

Vol LXV, #5

Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

May 2025

OUR MAY 19, 2025, ROUNDTABLE MEETING

Our May meeting will be on Monday, May 19, 2025, at 6:30 pm in the lower level of the Farmington Library – corner of Grand River and Farmington Road. This is one week earlier than normal because of Memorial Day. Our guest speaker, Robert Elliott from Tecumseh, MI will begin around 7:00 pm after our 6:30 pm business meeting. We must leave the library by 8:45 pm.

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

MAYS SPEAKER – BOB ELLIOTT – TECUMSEH, MI HOMETOWN HEROES

The Roundtable is happy to introduce our May speaker, Robert Elliott, who will speak on “Tecumseh MI Hometown Heroes in the Civil War.”

Robert’s presentation is based on a book that he wrote on the heroic Tecumseh men who fought in the Civil War. He will discuss the fund-raising effort to restore the Tecumseh Civil War monument.

He is a graduate of Eastern Michigan and has spent 40 years traveling the world in the commercial aviation business.

Robert is the long-time historian for the City of Tecumseh and is the manager of the city’s Historical Museum.

His Sons of Union Veterans group will be doing a ceremony in Monroe and adding a gravestone for a Black soldier in the 102nd.Infantry.

This will be a great presentation!

GETTYSBURG TRIP!

Please bring your \$275 payment for the trip to one of our meetings soon. Or you can mail a check made out to “Jeanie Graham” and mail it to her. Her mailing address is Jeanie Graham, 29835 Northbrook, Farmington Hills, MI 48334-2326.

The Roundtable will be visiting the Gettysburg Battlefield on Saturday and Sunday, November 1st and 2nd, 2025.

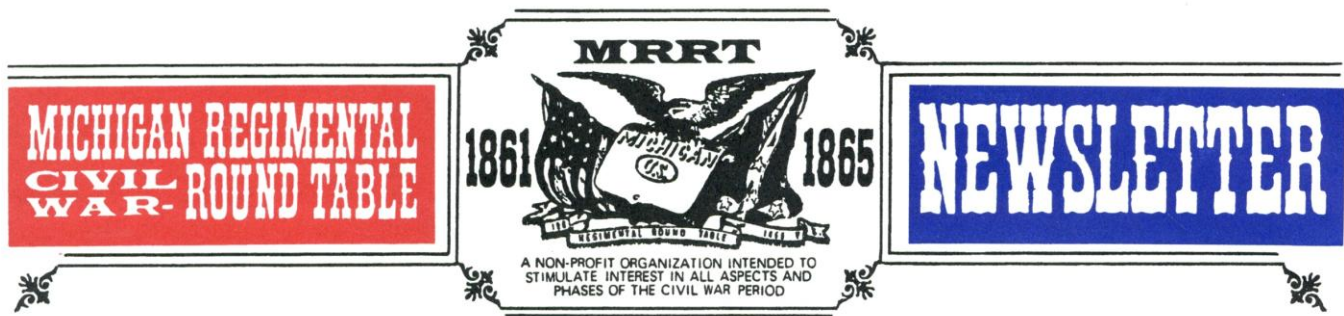
Linda Gerhardt has done a wonderful job putting our trip together. **As of April 28th, 28 people have signed up for our trip!** Our guide will be Chris Army (correct last name). He was our terrific guide, along with Clark “Bud” Hall. for the Culpepper and Brandy Station trip. He successfully passed the Gettysburg guide test, discussed in our January 2025 newsletter.

GETTYSBURG HOTEL

Please call the Quality Inn Battlefield to make your reservation soon.

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.

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



Vol LXV, #5

Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 2

May 2025

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 will include 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.

APRIL 2025 PRESENTATION – RON KIRKWOOD – “TELL MOTHER NOT TO WORRY”

The MRRT thoroughly enjoyed Ron Kirkwood's presentation of “Tell Mother Not to Worry.” Ron has spent eight years researching the George Spengler farm hospital at the Battle of Gettysburg. His second book on this subject is *“Tell Mother Not to Worry.”*

The George Spengler farm was the most important farm at Gettysburg, both during and after the battle. The farms 166 acres were located behind the Union lines. Thousands of Union soldiers from the V and VI Corps, along with artillery units, were stationed in reserve, prepared to join the intense battle. The men were ordered into battle on July 2, 1863. George's brother Henry also had a farm near Gettysburg.

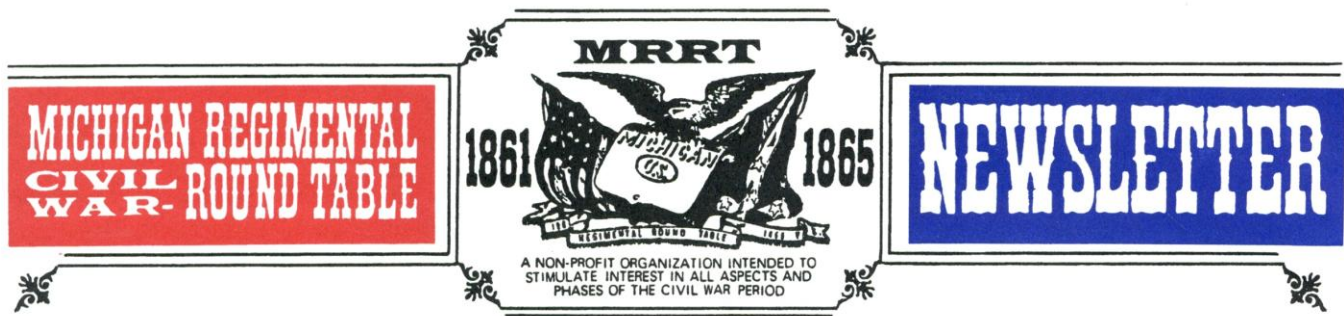
There were nineteen Union batteries on the Spengler farm. During the July 2nd fighting they went where they were most needed. Most of the other Gettysburg farms were destroyed. The George Spengler farm was not destroyed, primarily for strategic reasons.

Spengler Hospital #1 was the Granite School House. This was the First Division, II Corp's hospital. General Hancock's men were taken to the schoolhouse or waited to be picked up. *“Our regiment suffered terribly.”* Colonel Edward Cross predicted that he would die. Lieutenant George Woodruff from Michigan and West Point was hit in the back directing his men during Pickett's charge. Today the Spengler Hospital #1 is overgrown with poison ivy. The farm will not be cleared.

The XI Corps Hospital was the largest on the battlefield. George Spengler, 47, and his wife, 44, had four children. They were told to stay out of the way. They lived upstairs for five weeks. They could hear screams five hundred yards away. The wounded and dying men lay in the open and mud when thunderstorms came.

William Southerton of the 75th Ohio saw a huge stack of amputated arms and legs – they were stacked as high as his head. Ron said that he would like to find where they are buried. The Park Service has an easement on the farm and will not let him look for them.

Dr. Blecher Harvey and his wife were the only couple to travel to various battlefields during the war. They worked at the Spengler farm for five weeks. Nurse Rebecca Lane wept instead of sleeping at night.



Vol LXV, #5

Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 3

May 2025



The surgeons of the 154th New York saw Confederate General Lewis Armistead being treated. He went to the George Spengler farm covered in a blanket. At that time, there was chaos as the wounded from Pickett's Charge were brought in. **Armistead was in intense pain from his wounds. He died on July 5th in the summer kitchen.** There were 141 Union men buried in the orchards, who were later moved to the National Cemetery. **The Confederate dead were moved South in 1872,** George Nixon, the great – grandfather of President Nixon, died at the Spengler farm. Thomas Wheeler was at the farm for a month, recovering from four wounds. **The**

wounded were always thinking about their mothers and wives. *"I hope that mother will not worry about me."* Sawing the bone was the simplest part of an amputation. That did not hurt as much as tying the arteries and sewing the skin. **Captain Alfred Lee of the 82nd Ohio walked into his own funeral.** The Spengler house was practically destroyed. The Government compensated them \$90 for the damages. **Today, the Gettysburg Foundation has completed a complete rebuilding of the Spengler barn (picture above).** Approximately 90% of the original wood is still there. The hospital site is open to visitors.

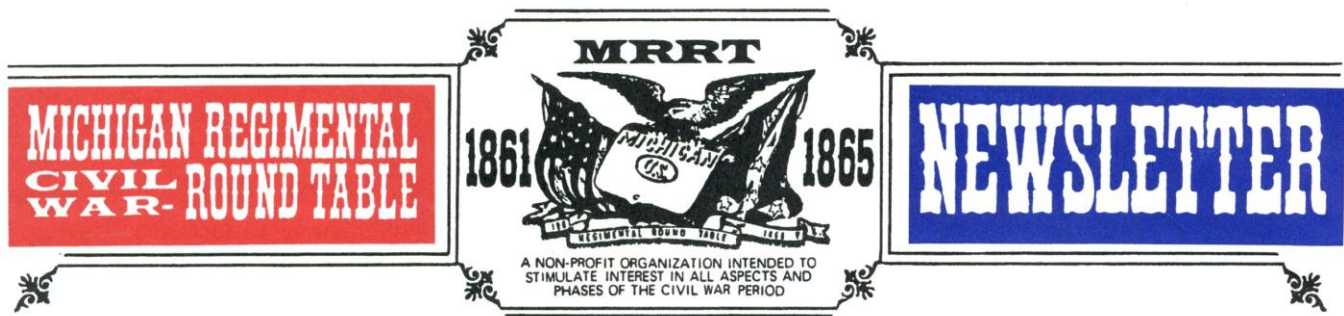
CIVIL WAR ESSENTIALS – STERLING PRICE and the LAST REBEL ATTACK IN MISSOURI

Sterling Price's name is inexorably linked to the state of Missouri in the Civil War. He played a key role in early battles such as Wilson's Creek and led the final Confederate effort to change the war's course.

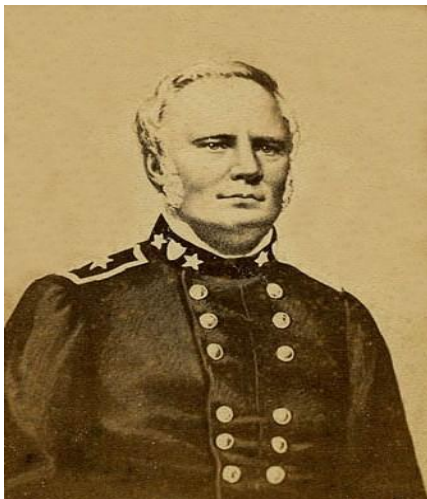
By the second half of 1864, the Confederates realized that they needed to blunt the Union hold onto parts of their country and to gain high visibility victories to strengthen the peace advocates in the north. **It was clear that only northern war weariness and a Lincoln defeat at the polls would allow them to achieve independence.** They planned a series of strikes at the Yankees which they hoped would cause the Lincoln administration to lose public support to ensure this. One of these actions was Sterling Price's raid into Missouri. **The goals were to drive the Union army out of the state, seize St. Louis, reinstall a Confederate state government in Jefferson City, and demonstrate that the Confederacy still possessed offensive power in the Trans-Mississippi region.** He also hoped to recruit more men and gain supplies from Missouri.

"Old Pap" Price invaded Missouri from Arkansas in September 1864 with about 12,000 men, mostly cavalry. He was able to brush aside small Union forces and destroy several towns during his advance. His progress was aided by bands of murderous bushwhackers like "Bloody Bill" Anderson who drew local militia forces away from Price. **On his way to St. Louis, he was confronted by a Union force under Thomas Ewing at Ft. Davidson near Pilot Knob.**

Although the Yankees eventually abandoned the fort and retreated, Price's army suffered major casualties in his failed assault on it and was delayed. **He attempted to continue toward St. Louis but concluded that the Union forces defending it were too strong.** He was also unable to capture the state capital, Jefferson City, but continued to sweep up whatever supplies he could find and to create havoc to alarm the Yankees both in Missouri and Washington. He had only limited success in recruiting more men as he moved – a surprise since he had expected to be welcomed by most Missourians. Price and his army then continued its movement westward across the state.



Price learned that General Alfred Pleasonton was pursuing him with 5,000 experienced Federal cavalry. In the meantime, General Samuel Curtis was in the process of assembling another Union force in the Department of the Borders around Kansas City. He had a core of Kansas regiments and was drawing in other units from Kansas and Missouri. Curtis, who had been under a cloud because of political disputes with former Kansas governor Thomas Carney, had become more cautious since his 1862 victory at Pea Ridge. As he approached Kansas City, Price engaged parts of Curtis' force which



were trying to slow his advance to permit more Union reinforcements to arrive and to enable Pleasonton to catch up with Price. Price won these small clashes but the efforts to slow him down succeeded. **Sterling Price knew he needed to defeat Curtis before Pleasonton caught up to him.** The considerable wagon train of loot that trailed behind Price's army also slowed his progress. He could abandon it, but it represented the only tangible gain left from his raid.

Curtis attempted to stop Price (**picture left**) at the Big Blue River, but Price was able to outflank him by crossing at Byram's ford. Curtis was unsure whether he could contain Price, in part because some Kansas militia units refused to cross into Missouri. **Finally, at the insistence of his subordinates who were determined to fight, he set up a defense facing south along Brush Creek west of the Big Blue River and south of Westport** (now part of Kansas City, Mo.). Price ordered two divisions under Generals Fagan and Shelby to turn to the north and attack this position while General Marmaduke's third division was to face eastward and hold Byram's Ford against Pleasonton. **If he could destroy the Yankees at Brush**

Creek before Pleasonton's army arrived, Sterling Price could then turn, Napoleon-like, on Pleasonton or at least cross over into Kansas with his loot and claim a partial victory.

Early on October 23, 1864, the battle began along Brush Creek. Both sides attacked the other without breaking through. **Then a local farmer, George Thoman, angry because the Confederates had stolen food from him, showed the Union commander a hidden creek bed which would enable him to move a force unseen to penetrate the rebel positions.** Using this advantage, Curtis attacked again and was able to push the Confederates south.

Shortly after the Brush Creek battle started, Alfred Pleasonton's force arrived at Byram's Ford and began crossing the Big Blue there. **Marmaduke's division resisted the Yankees for a while but was forced to give way** and retreated west where it met the rest of Price's force pulling back from Brush Creek (see map). Jo Shelby fought a desperate rearguard action to cover Price's army as it retreated south.

Both sides suffered about 1500 casualties in what was one of the biggest battles in the Trans-Mississippi region. It is considered decisive because Price's force was crippled and never again threatened Missouri. After this defeat, the bushwhackers in Missouri became less aggressive and many left for Arkansas. The Republican candidate for Missouri governor easily won the November election.

Price was pursued into Kansas and defeated again at Marias des Cygnes and Mine Creek. **After Mine Creek, Price had to burn most of the precious wagons of Missouri loot.** He then retreated south, not pursued by the Federals whose attention was diverted by a feud between Curtis and Pleasonton over who deserved credit for the Westport battle. The remains of his command—six thousand men or less—finally arrived in southern Arkansas in early December 1864 after a grueling retreat through the barren Indian Territory. Price himself crossed over into Mexico at war's end.