

WE WILL HAVE OUR THIRD MEETING OF 2021 ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2021, AT 6:30 PM IN THE BASEMENT OF THE FARMINGTON LIBRARY – (corner of Grand River and Farmington Road)! Tom Nanzig from Ann Arbor will return as our guest speaker!

Jeanie Graham has reserved the Farmington Library meeting room for 2022. The last Monday of each month except for May (one week earlier because of Memorial Day) and October and December (we do not meet during those months). We plan to be on our field trip during October 2022.

It is a good idea to bring a mask to the meeting. The Roundtable will have masks available for your use.

Our November speaker is our long-time friend from Ann Arbor, Tom Nanzig, who will speak on “Ten More True Tales . . . With A Twist”. For more than 25 years Tom has been writing an “Ask the Colonel” column, a collection of



trivia articles, for his CWRT newsletters, including for the Ann Arbor Roundtable. Tom has searched through dozens of these columns to come up with ten Civil War stories. Photographs will introduce each story to give our audience progressive clues as to the direction of each tale that has a twist. Audience participation is encouraged. We really enjoyed Tom’s presentation in Part 1 of these “Tales with a Twist”.

Tom was born and raised in Grand Rapids, MI. His lifetime interest began in 1960 when his family went on a field trip to Gettysburg. He has written three Civil War books, has served as an officer for Civil War Round Tables in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Michigan. He was an avid hunter for Civil War relics when he lived near Virginia’s Civil War battlefields. Tom has degrees education and library degrees from Michigan State University, University of Michigan, and the College of William and Mary (Virginia).

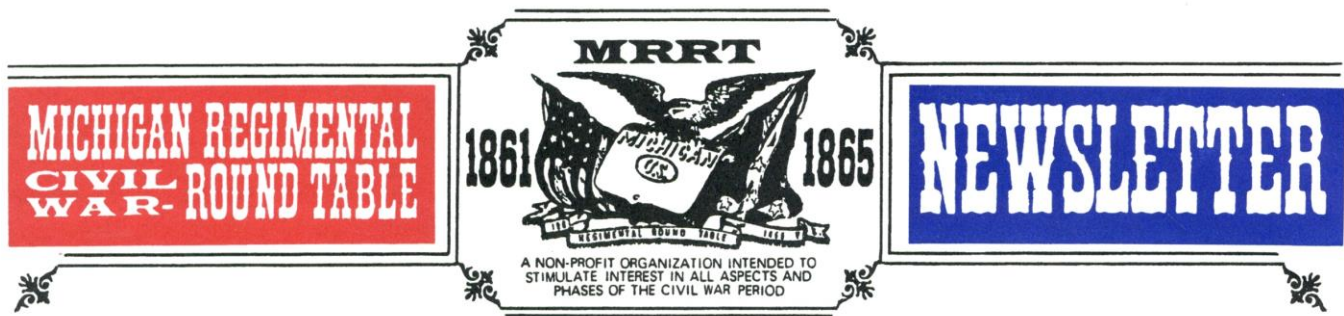
We will all enjoy this educational and entertaining presentation.

Please visit our great website at <http://www.farmlib.org//mrrt>. Links to interesting Civil War programs are available. Gerald Furi of the Farmington Library is doing a terrific job keeping the website up to date.

The Roundtable is most appreciative of President Lincoln/Ron Carley’s fascinating presentation of interesting facts about U.S. Presidents. It was particularly laudable as Ron was only given a week to prepare because of the recent resumption of the MRRT’s meetings. As he had on his last appearance before the MRRT, Ron cast his talk as if the President had visited the Library of Congress in order to learn about his counterparts. Among the trivia facts he discussed were:

- **George Washington** was the wealthiest president to enter the office. His fortune was primarily based on the sale of whiskey.
- **Andrew Jackson** was the first president to be the target of a would-be assassin.
- Before the era of Ambrose Burnside and the Civil War, sideburns like those sported by **Martin Van Buren**, were called side whiskers.
- **George W. Bush** completed a marathon.





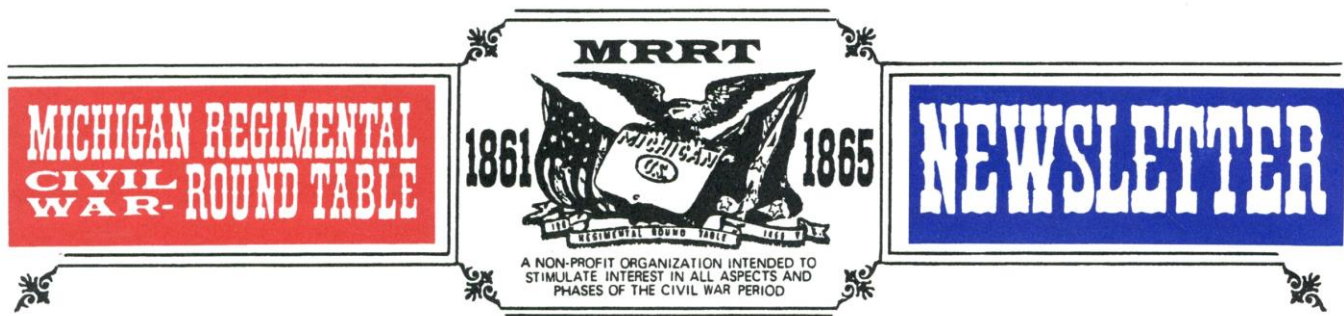
- The last Whig president was **Millard Fillmore**. Many Whigs, including **Lincoln**, joined the Republican Party after the Whig Party collapsed.
- **Gerald R. Ford**, from Michigan, was the only president who was not elected president or vice-president.
- **Washington** was the first president to appear on a postage stamp.
- **Harry Truman** was the first president to appear on television.
- **Theodore Roosevelt** was the first president to travel outside the country while in office. He traveled to see the construction of the Panama Canal.
- **Grover Cleveland** was the first to father a child while president.
- **William Taft** started the tradition of throwing out the first ball at the opening game of the baseball season. **Ronald Reagan** threw the first ball from the pitcher's mound instead of the stands.
- **Thomas Jefferson** and **John Adams** both died on July 4, 1826, exactly 50 years after the Declaration of Independence. **James Monroe** also died on July 4, 1831, five years later.
- **Theodore Roosevelt** was the youngest man to enter the office of president (after McKinley's assassination); **John F. Kennedy** was the youngest man to be *elected* president.
- **Lincoln** was the tallest president (**LBJ** was nearly as tall) and **Madison** was the shortest.
- **Lincoln** first appeared on the penny in 1909, one hundred years after his birth.
- Brooks Brothers and Johnson & Murphy have had long histories as suppliers of presidential suits and shoes.
- **U.S. Grant** died of cancer a week after completing his memoirs.
- **Lincoln** signed the Secret Service Act into law before leaving to go to Ford's Theater. The Secret Service was intended to deal with counterfeiting.
- **Lincoln** established the idea of the White House press corps.
- **Andrew Jackson** was the president when the U.S. last had no National Debt,
- **Lincoln** and naturalist Charles Darwin were born on the same day.
- **Lincoln** set aside the fourth Thursday of November as a day of Thanksgiving (see article below). **FDR** changed it to the third Thursday in the 1930's to provide more shopping days before Christmas.
- Many of **Lincoln's** public speeches have been preserved because shorthand had been invented just before his presidency.

Ron also recounted how he first portrayed Lincoln (at a Halloween costume party) and several memorable episodes he had experienced in the nine years he has been doing this.

Quiz Questions: This month's questions pertain to the month of December.

1. On December 21, 1864, Federal forces occupied Savannah, Georgia. What famous note General Sherman send to President Lincoln the following day? Which Union general led the march into the city?
2. Which large battle in the Western Theater began on December 31, 1862? Which Confederate cavalry general rode his troops completely around the Federal Army capturing wagons and supplies at this battle?
3. Which Confederate general committed suicide with a pistol bullet in his temple on December 26, 1861? Why did he do this?
4. On December 6, 1864, who did President Lincoln name as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court? Who did he replace?
5. On December 4, 1861, which member of the U.S. Senate was expelled by a vote of 36-0? And five days later, on December 9. Which infamous committee did the Senate create by a vote of 33-3?

Our thanks to "Old Sarge" for his help with these great questions.



Civil War Essentials – Thanksgiving 1864

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed that Americans should observe a day of thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday of each November. The idea of a national day to give thanks had been proposed prior to the war, notably by an influential female author and editor named Sarah Josepha Hale (who penned the nursery rhyme “Mary Had a Little Lamb”). The terrible conflict had given the idea a fresh impetus.

The proclamation did not include any reference to providing a special celebratory meal for the Union soldiers and sailors, but the idea sprung to the minds of a number of northerners at the same time. Prominent among these was George W. Blunt, a wealthy New Yorker, who proposed to provide the Union military personnel in Virginia, “*with poultry and pies, or puddings, all cooked, ready for use*”. Blunt thought it “*would be a grand sight to see that army of brave men, loyal to the flag, feeding on the good things of the land they have fought for*”. Blunt enlisted other wealthy members of New York City’s Union League Club to provide and solicit donations of cooked poultry, meats, pies, and other foods to be forwarded to the troops for a proper feast on November 24th.

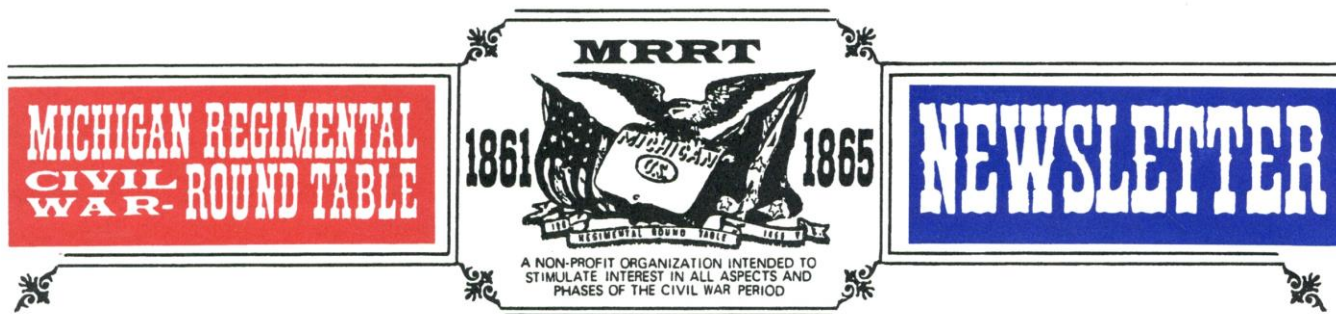


Blunt’s idea was picked up quickly by others across the northern states. Individuals, churches, civic organizations, sanitary commissions, restaurants (including *Delmonico’s*—the most fashionable eatery in New York City) and freight companies provided money, food, cooking facilities and delivery to enable the event to succeed – all without any real central coordination! Some donations were aimed at specific military units – as an example, the “*Soldiers Aid*” of Norwich, Connecticut sent hundreds of turkeys and chickens, 200 pies and an endless list of other comestibles to regiments from Connecticut. Most, however, were simply sent to support any and all of the men in uniform. The army authorities were initially not enthusiastic since they would have to undertake the final stages of delivery in the war zone, but they soon saw the very positive morale benefits. **The exact amount of food ultimately delivered is unknown**

but enormous. For example, 4 steamers left New York harbor in the week before carrying 400,000 boxes and barrels to City Point, the main supply depot of the Army of the Potomac. Other shipments went to naval vessels and to Union forces elsewhere.

General Sherman and his army were marching across Georgia and in the process, creating their own movable feast courtesy of the farms and plantations that they passed so they did not receive their share in November. Some other Yankees out west, including those defending Nashville, did get some of the windfall but it appears that the principal beneficiaries were in the East.

The soldiers soon received the word from newspapers and letters that the food was going to be sent to them. Most responded with enthusiasm but some, and some other observers, were skeptics. The *New York Times* reporter covering the Army of the Potomac wrote on November 23rd “*I am afraid that the bounty of the Northern people will be sadly diverted from those for whom it is especially intended. My past experience has taught me a sad lesson*”. This attitude was reinforced in some units when logistical issues delayed the delivery of some or all of the food for one or more days.



The 48th Pennsylvania Infantry, the men who had dug the mine exploded creating the infamous “Crater” near Petersburg, received nothing on the 24th. The cynics concluded that their feast had been waylaid by someone (commissary personnel were usually the prime suspects). A soldier named Tilney bitterly complained in his diary that all his company received on the 24th were some apples. Only a few chickens and two mince pies arrived the next day. On Sunday, however, they finally received a large quantity of poultry and other delicacies. Private Tilney happily conclude that they had feasted on the “*installment plan*”. **It appears that most of the food did eventually arrive. To men used to a diet of weevilly hardtack and salted meat, even food which was perhaps past its prime was still a delicacy.**

Some parcels had notes from people who had provided the food which the soldiers frequently answered with thanks. Most observers concluded that the boost in the soldiers’ morale was well worth the effort. Many men expressed the belief that the food represented a reassurance that they had not been forgotten by those back home. **One Union soldier wrote “It isn’t the turkey. But the idea that we care for.”**

The word also reached the Confederates and their official position as rendered by the southern press was predictably negative. Nonetheless, General Lee granted the enemy an unofficial ceasefire on November 24th. **Some people in the South were inspired to try to duplicate the feast for their army in the Richmond area.** At first it was planned for Christmas but slipped to January 2, 1865. As had been the case in the North, a lot of people and organizations participated in the effort. **A Richmond newspaper predicted that the meal would bring deserters and malingerers back into the ranks.** The Yankees in turn granted the Rebels an unofficial ceasefire on January 2nd. **The results were disappointing.** Despite the high expectations created by the Richmond newspapers, most soldiers received very little food. There were suspicions among the other regiments that the Virginia units were given more and better food than they received. All of the troops were convinced that speculators had stolen much of the food. The validity of either accusation remains unclear. The lack of success is more likely due to the depleted food reserves the Confederacy had left. Especially around Richmond, by the end of 1864.

The tradition of a special Thanksgiving meal for U.S. combat troops was thus born during the Civil War.

Quiz Answers:

1. *“I beg to present you, as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah...”* General John W. Geary led the XX Corps into Savannah.
2. Stone’s River and General Joseph Wheeler
3. Philip St. George Cocke and no one knows for sure.
4. Salmon Chase and Roger B. Taney of the Dred Scout decision fame.
5. Former Vice-President John Breckinridge and the Committee on the Conduct of the War.

Civil War Nuggets – Christmas

The officers of the 20th Tennessee Infantry on Christmas Day bought a barrel of whiskey for their men. One of the soldiers reported, *“We had many a drunken fight and knock-down before the day closed”*. Fortunately, no one was seriously injured. After the men sobered up, everyone was friendly, and perhaps, the soldiers actually got in a little more preparation that might be useful fighting the Federals.

In Nashville, TN in 1862 Colonel John Beatty of the 3rd Ohio Infantry tried to make the best of a Christmas away from home. *“At the expense of one dollar and seventy-five cents, I procured a small turkey and had a Christmas dinner, he wrote, “but it lacked the collaterals, and was a failure”*.