

Vol LXVI, #5

Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

May 2026

We will meet one week earlier than normal this month, on May 18, 2026, because of Memorial Day.

MONDAY, MAY 18, 2026, ROUNDTABLE MEETING

Our May 2026 meeting will be on Monday, May 18, 2026, at 6:30 pm at the lower level of the Farmington Library, on the corner of Grand River and Farmington Road. Our guest speaker, Dr. Roger Rosentreter from Michigan State University, will speak on “Hoofs & Paws: How Four-Legged “Soldiers” Impacted the War.”

FALL 2026 FIELD TRIP – DESTINATION: WINCHESTER, VA!

Our trip will be on the weekend of October 17th and 18th.

We will pass around a sign-up list at our May meeting. You may call Linda at 586.588.2172 or e-mail her at lindagerhardt99@gmail.com. This is a great start to our trip.

Tour Guide: Scott Patchen **Tour Date:** October 17-18 **Hotel:** Hampton Inn – Winchester, **Block of rooms will be available at \$139 per night.** Bus -: From Varsity Travel-Winchester

Saturday – 1862 Stonewall Jackson-Sandy Ridge 1864 Jubal Early-Prichard Farm and Third Battle of Winchester
Sunday – Fisher’s Hill Battlefield, Cedar Creek Battlefield, Frederick County Courthouse Museum – Winchester
Please note that each participant must provide his/her own transportation to and from Winchester, Virginia.

ROUNDTABLE WEBSITE **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>**

MAY 18, 2026, SPEAKER – DR. ROGER ROSENTERER – HISTORY PROFESSOR – MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Roger will be sharing with us another interesting topic, “Hoofs and Paws: How Four-Legged “Soldiers” Impacted the War.” Horses and mules went to war in much greater numbers than men in the ranks of both armies. They had no voice in being called to duty, and they suffered twice as many fatalities as their masters. Alongside this massive, unprecedented mobilization of animal power, canine mascots were found in all army camps and on many battlefields, Dr. Rosentreter chronicles how these four-legged troopers were, in one soldier’s view, both a “*companion and friend*.”

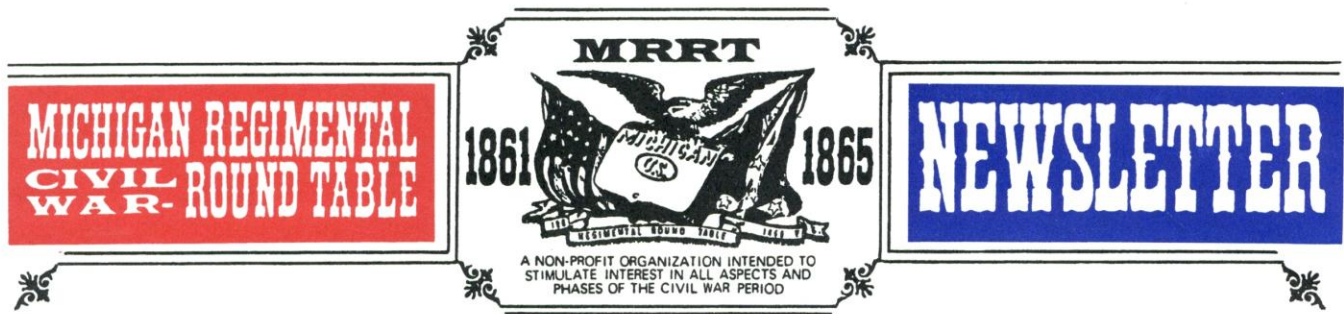
Roger Rosentreter teaches U.S. History courses at Michigan State University and is the past editor of *Michigan History Magazine*. His most recent book MANY A HAND: MICHIGAN AND THE CIVIL WAR was recently published by the Michigan State University Press. He and our late friend, Dr. Weldon Petz, worked together on MICHIGAN REMEMBERS LINCOLN.

This will be an outstanding presentation on Monday evening, May 18, 2026!

April 2026 Speaker – Benjamin Cwayna

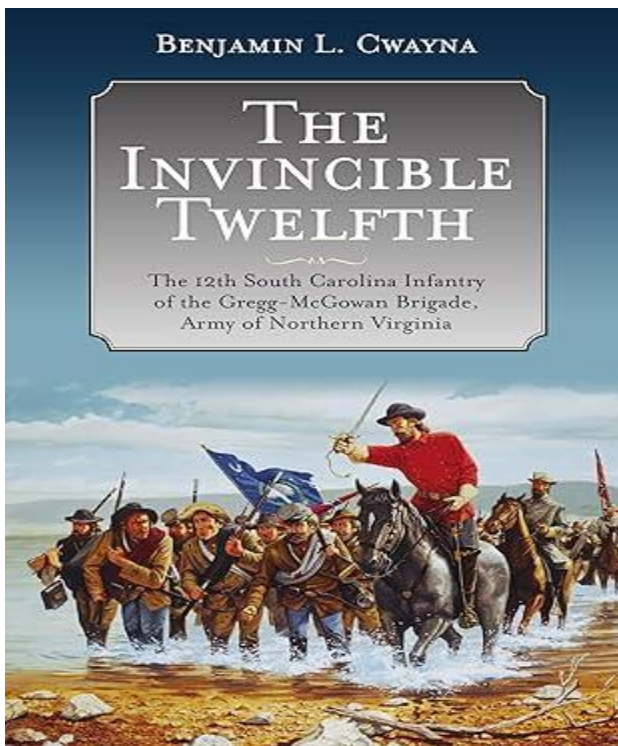
The MRRT really enjoyed Ben’s discussion of his new book, The Invincible Twelfth: The 12th South Carolina Infantry of the Gregg-McGowan Brigade, Army of Northern Virginia. Ben worked on this book for approximately fifteen years. He became interested in the 12th because of reenacting with the 12th. Little has been written about the regiment. Ben also reenacted with the 4th Michigan, which had a lot more written about it.

During the War, 1,400 men served in the regiment. Ten companies were formed in northern South Carolina. **The regiment served on the Carolina coast during the fall of 1861 through the Spring of 1862. The regiment was then**



transferred to the Army of Northern Virginia, where it served in all the battles through the surrender at Appomattox.

During the conflict, 414 soldiers died, 230 in battle and 184 from disease. Usually, more men died from various diseases.



None of the eight colonels leading the regiment wrote about his experiences. Newspapers were a prime source of information for Ben.

Regiment's Leadership During the War

The regiment's colonels left a lot to be desired. The regiment was the first one to muster in South Carolina with Richard Dunovant as colonel. He did not drill the regiment and did not want to suffer. Richard resigned when he was passed over for a promotion to brigadier general.

The second colonel was Dixon Barnes. He was very dedicated to the regiment. Colonel Barnes was **mortally wounded at Sharpsburg** after suffering wounds at **Gaines' Mill and Second Bull Run**. Brigadier General Maxcy Gregg complemented his leadership at Second Bull Run.

Ben gave a summary of various enlisted members who are part of the regiment. **John Robertson, along with several others, was wounded at Gettysburg.** The Templeton Brothers, Joseph and William, were exchanged from the 6th South Carolina to the 12th. They wrote 150 letters home even though they were barely literate. They wrote, "*We march, had a battle, went back home,*" referring to the Battle of Gettysburg. Most of the men were literate, but not highly literate.

Regiment in 1861-1862

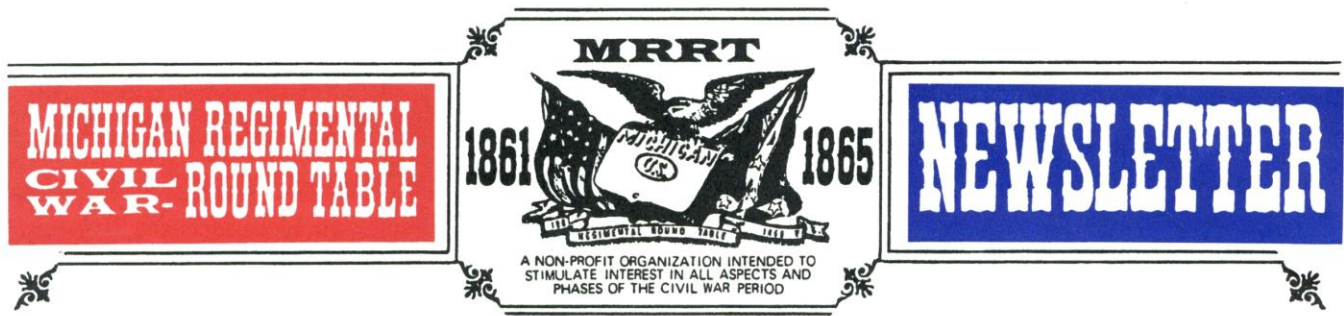
The Battle of Port Royal, South Carolina in November 1861, was the regiment's first battle. The regiment could not compete with the Union bombardment. The regiment was decimated, leaving all its equipment in camp.

The regiment improved during 1862. At 2nd Bull Run, the 12th had its best day of the war, as it served on the left end of Stonewall Jackson's line. **During the Sharpsburg battle, the 12th marched with General A.P. Hill from Harper's Ferry to Burnside's Bridge. General Burnside's attack was flanked as three desperate charges were made. During the Sharpsburg battle the regiment went from 130 men to seventy-five.**

Gettysburg to Appomattox

At Seminary Ridge in Gettysburg, the 12th helped crack the Union Army on July 1st. During the Overland Campaign in 1864, the 12th was in the thick of the bloody fighting. At the Spotsylvania battlefield, the regiment spent 12 hours in the bloody Mule Shoe. Ben Powell from the 12th killed Union General Sedgwick.

The 12th was in A.P. Hill's Corp during the Petersburg campaign. **Most of its time was spent moving up and down the railroads, fighting off Federal attacks. At Appomattox, all the companies of the regiment were represented,**



one only had four men. After they received their parole, they marched by the Federal troops. The regimental flag was never surrendered to the Federals.

Regimental reunions started ten years after the end of the war. They then met every year at various locations in South Carolina. A regimental history was never written.

We thank Ben for his excellent presentation and hope to visit with him sometime soon.

Civil War Essentials - The End of the CSS Florida

The Confederate commerce raider *CSS Florida* (not to be confused with several other Confederate ships of the same name), while not as famed as its sister warship, the *CSS Alabama*, was still a phenomenally successful raider which caused a great deal of heartburn for the American merchant ship fleet.

The Union Navy Searched for the *CSS Alabama* and the *CSS Florida*

The Union Navy exerted a major effort to find and destroy both ships. The *Alabama* had finally been located and sunk in a battle with the *USS Kearsarge* in June 1864 off Cherbourg, France.

In September 1862, the Yankees captured Florida. Captained at the time by the famous John Maffitt, the *Florida* was damaged but not destroyed while running the blockade into Mobile Bay. A furious Gideon Welles sacked the captain of the blockader that failed to sink the raider.

CSS Florida's Exit from the War

Florida's exit from the war at sea would finally come in October 1864.

Unlike the demise of *Alabama*, however, the end of *Florida's* career brought mixed reactions in the north. The way the ship was neutralized caused the ambivalent reaction by the Lincoln administration.

Photo # NH 1320 CSS Florida overhauling the Jacob Bell



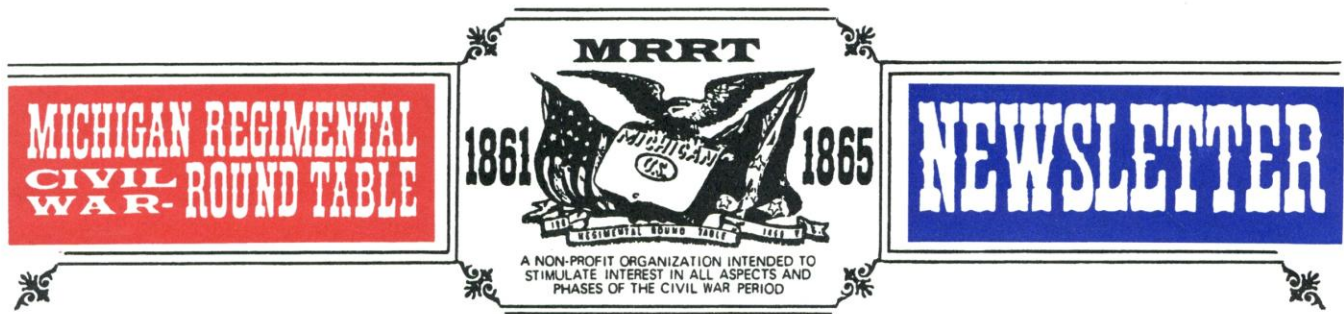
The *USS Wachusett* captured the *Florida* (picture left) in the Bahia, Brazil harbor: a violation of international law. A commander named Napoleon Collins, who had provoked a diplomatic incident with the British earlier in the war, decided once again to ignore international law. Captain of the *USS Wachusett* which was anchored in the Brazilian port of Bahia in the Bay of San Salvador, Collins saw the *Florida* arrive and drop anchor.

Despite the presence of a Brazilian navy gunboat, at 3AM on October 7, 1864, Collins raised anchor and deliberately rammed the *Florida* on its starboard side doing damage to the Confederate raider and capturing those of its crew who were aboard. Although heavily damaged, the

Florida did not sink, so Collins towed her out to sea and on to St. Thomas, a Danish island.

The Brazilian warship attempted to pursue the *Wachusett* and her prize but failed to stop them. Collins dropped eighteen prisoners – those who were not Confederate residents – off at St. Thomas, an action which spread a disease they were carrying to the island's population! He then proceeded with his crippled prize to Hampton Roads.

Florida capture a diplomatic "hot potato" for the Lincoln Administration



Many in the Navy, including Navy Secretary Welles, and in the American public hailed the action. It was nonetheless immediately apparent that this incident, a clear violation of Brazilian neutrality, was another diplomatic hot potato for Lincoln and Secretary of State Seward to juggle. This was compounded by the verbal promise the US Consul, Thomas Wilson, had made to the local Brazilian authorities that the *Wachusett* would observe international law during its visit. Collins refused to acknowledge that his action was a serious violation of recognized international law and argued that Brazil was to blame for allowing the *Florida* to enter her waters.

Naval Secretary Gideon Welles insisted that Brazil had assisted “robbers.”

Always pragmatic, President Lincoln kept silent waiting to see how the Brazilian government would react. Seward recognized that the US “owed a respectful apology to Brazil” but resisted any suggestion that the *Florida* be returned. Welles agreed that Collins had been “guilty of a discourtesy” but insisted that Brazil had given “refuge and aid to robbers.”

US Consul Wilson was dismissed from the Diplomatic Corps

As it turned out, the Brazilian government aimed its protest at the dishonest statements of Consul Wilson, not the US government. It banned the *Wachusett* from Brazilian waters but interestingly permitted other US warships to enter. Thomas Wilson was dismissed from the diplomatic service and Collins was court-martialed. On April 7, 1865 (two days before Lee surrendered), Collins was found guilty and dismissed from the Navy. This sentence was, however, reversed by Navy Secretary Welles in September 1866.

A 21-gun salute by the US ended the diplomatic tension.

The same year, a US warship was ordered to fire a 21-gun salute to the Brazilian flag. This ended the diplomatic tension between the two countries. The British press made its predictable condemnation of Collins’ action but since the Brazilians did not seem overly upset, the UK government had no pretext to complain.

The CSS Florida sank on November 28, 1864

Although the diplomatic aspects lingered for a while, the *CSS Florida* herself did not. Still leaking from the collision at Bahia, it was damaged further when an Army transport vessel also collided with it at Hampton Roads.

Despite the efforts of the prize crew and sailors from other naval vessels to pump the ship out, it sank on November 28, 1864. This made returning the ship impossible. Two Navy courts of inquiry conveniently concluded that the second collision was an accident, not sabotage.

Civil War Nicknames – Confederate Generals

- Confederate General John B. Magruder – “*Prince John*” flamboyant, theatrical personality and his showy uniforms.
- General Lewis Armistead – “*Lo*” or “*Lothario*” received at West Point because he was shy around ladies.
- General William Jackson – “*Mudwall*” – due to his uninspiring leadership, unlike his second cousin, Stonewall.
- General JEB Stuart – “*Beauty*” – because of his weak chin, also a homely appearance concealed by his beard.
- General John Bell Hood – “*Pegleg*” – from losing a leg in 1863.
- General William J. Hardee – “*Old Dependable*”

We thank North and South Magazine for these nicknames.