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Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

February 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.

Sadly, long-time member and friend, Manford (Manny) Cetner, passed away on January 1, 2025. He and member Joe Epstein traveled together for many of our field trips. Our condolences to his wife, Barbara, and his family and friends.

Our February meeting will be on Monday, February 24, 2025, at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library – corner of Grand River and Farmington Road. Our guest speaker, Tom Nanzig of Ann Arbor, 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.

The Roundtable is proud to welcome as our February 2025 speaker, Tom Nanzig of Ann Arbor, who will share with us the story of “Civil War Tales with a Twist – Part 4”. Tom continues to research interesting stories of the Civil War. As in Parts 1-3, previously shared with us, he will introduce each story with three or four paragraphs, giving the direction of each story. This will be another educational and entertaining evening with Tom. As with several of us, **Tom became interested in the Civil War when his parents took him to the Gettysburg battlefield.**

He was born and raised in Grand Rapids.

GETTYSBURG TRIP!

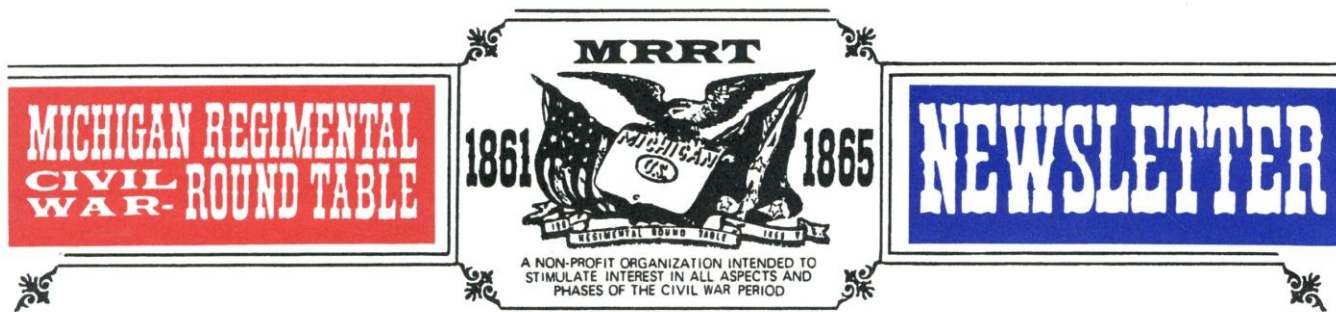
The Roundtable voted (unanimously) at our January 2025 meeting to visit the Gettysburg Battlefield for our 2025 field trip! Linda Gerhardt is already doing a wonderful job putting our trip together. Our guide will be Chris Army (last name). He was our terrific guide for the Culpepper and Brandy Station trip. He successfully passed the Gettysburg guide test, discussed in our January newsletter.

The tour will be on the weekend of November 1st and 2nd. 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 71.913.4923. Prices are \$170 each for Friday and Saturday. Sunday night is \$80. This includes breakfast. The rooms are reserved under the Michigan Regimental Roundtable.

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

The Saturday banquet will be at the *1776 Dobbin House Tavern*. The buffet includes three entrees, four vegetables and four desserts with a 25-item salad bar and fresh bread. Dinner begins at 5:30 pm. Our group reservation is confirmed. Linda booked the hotel and Dobbin House now because waiting very long will make reservations difficult.

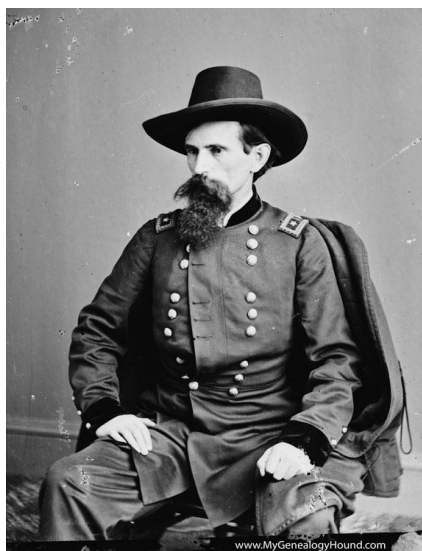
The itinerary is being finalized Chris said that he will start with General Meade's Pipe Creek Line.



Our estimated tour cost for the Chris, bis, boxed lunches and Saturday buffet, and Gettysburg battlefield sites is \$275, based on twenty-four participants. This will be a great trip, even for those who have previously been to Gettysburg!

The MRRT enjoyed Jim Epperson's interesting discussion on "Shiloh and the Removal of Major General Lew Wallace USA" at the January meeting. Jim chose to concentrate on the aftermath of Wallace's actions at Shiloh rather than the battle itself; this subject may be the basis of a further talk in the future.

Lew Wallace came from a prominent Indiana family – his father attended West Point and became governor. Lew himself was in the army during the Mexican American War but saw no combat. At the beginning of the Civil War, Wallace was made the state adjacent general and received command of the 11th Indiana. He led the regiment successfully at Romney (now in West Virginia) which helped force the rebels out of Harper's Ferry. During Grant's Middle Tennessee campaign in early 1862, Wallace moved to a divisional command and after occupying Ft. Heiman, across the river from Ft. Henry, **he performed well in the combat around Ft. Donelson.**

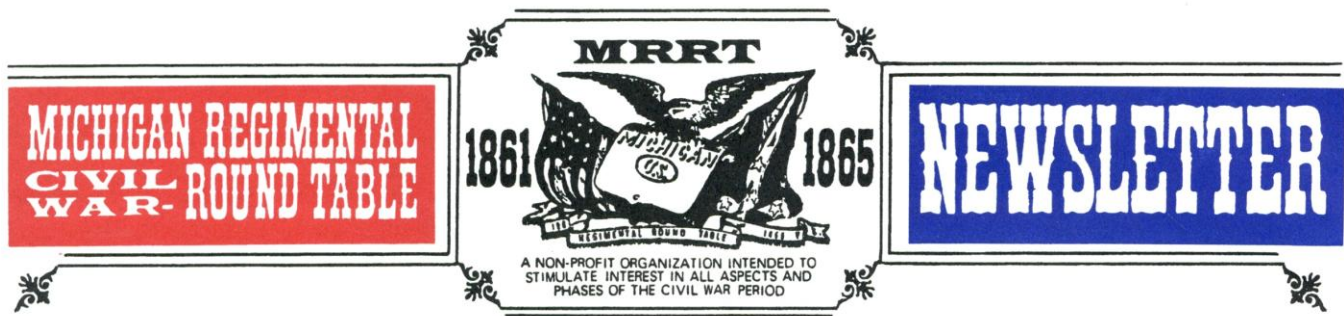


By the time of the Shiloh battle, Wallace had been promoted to Major General; Jim said the youngest in the Union army at the time. This dizzying elevation in rank would prove to have a downside later. At Shiloh, Lew Wallace's division was detached and spread out. Grant said he sent a note to Wallace ordering him to march to Pittsburg Landing by a specific road. **The longstanding controversy is why Wallace did not do so directly.** The written orders from Grant are not in the archives and their exact nature has been debated since then.

Lew Wallace was relieved of command of his division sometime after Shiloh, but the exact timing, responsible party, and reasons remain uncertain. **The general assumption by many historians and writers is that Grant relived him because of his alleged failings at Shiloh.** Jim asked an internet correspondent who made this claim to provide evidence, and that person responded by saying, "Everyone knows that." In fact, Jim demonstrates that his relief of command happened months after the battle. Wallace held his command through the glacier-like advance of the combined federal armies under Henry Halleck on Corinth in May 1862 and commanded the occupying Union force at Memphis in June

Wallace requested a furlough in June to return home to settle affairs with his law partner. **While in Indiana, the influential state governor pressured Wallace, Oliver Morton, to make a series of recruiting speeches to support the anticipated call from the President for additional troops from each state.** To ensure Wallace complied, he obtained an order from Secretary of War Stanton assigning General Wallace to the governor. Wallace, whose ambitions were military, was displeased. The initial 20-day furlough was unexpectedly extended through the end of July, though it is unclear who authorized this extension. Lew Wallace's wife had experienced a tough time during his absence from the war.

They traveled to Poughkeepsie NY during this period. The author of the book *Shadow of Shiloh* contends that this trip was a cover for Lew to investigate the possibility of obtaining a command in the Army of the Potomac – a questionable idea. **What is known is that on July 9, 1862, Wallace testified before the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War** in Washington. His testimony was critical of Halleck's Corinth campaign as well as other troublesome issues such as what he claimed were overly cozy relations between some generals and southern property owners. This criticism of the man



who was becoming the head of the Federal army, Henry Halleck, contributed to his fall from grace. He delayed his recruiting speeches until after the NY/Washington trip.

Lew Wallace did not receive another field command until 1864. Part of the reason was that his fast early promotions had raised his seniority to a level that threatened other, experienced generals. Also, his name was included in a letter Henry Halleck sent to W. T. Sherman that year in which he listed several men he (Halleck) believed should never receive important field commands again!

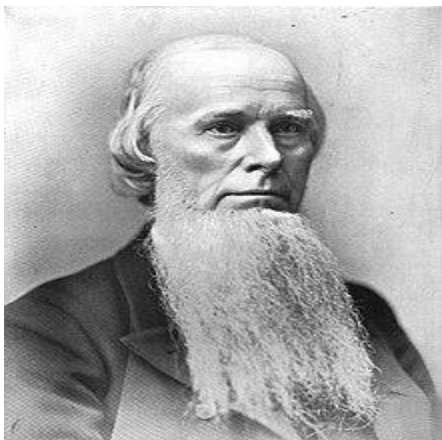
Finally, Wallace was given command of the Dept. of the Middle in the east. Jim indicated that this was viewed as a political post rather than a purely military one. However, **when Jubal Early made his lunge at Washington in the summer of 1864, Wallace's smaller force was able to delay the rebels at Monocacy for a critical period so that the 6th Corps could arrive from the Richmond/Petersburg front in time to prevent him from entering the capital city.** Monocacy earned him the approval of U. S. Grant. In October, he was sent to Corinth but there was no position for him there.

Postwar, Wallace would hold several administrative positions and would pen the most famous of his three novels, *Ben-Hur*. He passed away in 1905, and his autobiography was published the following year.

We thank Jim Epperson for his compelling talk.

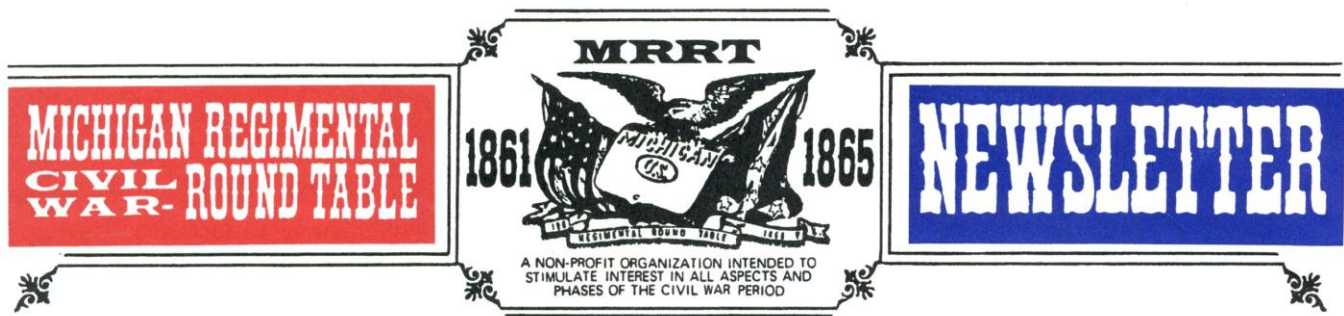
Civil War Essentials - The Georgia State Line (Governor Joe Brown's Army)

Among the many reasons ascribed to the ultimate failure of the Confederacy, the concept of “**States' Rights**” is not often mentioned. It had figured prominently in the political debate of the turbulent years leading to the Civil War. For many in the south, it was a means to try to shield the institution of slavery on which they believed their prosperity rested from those in the north who wanted to end it. **But for others, it was an essential constitutional principle which was just as important in the new Confederacy as in the old United States.** Some state governments contested certain actions by the Davis administration as vigorously as they had resisted those of the Federal government prior to the war.



One of the key state figures who continued to champion states' rights within the new Confederate nation was Joseph E. Brown, Governor of Georgia (picture left). He was motivated by a sincere belief in states' rights (and a strong dislike of President Davis), but he also had practical reasons to disagree with the Richmond government especially on the critical subject of who controlled the military forces of the new country. **One was local versus national security** – Georgia troops and weapons sent to join the CSA armies protecting Richmond or Vicksburg were not available to protect Georgia's railroads or its coast from Yankee incursions. **Another was purely political** – control of military assets was an important source of a governor's political power and Joe Brown was a politician down to his fingertips.

The old state militia system, particularly popular in the south, had given governors the right to reward key supporters with patronage jobs like senior officers in militia regiments or positions at state arsenals. Ordinary militiamen were drawn to the “relaxed” and localized nature of militia and their use traditionally only within the state's borders. **The passage of the first Confederate conscription law in the spring of 1862 absorbed the**



militia by making most men in the militia's age range eligible for CSA army service. Conscription was highly unpopular and caused resentment against the Richmond government.

The State of Georgia had established and owned* the Western & Atlantic Railroad before the start of the war. **It was at the W&A that the famous Union raid by James J. Andrew's raiders took place.** This action, although foiled, together with the activities of deserters and Union sympathizers in parts of the state encouraged Brown to organize several state forces for local defense. **The most enduring and successful of these was the Georgia State Line.** Its two regiments were created in late 1862/early 1863 from men who were mostly either outside the conscription age range or had received some type of exemption. Brown succeeded in filling the ranks because duty in the Line promised to be local and less dangerous than in the regular Confederate forces. **Confederate conscription officers were in immediate conflict with Georgia officials over the status of the Line soldiers;** Brown defended the Line by insisting that Georgia had provided all the men requisitioned by the Confederacy for its armies.

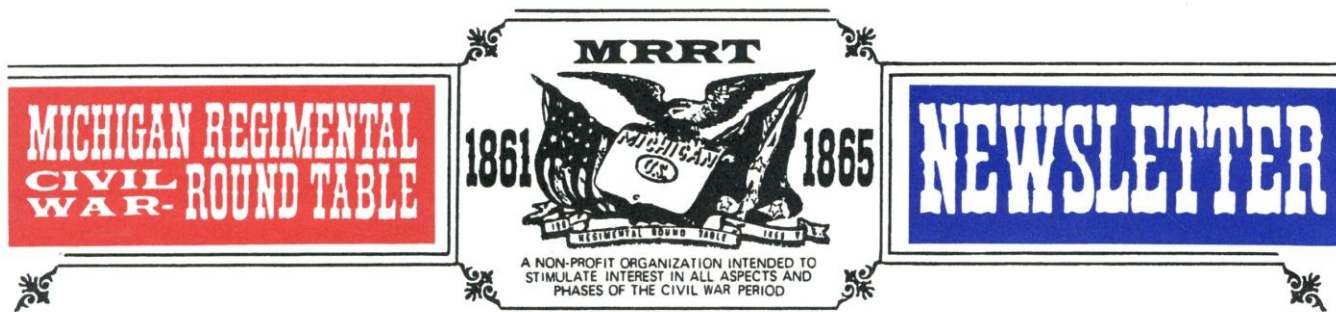
Brown and Davis wrangled over the diversion of men that the Line entailed. The Confederate government concern over the practice of establishing these kinds of local forces was voiced by Judah Benjamin as Secretary of War who insisted that the new country's sole hope of victory against "*so powerful an enemy*" was in a "*concentration of the common strength under one head.*" Relations between the Line and the regular army were sometimes strained; many ordinary Confederate soldiers considered the men of the Line to be the same as draft dodgers.

The first use of the Line was to provide increased security at Savannah after reports that the Yankees might attack the city. **Its primary function in 1863 was to serve as bridge guards along the W&A RR line and to round up deserters and suspected Union bushwhackers.** The Line also backed up Confederate troops when Yankee cavalry under Abel Streight raided northern Georgia. Throughout 1863 and most of 1864, the Line regiments continued their guard and policing duties. They also performed maintenance on the W&A road, trying to keep the worn-down railroad running. During the fighting around Chickamauga in September 1863, some of the railroad positions held by the Line were threatened, but they did not see combat yet.

As Sherman's army fought its way down into Georgia starting in May 1864, the Line regiments effectively became part of the Confederate Army of Tennessee. They took part in the battles down to and around Atlanta. One Line regiment, part of Carter Stevenson's division, suffered significant casualties at Kolb Farm and even more at Jonesboro. After the evacuation of Atlanta, the Line left the Army of Tennessee to join the CSA force resisting Sherman on his famous foray through their state to the sea.

At Griswoldville (targeted by Sherman because of the pistol factory there) **on November 22, they were in a Confederate 3 brigade force which suffered a bloody defeat after attacking an unexpectedly strong Union position.** Line casualties totaled just over fifty men killed, wounded, or missing. Soon after, they were able to repay the Yankees at Honey Hill, South Carolina where they were part of a defensive line that threw back attacks by US Colored Troops. As the war wound down to its conclusion, the remaining men of the Georgia State Line were again employed in defending cities such as Augusta and Milledgeville from Union attack.

In mid-April 1865, the Line was part of a mostly militia force at Girard, Alabama just across the Chattahoochee River from Columbus, Georgia. The rebel force was driven back in confusion by Union veterans under General James H. Wilson. Most of the Confederates, including Line troops, were captured, and sent to a prisoner camp in Macon. **The formal end came in early May when Wilson received the surrender of the Georgia State Line and Militia.** The men were paroled and permitted to return home. Governor Brown was arrested and detained for a brief period, but he soon returned to being a power in Georgia politics (see photo) until his death in 1894.



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Although its importance was quickly forgotten after the war, **the Line was Joe Brown's expression of state sovereignty, a defiant answer to the CSA's conscription acts, and his attempt to keep some troops for state defense.**

*The W&A RR, with track from Chattanooga to Atlanta, continues to be owned by the State of Georgia, but is operated by CSX.