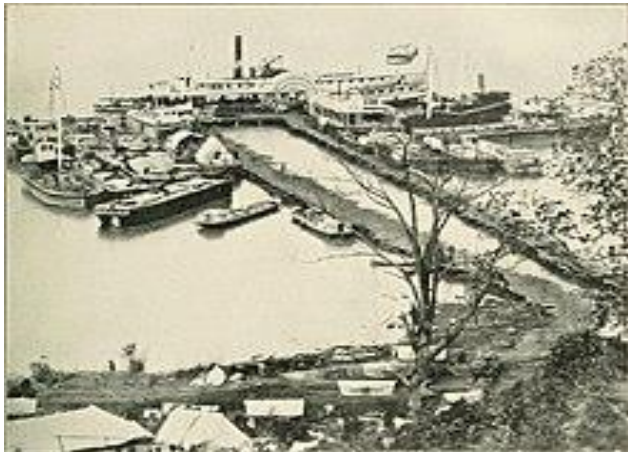
- **Grant's Headquarters** – (picture left) **the telegraph was sending and receiving the latest dispatches.** Aides were moving back and forth, administrating the Army. This communication system enabled Grant to keep track of the war all over the country.
- **Hospitals with 4,000 beds and growing.** **The hospitals could treat 15,000 wounded.**
- **The gunboat's whistles moving down the river, blowing their whistles.**
- **City Point wharves** – **where every day laborers unload supplies, troop transports docked with fresh soldiers aboard.** **The**



**eight wharves were able to unload twenty-five ships daily.** The warehouses included over 100,000 square feet of space. Most of the 3,000 wharf workers were freed slaves.

- Across the James and off to the north were the neat, white tents and gray warehouses.
- **10,000 personnel made this one of the busiest harbors in the world.**
- To the southwest, lay the elaborate trenches of Petersburg, where the two armies were dug in. General Robert E. Lee's headquarters were located there.

The Union Army failed to capture Petersburg in June 1864 and began a siege. General Grant was keenly aware of the role of logistics in warfare and hence **ordered Chief Quartermaster General Ingalls to create a supply depot to support the huge Union Army and its animals.** General Ingalls received praise for creating City Point. His strict



**control helped ensure accountability and proper prioritization of the supplies.**

City Point eventually became a depot of 280 buildings capable of providing all needed support services. A railroad system of over twenty-two miles of track traveled from the wharves to directly behind the Union lines. The railroad tracks provided over 100,000 fresh loaves of bread and fresh meat daily to the Union soldiers. As many as twenty-four locomotives transported a daily average of 1,400 tons of supplies from City Point to the front lines. Bread was the only food not imported from the North.

**During this time, over 390 ships worked between City Point and other Union ports.** The facilities allowed cargo to be loaded

directly into either railcars or wagons. Construction of this rail network was completed by July 5, 1864. The wharf workers were able to unload two to twenty ships a day, depending on the size and type of cargo.

**A separate ammunition wharf was built after an ammunition ship exploded on August 9, 1864** (picture above). **This wharf extended five hundred feet into the James River with rail lines running to the end of the wharf to enhance unloading capabilities.**

The rail system was beneficial to the Union war effort. The 600,00 tons of supplies and equipment moved by the railroad reduced the number of wagons required by 50%, or 5,000. Meanwhile, the Confederates were tied down protecting their rail lines and the corresponding “lifelines” to Richmond.

City Point was where President Lincoln, Generals Grant and Sherman, and Admiral Porter met on **Marh 24<sup>th</sup> and March 25<sup>th</sup> on Grant's floating headquarters, *The River Queen*.** During this meeting, the President enunciated to Grant and Sherman the *River Queen* Doctrine. He offered generous terms: “*to get the deluded men of the rebel armies disarmed and back to their homes they won't accept arms again. Let them all go, officers and all, I want submission and no more bloodshed I want no one punished, treat them liberally all around.*”

General Grant followed this directive when General Lee surrendered his Army on April 9, 1865.

Today, City Point (Hopewell) is part of the Richmond National Battlefield complex.