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Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

March 2025

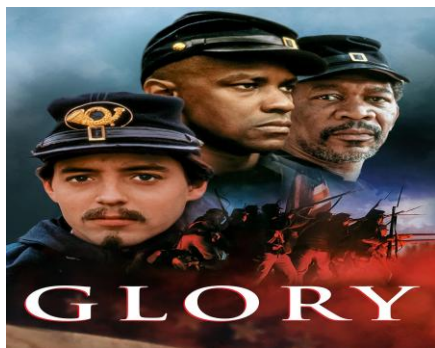
MEMBER RENEWAL

The MRRT celebrates its 65th year in 2025 – and now is a wonderful time to show your support by renewing your membership! (Or become a new member!). Membership is \$25 a year – or \$5 for students. Checks should be made out to Treasurer Jeanie Graham (the bank does not like checks made out to the RoundTable) and can be mailed to her home at 29835 Northbrook, Farmington Hills, MI 48334-2326. Cash is always welcome at our meetings.

Our March meeting will be on Monday, March 31, 2025, at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library – corner of Grand River and Farmington Road. Our guest speaker, Ms. Claire Herhold, will begin around 7:00 pm after our 6:30 pm business meeting. We must leave the library by 8:45 pm.

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> Please note that the s after http is necessary to get on the website. The website is well worth visiting.

MARCH 2025 SPEAKER



The Roundtable is proud to welcome as our March 2025 speaker. Ms. Claire Herhold, who will share with us “Glory: Colonel Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Infantry. Colonel Shaw (1837-1863), a member of Boston’s high society, was appointed to command the first all African American regiment, the 54th Massachusetts Infantry. He told his soldiers to refuse their pay until it was equal to that of their white comrades. He was killed leading the assault at the Second Battle of Fort Wagner in 1863. Afterwards, thousands of African Americans joined the Union Army. **The movie *Glory* is based on this assault. This promises to be a great presentation!**

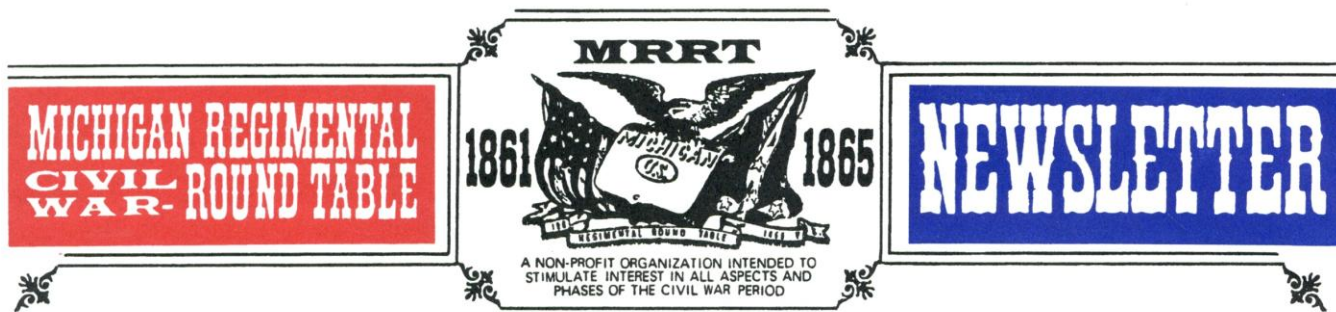
Claire was born and raised in Hartland, MI, near Lansing. She earned her bachelor's in history from Saginaw Valley State University and her master's from Western Michigan University. Presently she is working on her PhD from Western, Claire is busy working for the Historical Society of Michigan as the Day Manager.

GETTYSBURG TRIP!

The Roundtable will be visiting the Gettysburg Battlefield on Saturday and Sunday, November 1st and 2nd, 2025. Linda Gerhardt has done a wonderful job putting our trip together. Our guide will be Chris Army (last name). He was our terrific guide, along with Clark “Bud” Hall, for the Culpepper and Brandy Station trip. He successfully passed the Gettysburg guide test, discussed in our January 2025 newsletter.

GETTYSBURG HOTEL

We have reserved a block of rooms at the *Quality Inn Battlefield*, 380 Steinwehr Avenue, Gettysburg, that our President, George Crouch, recommended. The Inn is right on the Battlefield, in view of President Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address monument. The telephone number is 717.913.4923. Prices are \$170 each for Friday and Saturday. Sunday night is \$80. This includes breakfast. The rooms are reserved under the Michigan Regimental Roundtable MRRT, held until October 1, 2025.



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The Inn includes the Reliance Mine Saloon where many historians gather. William Frassanito, Garry Adelman, and Tim Smith are regular visitors.

GETTYSBURG TOUR COST

The tour costs \$275 per person (for twenty-four participants):

- The Tour guide fee and tip.
- Motor coach transportation around the Gettysburg area.
- Gettysburg Visitor Center Movie, Cyclorama, and Museum Entry.
- Box lunches are on Saturday and Sunday. Saturday evening buffet at the 1776 Dobbin House Tavern. The menu includes a 25-item salad bar, fresh bread, three main entrees, four vegetables, four desserts, and a selection of coffee, tea, and iced tea.

If our participation increases, the individual Tour Cost will decline.

ITINERARY

The itinerary is being finalized. The sites included are General Meade's Headquarters, Culp's Hill Observation Tower, Michigan Cavalry Brigade Monument, and Gettysburg National Military Park Museum & Visitor's Center.

SIGN UP

Sign up for the tour at a MRRT meeting or contact Linda Gerhardt (586.588.2712, lindagerhardt99@gmail.com).

Please note that each participant is responsible for his/her travel to and from Gettysburg.

The Roundtable really enjoyed Tom Nanzig February presentation of "Civil War Tales with a Twist – Part 4


We enjoyed Part 4 as much as Parts one, two, and three in the past.

- The first Civil War ironclad to fight in a battle was the *CSS Manassas*. **The city-class warships employed on the Mississippi River was the first United States ironclad fleet. These warships were outfitted in September 1861 and went on the River in October 1861. The *USS Cairo* was the lead boat in this flotilla, capturing Fort Pillow in June 1862, As a result Memphis. The boat is now on display at the Vicksburg National Military Park.**
- **The *USS Alligator* was the first known U.S. Navy submarine and was active during the Civil War.** The H.L.



Hunley was built by the Confederate Navy during the American Civil War. Brutus de Villeroi, a French inventor and ship designer, immigrated to the United States in 1856 where he continued working on shipbuilding. He built a

submarine called the *USS Alligator* that ran aground in the Delaware Valley. The submarine was based on a compressed air-purifying system. The ship was lost in 1863 off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. The submarine's remains have not been found.

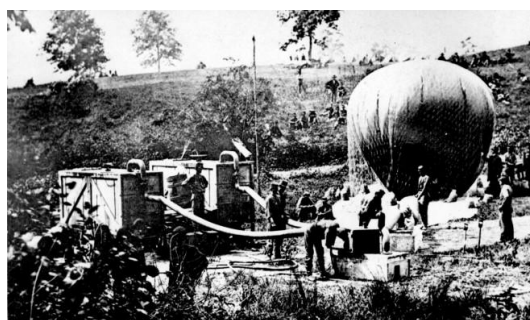
MRRT
1861  **1865**
NEWSLETTER

A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION INTENDED TO
 STIMULATE INTEREST IN ALL ASPECTS AND
 PHASES OF THE CIVIL WAR PERIOD

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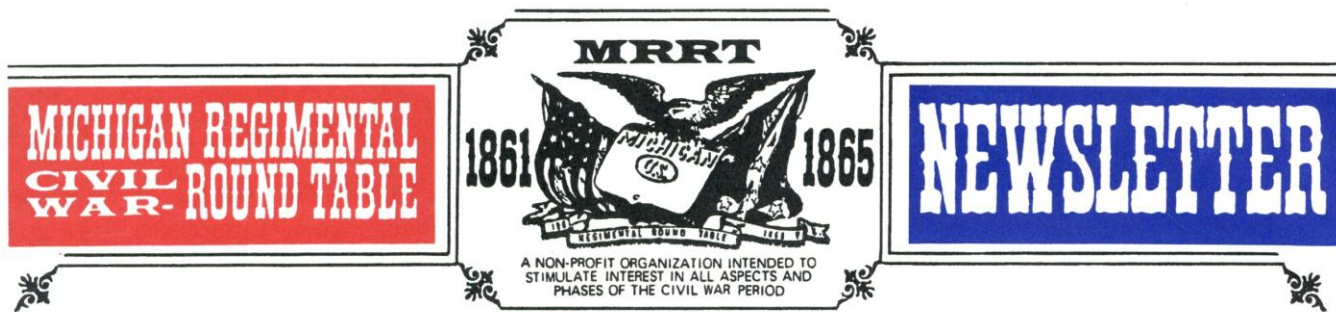
defeat.

- ***Intrepid* was a hydrogen “Silk Dress” used by the Union Army Balloon Corps for aerial reconnaissance during the Civil War. It was one of four larger balloons designed to ascend to higher elevations with a larger lift capacity for telegraph equipment and an operator. The *Intrepid* had a capacity of 32,000 cubic feet of Hydrogen. Chief Aeronaut Thaddeus Lowe used it at the Battle of Fair Oaks in 1862. The balloon helped save Union Army General Samuel Heintzelman's fragmented troops from**

- **General Stonewall Jackson and the Great Train Raid of 1861.** Stonewall and his men captured trains, with no orders to destroy railroads. He received orders to leave Maryland alone as that was determined to be the best way to bring Maryland into the Confederacy.
- **Richard Gatling (1818-1903) earned an MD degree. He invented dozens of items, including the Gatling Gun, which** may have been used occasionally during the war. The Gatling Gun was an early machine gun and the forerunner of the electric motor-driven cannon.
- **27th Maine Volunteer Infantry Reunion in 1897.** Of the 552 men still in the regiment, 312 agreed to stay in the service to guard Arlington, Virginia. Everyone went home on July 4, 1863. Within 18 months all the soldiers received the Medal of Honor for agreeing to stay that long. At that time, the Medal of Honor was the only medal handed. The soldiers received 864 medals, of which five hundred disappeared. The medals were rescinded in the 1910s.



- **Sweets in the Civil War diet** Beef and pork, vegetables, and hardtack was the mainstays of the Civil War diets. Well, what about sweets? **Candy Cutter was invented in 1847 by Chase and Co. They were called Necco wafers, which have become the oldest American-made candy.** Civil War soldiers liked them a lot. During World War 2, they were sent overseas to American soldiers. Today, Necco Wafers are available through Amazon and other websites.



- **President John Tyler (1790-1862) was elected as a Congressman in the Confederate Congress. He is the only U.S President to have a non-US flag on his tombstone. His grandson, Harrison Ruffin, was born in 1928 and is still alive. Three generations have covered a time-period of 230 years.**
- **The Vanderbilts - Cornelius Vanderbilt was a prominent and affluent steamboat owner who generously donated one of his vessels to the United States Navy. The steamboat went down to Hampton Roads, Virginia, in March 1862. The ship became a cruiser to help track the *CSS Alabama*.**
- **Dorence Atwater – was a Union soldier captured at Gettysburg. Eventually, he had the job of keeping track of dead prisoners of war. There were 13,000 unfortunate men on the list – of which he made a copy for himself. His federal list was used as evidence against Henry Wirtz, the commandant of Andersonville. After the war ended, he went back to Andersonville with Clara Barton to mark the graves. Dorence was arrested and sent to prison for not giving his list to the US government. The sad list was published on February 14, 1866. Dorence’s grave is in Tahiti, where he served as Ambassador.**

The Roundtable thanks Tom for another great presentation. He said that he will begin working on Part 5.

From the Colonel – Civil War Land Mines

Colonel, I know there were mines that sank ships but what can you tell me about land mines in the Civil War? Mine, all mine.

Well now, there was no such thing as land mines, or “subterra shells” as we called ‘em, at the start of hostilities. The attitude about war was that you were supposed to stand up and “fight like a man.” Leavin’ hidden bombs to blow people up when they stepped on ‘em was just not considered civil in war.

Confederate Officer Gabriel Rains – Land Mine innovator!

The way they came to be used was when a Confederate officer by the name of Gabriel Rains experimented with these kinds of booby traps when he had been fighting Seminoles away down in Florida. They had worked against the Indians and he kinda thought they would work the same against us Yankees.

As the Confederate army was retreatin’ from Yorktown in May 1862, Rains had his men bury land mines in the roads to slow down our pursuit. He would put an artillery shell in a hole in the ground with its fuse end pointed up. Over the fuse he put a wooden board with a percussion cap detonator, or an artillery friction primer rigged up so that when it was stepped on, it would fire the shell. They worked to slow us down but, oh my, there was a hue and cry. Our generals called it foul play and many of Rains’ fellow Confederate generals even said they should not be used.

The debate continued in Richmond among Confederate War Department officials, and it was finally decided that mines could be used in the James River and other waterways because it was the only effective way to close the rivers to Union warships. But they refused to give Rains permission to use his “subterra shells” against land forces at that time.

Of course, times change as situations change and before the war ended those booby traps were being used to protect Richmond on land as well as in the water. As for General Rains, he was transferred from the fighting front to a more suitable station, as an officer in the Confederate Torpedo Bureau.