

Vol LXVI, #1

Michigan Regimental Round Table Newsletter—Page 1

January 2026

Sadly, long-time member and friend William (Bill) Christen has passed away. His extensive research on a variety of Civil War topics brought us intriguing presentations on “17th Michigan Infantry – Photographic Study”, “Bullets or Bugs? How Were Michigan Civil War Soldiers More Likely to Die?” and the “Curtis Brothers of Connecticut.” Bill’s presentations were interesting and informative. Our deepest sympathies to his wife, Glenna Jo, and his family.

MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 2026, ROUNDTABLE MEETING

Our January 2026 meeting will be on Monday, January 26, 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, Jack Dempsey, well-known Civil War author, with an appearance on C-SPAN, will begin around 7:00 pm, after our 6:30 pm business meeting.

MEMBER RENEWAL

The MRRT celebrates its 66th year in 2026 – 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 the NEW treasurer, Jim Burroughs (the bank does not like checks made out to the RoundTable) and can be mailed to his home at 1632 North Silvery Lane, Dearborn, MI 48128. We will gladly accept cash at our meetings. The dues are used to pay our expenses, mostly outside speaker-related, and contributions to battlefield preservation.

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.

JANUARY 2026 SPEAKER – JACK DEMPSEY – PLYMOUTH, MI

The Roundtable welcomes Jack Dempsey as our January 2026 speaker, presenting “Radical of Radicals: Austin Blair—Civil War Governor in His Own Words.”

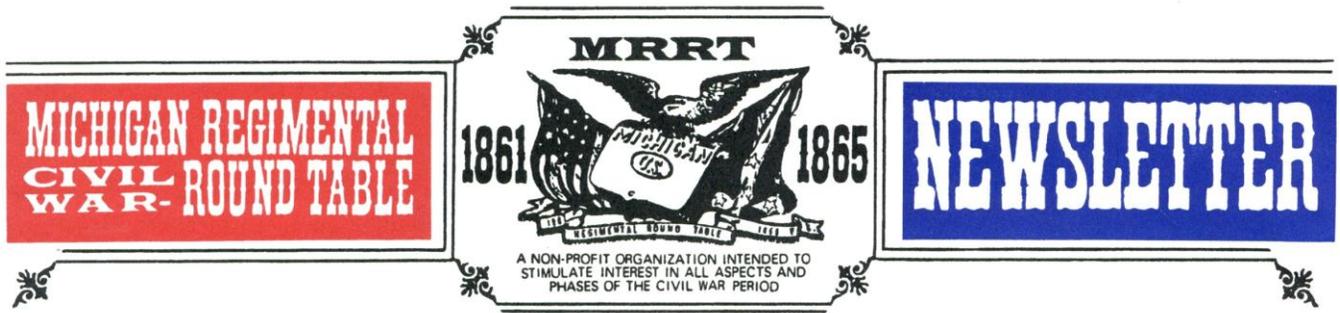
Austin Blair (1818-1894) was the Republican Governor of Michigan during the Civil War. He was a formidable opponent of slavery and secession. He and the Michigan legislature sent the first Western regiment to the scene of combat in mid-May 1861. He also worked to give women and blacks the right to vote and abolish capital punishment.

Jack’s new book, “*Radican of Radicals: Austin Blair-Civil War Governor-In His Own Wors*” will be available for purchase at our meeting. Sales assist his Antietam monument project.

Jack is an award-winning author specializing in the Civil War, and Michigan history and culture. From Detroit, he is a graduate of Michigan State and George Washington University. He is a retired attorney.

He chaired Michigan’s Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee, led the Michigan Historical Commission, and served on the Black Historic Sites Committee of the Detroit Historical Society.

He is working to place a monument at Antietam to recognize Michigan’s contribution in the 1862 battle. Jack has authored several books to help raise funds for the monument. The Michigan Civil War Association manages fundraising. **This will be an outstanding presentation on Monday evening, January 26, 2026!** We look forward to seeing you.



RECAP OF NOVEMBER 2025 SPEAKER- AUSTIN INGALL -TEMPERANCE-BEDFORD, MI



The Michigan Regimental Roundtable enjoyed Austin Ingall’s (picture-left) well-structured presentation on **Aaron Bromley, Monroe County, and the 102nd USCT**. Austin is a very articulate 17-year-old Temperance-Bedford High school student who is deeply interested in Civil War history.

102nd USCT

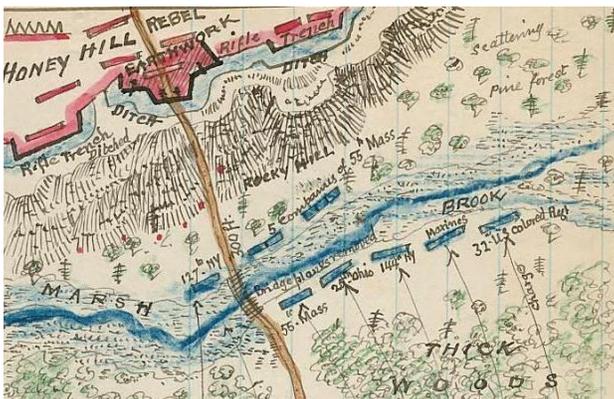
About 180 thousand Black soldiers and seventy thousand Black sailors served in the Civil War. Forty thousand of these men died in the war including an inordinately high 50% of those who were captured by the Confederates.

Confederates treated Black prisoners and any of their white officers they captured much more cruelly and then the officers and men from white Union regiments; some were even executed after they surrendered.

Arming Black people was a controversial action as many northerners were not sure they would make good soldiers. In addition, there was concern that those Black soldiers who had escaped slavery might use their weapons to indiscriminately murder any slave owners they encountered. This is one reason Black regiments had white officers only. **But with casualties growing as the war progressed and influential Black leaders, like Frederick Douglass, eager to show that their race was capable and thus deserving of respect,** Lincoln’s government authorized the recruitment of Black people and formation of Black regiments in May 1863.

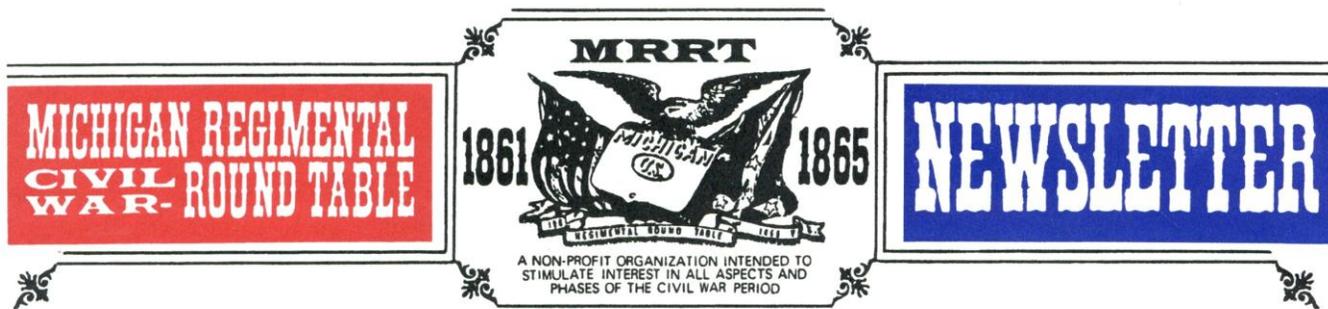
Michigan African American Regiment Established in July 1863

After Secretary of War Stanton authorized Gov. Blair to raise a Black Michigan regiment, **Henry Barns, a Detroit newspaper editor, became an enthusiastic recruiter and was elected colonel as a result.** Once the regiment was formed, Barns resigned his commission as he had no military training or experience and Henry Chipman replaced him. **The regiment, created in July 1863, was originally designated the 1st Michigan Colored Regiment and had an initial strength of 895 officers and men.** Throughout its service, 1673 men would be members of it. Many of the Black enlisted men came from slave states. White officers applied for transfer from other regiments, often with a promotion and some NCOs from white regiments applied to become commissioned officers. **Training was done at Camp Ward in southeast Detroit,** a facility in poor condition where many of the recruits suffered illness; eighteen died and are buried in a local cemetery (throughout the war, far more soldiers died from illness than combat). The two flags they carried are now in Lansing with other Civil War flags. **The soldiers were first issued Austrian muskets which proved to be dangerous and unreliable; these were replaced.**



1864-1865

In the spring of 1864, the unit was transported by train to Baltimore. Designated as part of the 9th Corps, Generals Burnside and Grant reviewed them. However, the regiment (**soon renamed the 102nd USCT**) was then sent to Beaufort, South Carolina instead. **They were in a force sent to Jacksonville, Florida where they**



first saw combat in the minor battle of Baldwin in August 1864. Their losses from disease continued after returning to Hilton Head. Orders from W. T. Sherman for pressure to be applied to the railroads to support his march across Georgia resulted in **their largest battle at Honey Hill at the end of November 1864.** A force of white and USCT troops, including the 102nd, led by General John Hatch attacked a well-entrenched force of Confederate militia (see sketch left) and were repulsed with heavy losses. **During the battle, 102nd officer O. W. Bennett won the Medal of Honor for protecting a gun battery from capture.** The 102nd suffered sixty-five casualties. Shortly afterward, another battle at the Tulifinny Creek bridge had the same result. **In April 1865, the 102nd saw its last action at Boykin's Mill as part of a Union force under General Potter which defeated Confederates defending another railroad in South Carolina.** The 102nd USCT was mustered out of service on September 30, 1865 but its planned formal celebration in Detroit was spoiled by poor weather. **None the less, the 102nd USCT lived up to its motto: "All men are born free and equal, to realize which we fight".**

Aaron Bromley

AARON BROMLEY – Member of 102 USCT

Bromley was a member of the 102nd USCT chosen for study by Austin. He was born in 1823 as a slave and escaped to Monroe County, Michigan in 1862. In August 1864, Aaron enlisted as a substitute in the 102nd USCT. **It is possible that he was present at the battles of Honey Hill and Tulifinny.** He contracted a disease and was given a medical discharge. He remained in Michigan and the records show that he voted in the 1870 elections and ran for office in 1885. Following his death in 1906 he was buried in a known but unmarked grave. **Austin's American Battlefield Trust Youth Leadership Program project was to secure a government headstone for his grave.** The marker ceremony took place on May 18, 2005.

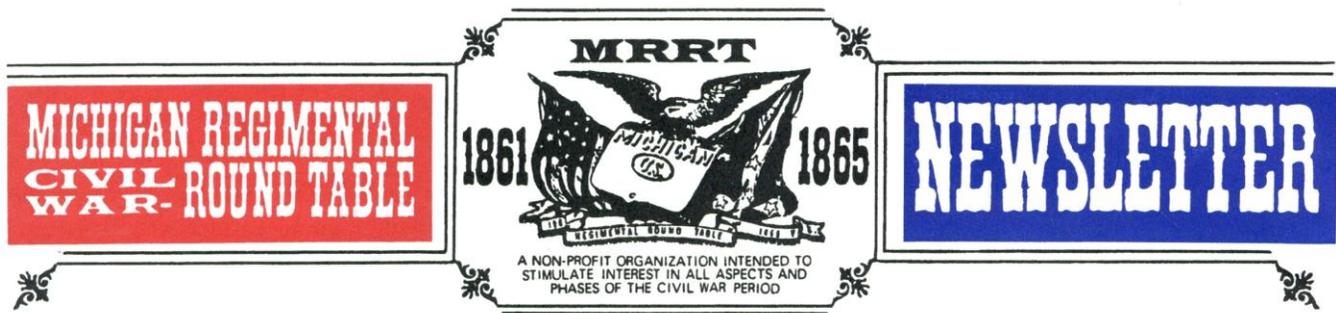
We thank Austin Ingall for his erudite and fascinating presentation!

The Return of Questions and Answers!! This month the Questions pertain to the navies.

1. Where did 3 Confederate politicians, all opponents of President Davis, meet with President Lincoln on February 3, 1865, to discuss peace terms? Also, who were these men?
2. Which ship attempted to carry supplies to Robert Anderson's forces at Fort Sumter on January 9, 1861, and from which locations did the Confederates fire on this ship?
3. Following the death of John Wilkes Booth, where was his body kept until its burial? What other vessel was used for temporary incarceration of the Lincoln conspirators?
4. Who commanded the CSS *Merrimack* in this first battle of the ironclads? Who took command when he was wounded?
5. Which former U.S. Navy lieutenant and veteran of the Mexican War commanded the CSS *Sumter* and made eighteen captures of Union ships in 6 months? Which more famous vessel did he later command?
6. Who commanded the USS *Monitor* in the battle with the CSS *Monitor* on March 9, 1862? Who took command when he was wounded?

Civil War Essentials - Alonzo Cushing – Federal Artillery Officer at Gettysburg

Alonzo Cushing (1841-1863) served as a Union artillery officer during the Civil War. Alonzo was born in Delafield, Wisconsin, and grew up in Fredonia, New York. All Cushing brothers served in the Union Army during the war. Brother Howard was killed during the Indian Wars of 1871.



Alonzo graduated from the West Point June class of 1861, when the War was really beginning. He excelled in the Union Army and was commissioned as a second and first lieutenant on the same day. He was brevetted as a major after Chancellorsville.

The Battle of Gettysburg

Major Cushing served heroically during the Battle of Gettysburg as Commander of Battery A, 4th U.S. Artillery. He was wounded three times on July 3rd. First, a shell fragment went straight through his shoulder. A second shell fragment tore into his abdomen and groin, a serious wound. He held his intestines in place with his hands as he continued to command his battery.

After all this, a higher-ranking officer said, “*Cushing, go to the rear.*” Cushing refused to leave as he had only a few men left. His severe wounds left him unable to yell his orders above the loud sound of battle. Sargeant Fuger, passed along his commands to the remaining men.

Major Cushing passed away at Gettysburg when another bullet entered his mouth and exited the back of his skull. He was only 22 years old.

He was posthumously honored for gallantry and received a brevet promotion to lieutenant colonel.

He was buried in the West Point Cemetery.

Medal of Honor – Awarded in 2014



Cushing was nominated for the Medal of Honor in the late 1980’s by a letter writing campaign by Margaret Zerwekh, a constituent of Senator William Proxmire of Wisconsin.

Margaret lived on property that was once owned by Alonzo’s father in Delafield, Wisconsin. She spent years researching his background.

Finally, other Wisconsin legislators were able to get the U.S. Army to approve the nomination in 2010. Cushing then received his Medal 147 years after his death. However, the Medal was delayed for two years by Senator Jim Webb, (D-Virginia). Finally, President Obama presented Alonzo’s surviving family his well-earned medal on November 6, 2014, 151 years after Major Cushing’s death.

Quiz Answers:

1. Hampton Roads, Virginia. The men were John A. Campbell, Robert M.T. Hunter, and Vice-President Alexander Stephens. Mr. Campbell was a Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court from 1853 to 1861.
2. *Star of the West* Morris Island and Fort Moultrie
3. The ironclad *Montauk* and the monitor *Saugus*
4. The Confederate commanders were Franklin Buchanan and Catesby R. Jones
5. Raphael Semmes and *CSS Alabama*
6. Union officer John L. Worden and Samuel Dana Gross