



**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** Because of scheduling conflicts, our January meeting, normally held on the last Monday of the month, has been moved to **MONDAY, JANUARY 5**. A few other months in the upcoming year will be changed as well. Be sure to check the Newsletter each month for the rescheduled dates. The meeting time and place should, however, remain the same: Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road) starting at 6:30 P.M.

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When newly-elected President Abraham Lincoln and his family moved into the Executive Mansion on March 4, 1861, they found the building somewhat overwhelming. It consisted of thirty-one rooms with the East Room alone about the size of their entire residence back in Springfield. Mrs. Lincoln found much of the house in disrepair—furniture broken down, wallpaper peeling, carpeting worn, draperies torn, the eleven basement rooms filthy and rat-infested. Mary Todd, a strong-minded woman, took it upon herself to refurbish the place with the \$20,000 Congress had appropriated for the renovation.

The First Lady traveled to New York and Philadelphia to buy furnishings suitable for the mansion. Merchants gladly welcomed her, showing her the finest and most expensive carpeting, draperies, furniture, and china. She took special care in redesigning the guest bedroom, repapering it with light purple wallpaper figured with gold roses. Mary also ordered the ornately carved seven-foot rosewood bed that has since become known as the ‘*Lincoln bed*.’ It was framed in the most elegant of canopies, made of purple silk trimmed with gold lace gathered together at the headboard in a gold coronet. For the other rooms Mary purchased chairs, sofas, hassocks, expensive fabrics of damask and brocade, imported wallpaper from France, and a full set of Haviland china in “Solferino and gold.” For the Red Room she ordered 117 yards of crimson Wilton carpet, and for the East Room, an imported Brussels velvet carpet, pale green in color. Returning to Washington, she personally oversaw the scrubbing, painting, and plastering of the entire White House.

Unfortunately for Mary, the bills began arriving, and by December she discovered that she had exceeded the Congressional appropriation by \$6,700. In desperation she asked the Commissioner of Public Buildings, who kept the White House accounts, to explain the situation to the President and to ask him to sponsor a supplementary Congressional appropriation. Mr. Lincoln was furious. He absolutely refused such an idea. “*It would stink in the nostrils of American people,*” he declared, “*to have it said that the President of the United States had approved a bill overrunning an appropriation of \$20,000 for flub dubs for this damned old house, when the soldiers cannot have blankets.*” Rather than ask Congress for more money, he vowed to pay for Mary’s purchases out of his own pocket. Eventually, Congress quietly passed two deficiency appropriations to cover Mary Lincoln’s expenditures.

This month we are once again honored to have MRRT member Weldon Petz as our guest speaker. Weldon has become a fixture as our January presenter, and his program is “*A Pilgrimage With Abraham Lincoln*.” Of the thousands of talks that Weldon has given over nearly six decades, this is the program he started out with in 1947 at the Westlawn Methodist Church in Detroit. Weldon will speak on Lincoln’s genealogy and life to the Ford’s Theater assassination by showing a variety of historical objects including the Lincoln hands and mask made by sculptor Leonard Volk. Human interest stories such as the Grace Bedell letter will be told, and slides will be shown to enhance the presentation. It’s one you absolutely do not want to miss. Circle the date now: **MONDAY, JANUARY 5**.

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Our thanks to November speaker, **Marty Brosnan**, for his excellent program, “*History’s Mysteries*.” In case you missed it, Marty thoroughly examined four questions: How did Lincoln’s death chair at Ford’s Theater end up in Dearborn, Michigan? Where is John Wilkes Booth’s body? Why was Stonewall Jackson’s raincoat, the one he wore the night he was mortally wounded, taken to Scotland? Where is Libby Prison? Another outstanding program by Marty.



**QUIZ: All questions pertain to the month of December.....**

1. On December 20, 1860, the Vice President named a committee in the Senate to organize a possible compromise. Name the Vice President and the title of the committee. [Extra credit: Which of the following people did not serve on the committee? Jefferson Davis, Robert Toombs, Stephen Douglas, William Seward, Ben Wade?]
2. 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?
3. Which slave state did the Confederate Congress admit into the Confederacy on December 10, 1861? And, on the following day, December 11, President Lincoln attended the Senate memorial services for which fallen officer and Senator from Oregon?
4. Which Confederate general committed suicide with a pistol bullet in his temple on December 26, 1861? And, why did he do this?
5. On December 6, 1862, President Lincoln ordered the execution of 39 Indians of 303 convicted for a bloody uprising. What tribe were they from, and where did the execution take place?
6. Which large battle in the Western Theater began on December 31, 1862? And, which Confederate cavalry general rode his troopers completely around the Federal Army capturing wagons and supplies at this battle?
7. Which general was replaced by Joseph E. Johnston as the commander of the Confederate forces in the West on December 16, 1863? And, on the same day which Federal soldier was promoted to the rank of major general a few hours before he died of typhoid?
8. On December 6, 1864, who did President Lincoln name as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court? And, who did he replace?
9. On December 21, 1864, Federal forces occupied Savannah, Georgia. Whose XXth Corps led the march into the city? And, what famous note did William Sherman send Lincoln on the following day?
10. On December 18, 1865, which Amendment to the Constitution became official? And, on the same what amount of money did Congress agree to give Mrs. Lincoln?

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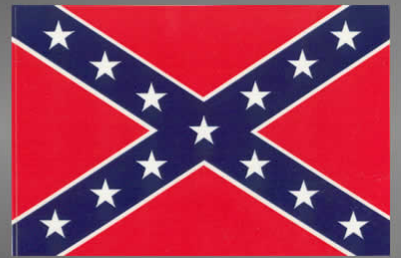
On Sunday, February 1, Al Oakes will again hold the “*Annual History and Military Memorabilia Show.*” Please make a note of the new address: 2299 W. 12 Mile Road in Berkley, (between Coolidge and Woodward, across from the cemetery). Featured items include antique arms, a variety of Civil War paraphernalia, battlefield finds, Indian artifacts, swords, and much more. This promises to be the biggest and best show thus far. Further details will be provided at this month’s meeting. You may contact Al at 248-541-8037.

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Some Christmas stories from the Civil War....

On Christmas Day in 1860, a diarist in Camden, Arkansas sadly wrote: “*Another Christmas has come around in the circle of time but it is not a day of rejoicing. Some of the usual ceremonies are going on, but there is a gloom on the thoughts and countenance of all the better portion of our people.*”

In Nashville in 1862 Colonel John Beatty of the Third 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.*” Colonel Hans Heg of the Fifteenth Wisconsin spent a more boisterous evening. Invited to a Christmas party in an appropriate schoolhouse near camp, Heg and the brigade surgeon dressed two of the soldiers as women, and the colonel made an entrance “*just as if I had a lady on my arm....We kept the*



*house roaring for a good long time.”* Heg thought his men jolly that night despite rumors of an impending advance; perhaps his merry disposition, made merrier by the free-flowing liquor, prevented him from seeing things as they really were. Colonel Charles Manderson of the Nineteenth Ohio had a different viewpoint of the evening. Homesickness crept into all efforts by his men at merrymaking, until it became the “*all-pervading complaint.*” As Manderson observed from his tent: “*The men gathered about the camp fires during the evening hours with abortive attempts at merriment, soon to be given up, and then to talk in whispers of friends and family and home. The bugle calls, holding out the promise that balmy sleep might bring forgetfulness, were welcomed; although tattoo seemed a wail, and lights-out a sob.*”

In the opposing army the officers of the Twentieth Tennessee Infantry on Christmas Day bought a barrel of whiskey for the men. The result was not too merry. One soldier of the regiment reported: “*We had many a drunken fight and knock-down before the day closed.*” Nobody was seriously injured. When the men sobered up, everybody was friendly and, perhaps, the soldiers had gotten in a little more preparation that would be helpful for combat.

The Christmas season was certainly not a pleasant one for Captain Jim Womack of the Sixteenth Tennessee Infantry. His diary reveals that he was evidently depressed much of the time. The worst came on December 17, when he finally got an opportunity to ride to McMinnville to visit his sister Martha, who had been sick for several days. He arrived to learn that she had died only days before. Womack, himself, took a bullet in his right arm only a few days later at the Battle of Stones River.

The Social highlight of Christmas at Murfreesboro was the gala ball at the town square, given on Christmas Eve by the First Louisiana and Sixth Kentucky regiments. The new courthouse was elaborately decorated. To soldier Spencer Talley the ball was “*a most delightful time. We had the best band of musicians in the army and our table was loaded with the best things that Murfreesboro could afford.*” Reports of the ball reached the Union army in Nashville where it was said that the arrogant Rebels had spread the United States flag upon the floor, the drunken revelers doubly desecrating “*Old Glory*” by dancing upon it.

## QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. John Breckinridge and the Committee of Thirteen [Trick question: all were members of this committee]
2. John Breckinridge and the Committee on the Conduct of the War
3. Kentucky and his good friend, Edward Baker (killed at Ball’s Bluff)
4. Philip St. George Cocke and no one knows for certain
5. Santee Sioux and Mankato, Minnesota on December 26 [only 38 were hanged as one received a reprieve earlier]
6. Stone’s River and Joseph Wheeler
7. William Hardee and John Buford
8. Salmon Chase and Roger B. Taney
9. John W. Geary and “I beg to present you, as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah....”
10. Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery and \$25,000 [a more generous proposal of \$100,000 was voted down]

Another reminder of our changed meeting date: **MONDAY, JANUARY 5**; make a note so you won’t forget. Weldon Petz will present “A Pilgrimage With Abraham Lincoln.” It’s at the Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road). The meeting will begin at 6:30 P.M. Get there early to reacquaint yourselves with the other members. And try our website: <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.

*Have a safe and Happy Holiday Season!*