

Vol LXIV, #9

Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

September 2024

**Our September 2024 meeting will be on Monday, September 30, 2024, at 6:30 pm in the lower level of the Farmington Library – corner of Grand River and Farmington Road. Our guest speaker, Kin Crawford, from Clarkston, 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.**

**We have a wonderful opportunity to help our meetings out! We need a volunteer(s) to provide cookies for our meeting break.**

**The cookies can be home-made or purchased at the store. If you are interested in helping, please call Jeanie Graham on 248.225.7596.** Thank you.

**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 at Puckett's Franklin at 5:00 PM. Puckett's is well-known for barbeque. Other choices, including vegetarian, are available.**

**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 September meeting or send it to Jeanie.** Her address is: 29835 Northbrook, Farmington Hills, MI 48334-2326. **The September meeting is our deadline.**

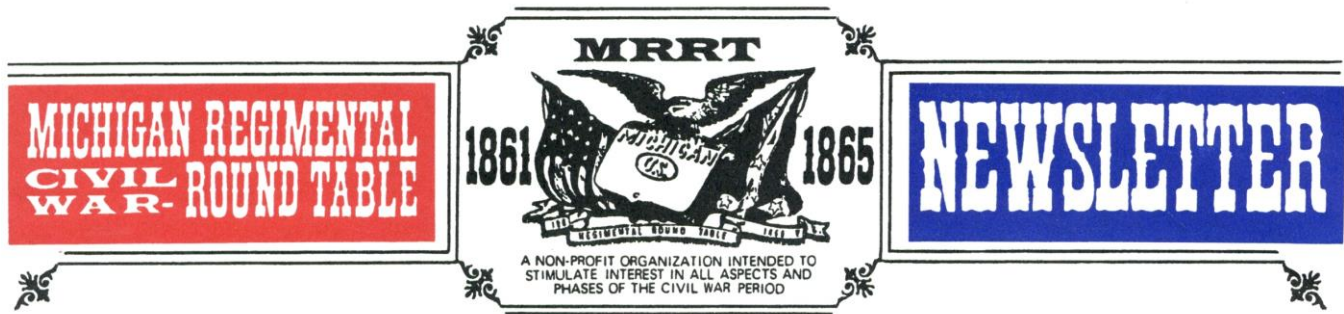
**We will be staying at the Best Western in Franklin, near the battlefield.** Best Western's telephone number is 615.790.0570. We have a block of rooms under the Michigan Regimental Roundtable for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights. The rooms, at \$119.99 per night, include either a King Bed or two 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 Kim Crawford as our September 30, 2024, speaker, who will share with us the story of "The 4<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry in the Civil War".** The regiment fought in most of the Eastern battles, from First Bull Run to Cold Harbor. Three commanders died during the war. Colonel Dwight Woodbury was killed at



Malvern Hill. Colonel Harrison Jeffords died at Gettysburg, and Colonel George Lombard died from wounds suffered at the Battle of the Wilderness.

Kin has written three books, two on Michigan soldiers in the Civil War, “*The 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry in the Civil War*” and “*The 4<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry in the Civil War*” with Marty Bertera. Both books were published by MSU Press, as was his third book, “*The Daring Trader: Jacob Smith in the Michigan Territory*,” about the War of 1812 period.

Kim was born in Kalamazoo, grew up in Battle Creek, and graduated from Michigan State. He worked as a journalist for 28 years and has authored articles for “*Michigan History Magazine*”.

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

**August 2024 speaker – Jack Dempsey – “When Slavery and Rebellion are Destroyed.”**

The Roundtable really appreciated and enjoyed Jack’s presentation. Jack discovered this collection of unpublished primary sources at Central Michigan University’s Clarke Historical Library. Ellen Woodworth’s Journal provided a diversity of perspectives on the Civil War period.

**Ellen’s journal began with “My dear husband” Her letters from the northern Michigan home-front were saved.**

**Every letter was hand copied into her book twenty years after the War ended.** Ellen Preston (1832—1914) married Samuel Woodworth (1832-1899) in 1851.

**The Homestead Act of 1862 enabled Woodworth’s to own 160 acres in the Mount Pleasant, Michigan area.** They had to do a lot of work to clear the farmland, especially chopping down trees to grow crops. The Indigenous people in the area successfully negotiated to keep their reservation. Their reservation is there today.

The War forced the Federal government to enroll males between 20-45 years old for the military draft. Conscription was required to make up for the lack of volunteers. New York draft riots occurred shortly after the end of the Battle of Gettysburg. The draft began October 27, 1863.

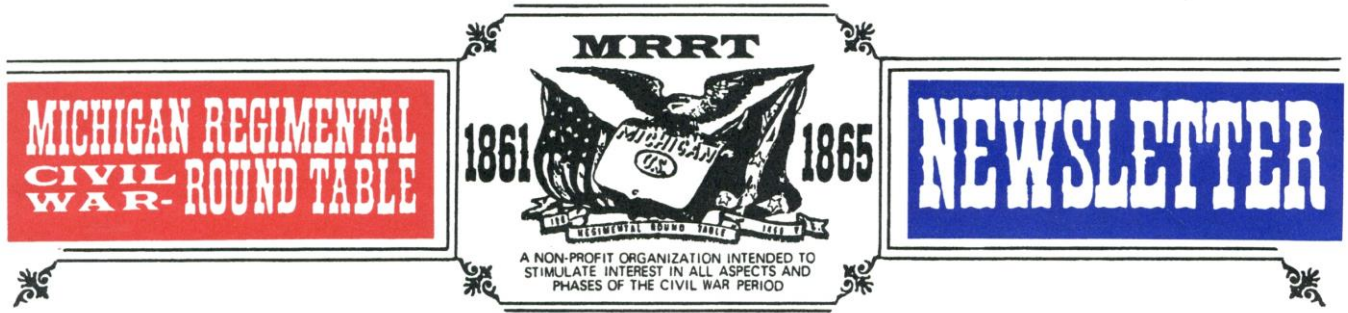
**Samuel volunteered in September 1863 and was mustered in on October 7, 1863. He volunteered because there was a stigma attached to being drafted. Samuel was an artificer – carpentry. He helped to maintain structures as a member of the 1<sup>st</sup> Michigan Engineers and Mechanics.** The regiment had an enrollment of 2,920 with 288 casualties and 279 disabilities. **Samuel started his trip to Detroit on a raft going down the Chippewa River.**

**Over one hundred letters were written between September 1863 and May 1865. Ellen’s motivation to preserve these letters were to document the sacrifices that an American military family made during the war. Slavery, the Indigenous population in Mount Pleasant, and religion was discussed from a small-town perspective. Ellen had a unique perspective as a rural Midwestern woman that had recently settled in the Mt. Pleasant area. This was rare in Civil War era writings. Samuel’s contribution was his exposure to slavery in the South.**

She was very resourceful when Samuel went to the war. She managed the farm, rented the farm out, and invested in their home. Ellen became a paid schoolteacher.

Ellen wrote “*we must lay aside every selfish wish.*” She was buried in Mt. Pleasant’s Riverside Cemetery, next to Samuel.

Jack was exposed to this exciting collection of letters on May 26, 2020. The letters were published by the Georgia Press on November 15, 2023, after Jack received 15-16 no thank you from various university publishers.



### Michigan Monument at Antietam

The Michigan Civil War Association (MCWA) is fund-raising to install a Michigan monument on the Antietam battlefield. Jack is the leader of the MCWA.

The MCWA acquired an easement close to the Visitor's Center which is now Park property. The National Park Service (NPS) has a ban on new monuments. However, the MCWA is working with the NPS on this project. The MCWA's website is [Michigancivilwarassociation.org](http://Michigancivilwarassociation.org). The website is being worked on.

**Thank you very much Jack. Jack's presentation appeared on C-SPAN when he gave this talk to the Abraham Lincoln Civil War Roundtable in Plymouth, MI.**

### Civil War Essentials – The Army of the Potomac Crossing the James River

#### Situation after the Battle of Cold Harbor – June 3, 1864

After the disastrous assault at Cold Harbor, Virginia on June 3, 1864, the Union and Confederate armies were facing each other in a stalemate. Union General Grant wanted to get the Confederates out of their trenches by cutting off their supplies. His plan was to seize the town of Petersburg – south of Richmond, block the supply line through the Shenandoah Valley and get Lee's hungry army out into the open. The resulting battle should be a major Union victory. General Grant issued his orders on June 5<sup>th</sup> and the Army began its work by June 7<sup>th</sup>.

#### The James River Campaign Begins

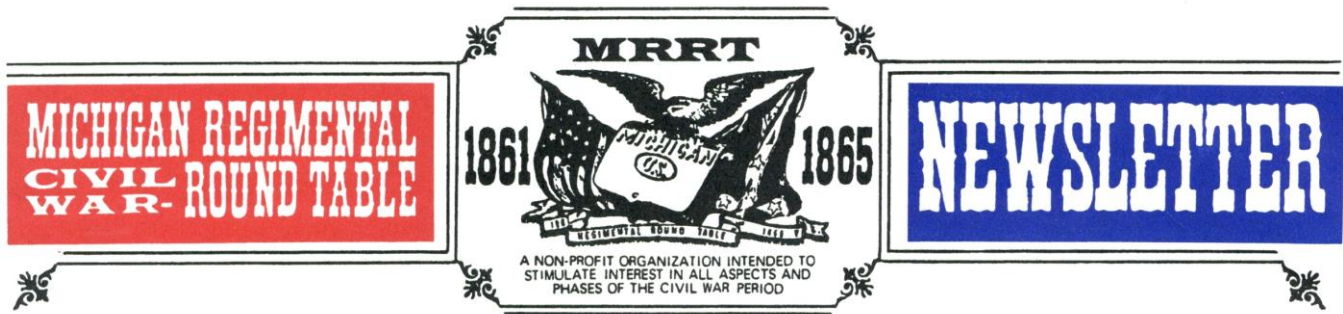
**General Meade's engineers were building an inner line behind the Cold Harbor front and the Union army was shifting slowly to its left. A fleet of transports had arrived at the White House base and warships, transports, barges, and pontoons were being assembled at Fortress Monroe, ready to go up the James River.** The intricate arrangements were well-directed as 100,000 soldiers began moving out of the positions that they had held for almost two weeks.



(portion of pontoon bridge – picture left)

**This was not an easy move. The whole army was marching directly away from the Confederate Army commanded by General Lee. Disappearing from the other army along a five-mile front nowhere more than a few hundred yards apart was not easy. Once the Federal army got away it would have to make a fifty-mile hike and then cross a tidal river fifteen fathoms deep. The James River bore on its surface iron-clad Confederate gunboats. Yankee gunboats were watching for them. If one gunboat was able to slip past the Yankee gunboats it would be a disaster.**

**Of even more concern was the chance that Lee would find out what was going on and move to interfere with the river crossing. If his army caught the Union force marching down to the James, it would be a disaster. They almost caught**



General McClellan's army doing a similar march in 1862. Only a lack of Confederate experience saved the Union Army. **By the dawn of June 13<sup>th</sup>, the Union trenches were empty at Cold Harbor. General Lee pulled his army out and moved to cover the capital, Richmond. For the first time in a month and a half there was no contact between the two armies.**

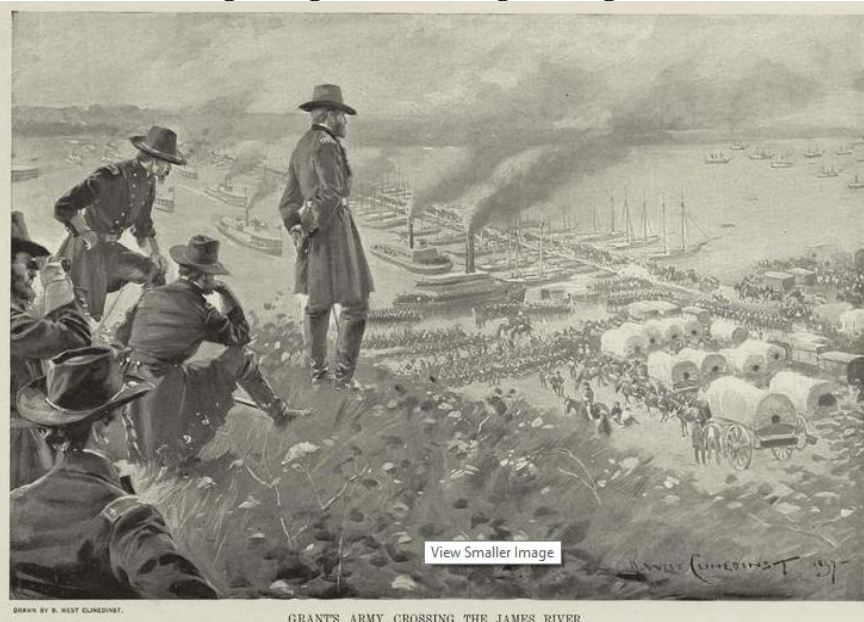
### **Building the Pontoon Bridge**

The advance guard reached the James River on the afternoon of June 13<sup>th</sup>. Numerous engineers began working to lay a pontoon bridge over the southern shore of the river. **The bridge would be a half mile long and require more than one hundred pontoons. Three schooners had to be anchored in the deep water out in midstream to support the central section of the bridge. Tugboats and barges brought men to each shore and along the banks a grove of huge cypress**

**trees had to be chopped down to build a causeway across a swamp to provide an approach to the bridge. The bridge ranks as the longest pontoon bridge in history! Men worked to repair a half-ruined wharf so that transports anchored offshore could take men aboard as soon as the wharf was repaired.**

### **Crossing the Bridge** (picture left)

**The Army of the Potomac was crossing over the river to the south bank of the James River by pontoon bridge and by steamboat. The bridge was used for forty-six hours until June 17<sup>th</sup>. All the artillery, cavalry, and trains, plus 3,000 cattle crossed over with no losses. A *New York Times* correspondent wrote, ".one of the most brilliant scenes of the war" Colonel Wainwright, V Corps Artillery Chief found**



GRANT'S ARMY CROSSING THE JAMES RIVER.

the bridge *"very steady in crossing, nor has there been the slightest trouble as far as I can learn."*

After the crossing was completed, the bridge was disassembled, and the components were sent to City Point

### **Aftermath of the River Crossing**

**The army was now in its best strategic position possible on June 15<sup>th</sup>. The Army was squarely in the rear of the Confederate army, which was at the old Malvern Hill and Glendale battlefields, an area that Grant's men were not going to attack.**

**Grant had the Union Army out of Lee's reach and would attack where the Confederates could not make an effective defense. Major victory was near.**

**The resultant Union attack led by General Baldy Smith was a total failure. As a result, the Union Army then laid siege to Petersburg for almost nine months before the breakthrough assault in early April 1865.**