

## MEMBER RENEWAL

The MRRT is celebrating its 57<sup>th</sup> year in 2017 – and this month is a great time to show your support by renewing your membership (or becoming a new member!). Membership remains \$20 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](mailto:29835); or simply bought to the meeting and given to Jeanie. Cash is always welcomed.

Our Monday, February 27, 2017 meeting begins at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library with member Bill Christen sharing with us the story of “The Curtis Brothers of Connecticut”. Please visit our website at <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt>

The February meeting will include the PRELIMINARY vote for our fall trip destination. Several sites were suggested as possible destinations during the January meeting. Gettysburg Chattanooga and Chickamauga Shiloh and Corinth Franklin and Stones River The FINAL vote will be at the March meeting.

We will vote for new officers at our February meeting!

### The Roundtable welcomes back member Bill Christen, who will speak on “The Curtis Brothers of Connecticut”.

Bill has continued his Civil War research with the cataloging and transcribing over 700 pages of documents related to the 1860 Curtis family of Connecticut. Three Curtis brothers, Frederick, John, and Elliot fought in many major battles and John Curtis was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions at Baton Rouge. Several letters were from close relatives and friends. Most of the letters were kept in a barrel more than 150 years old that descendent James Bond (real name) gained possession of in 2010. The letters provide great insight into Civil War life at home and in the army.

Bill is a retired automotive engineer with General Motors. He and his wife, Glenna Jo, have been involved with Civil War reenacting and collecting photographs and clothing of the era for over thirty five years. Bill wrote a book, *Pauline Cushman, Spy of the Cumberland*. His most recent presentation to the Roundtable was *A Photograph of the 17<sup>th</sup> Michigan*. Bill and Glenna Jo have led workshops on 19<sup>th</sup> Century clothing and other aspects of civilian life, including dating photographs. Bill and his wife reside in Chelsea, Michigan.



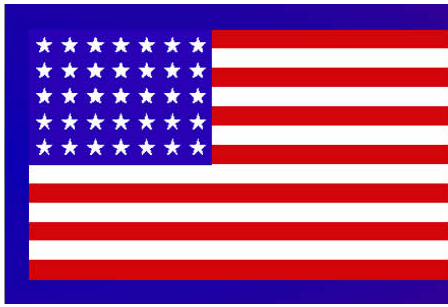
### The Michigan Regimental Round Table enjoyed Michael Gillett’s presentation “Thomas Nast & the Civil War

Cartoonists” which included an interesting selection of cartoons from the era. Mike, a retired pastor and a re-enactor, is also a cartoonist himself. He noted that cartoons started as a preliminary sketch done by a painter prior to beginning a portrait of a person. They soon changed however to a satirical way to make a statement.

In an era when photographs could not yet be reproduced in newspapers, cartoons were often the only visual representation of a public figure to which the average person had access. The cartoons were printed from woodcuts developed from the original drawings. They generally appeared in weekly newspapers rather than dailies because of the work and costs involved. Cartoonists have always projected their own (or their newspaper’s) views on an individual or subject by the way they portrayed them. They exaggerated a person’s key characteristic, like

Richard Nixon’s nose or Lincoln’s long legs and big ears, if they wanted to ridicule the subject. In the case of a hated figure like Lincoln was to southern cartoonists, the caricature could become grotesque. The knowledgeable reader





could often find telling nuances in the details of a cartoon not apparent at first glance. On the other hand, cartoonists tended to project familiar racial or ethnic stereotypes even when these images were inaccurate.

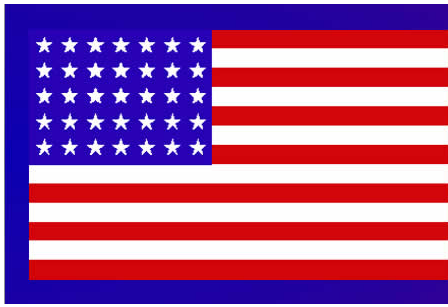
Thomas Nast was born in Germany in 1840 and moved to New York in the late 1840s. His first published cartoons appeared in 1859 in *Harper's Weekly*. **He went on to create or enhance many now-famous images such as the GOP elephant or Uncle Sam in striped trousers and top hat.** He created the popular image of Santa Claus and used that image in a powerful wartime cartoon where Santa (dressed in US flag garb) is seen handing out gifts to Union soldiers. **He was a strong supporter of President Lincoln and the Union cause during the war.** His personal bias against Irish people and against Roman Catholics sometimes came out in his cartoons. **The power of his post-war cartoons was such that one target, New York City's Boss Tweed, tried to buy him off with a huge bribe which Nast refused.** There were numerous other cartoonists on both sides of the conflict and also British cartoonists for notable publications like *Punch* who drew many clever cartoons about the war in the US.



**MRRT Minutes for January 30, 2017: Call to Order** 6:45 pm, about 25 present for business meeting **Pledge** Dedicated to the Navy Seal killed in Yemen. **Introduction of Guests and New Members** Guest Earl Baxtresser, who found us on the internet, and Dennis Crothers **Treasurer's Report** Jeanie Graham will be back next month. **Secretary's Report** accepted **Preservation** Fort Wayne received \$400,000 to tear down the buildings that they cannot restore. No one knows yet what the new bridge will mean to Fort Wayne. The Kresge Foundation has pledged \$265,000 for expanded cultural opportunities at the Fort. The Civil War Trust held a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Gettysburg on October 28, 2016 to unveil the restored General Lee's Headquarters. The Civil War Trust is continuing to preserve various battlefields. The latest efforts include 7 battlefields in both the East and West. **Newsletters** Bob read from the Toledo Mini Bulletin, Indianapolis Hardtack, Cincinnati Canister and Cleveland Charger **Website** Updated monthly **Program** None **Items of Interest** CSpan 3 have some Civil War related shows on the weekend. George recommended **Essays on the Civil War and Reconstruction.** **New Business** Gary Pritchard has agreed to become Vice President. George has been coffee sergeant for over 20 years and Mollie has been Secretary for 15 years. We need new people to be involved with the Roundtable. **Old Business** None

**Quiz Questions: This month's questions and answers pertain to "The Medal of Honor".**

1. Who was the first winner(s) of the Congressional Medal of Honor?
2. What was the significance of Mary Edwards Walker?
3. Which Civil War soldier was awarded the Medal of Honor in 2014?
4. What was the connection to the Medal of Honor of the 27<sup>th</sup> Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment?
5. Why was it easier to win the Medal of Honor during the Civil War than it is today?



### Orlando Poe- adopted Michigan Hero

**Orlando Poe was an officer in the Union Army, commanded a Michigan regiment, and, before and after the war, a respected engineering officer whose name is forever associated with Michigan.** Poe, however, was not a native Michigander.

Orlando Metcalfe Poe was born in 1832 near Canton, Ohio. At school, he showed signs of intelligence, especially in mathematics. As a teenager, he dreamed of a military officer's career which meant going to West Point. He managed to secure an appointment after the original district appointee flunked out.

The Academy he joined in 1852 was already riven with the tension growing between North and South. West Point, although one of few real engineering colleges in the nation, was constantly under suspicion by Jacksonian Democrats of being anything from a waste of taxpayer money to a threat to democratic principles. Poe's views on slavery and his Ohio birthplace earned him enmity from southern cadets as "a damned abolitionist".

**Poe graduated sixth out of the 1856 class of forty three** and joined the topographical engineering corps ("topogs" were separate from the Corps of Engineers in the pre-war army). **His pre-war assignment was in Michigan helping to chart the 6000+ miles of Great Lakes. Poe was particularly adept at calculating location from astronomical observations. Poe would spend a lot of time in Detroit during this period. George G. Meade, in charge of the survey from 1857 to 1861, noted the precision and enhanced methodology Poe brought to his work. At a party in Detroit, Poe met Eleanor Brent, his future wife.**



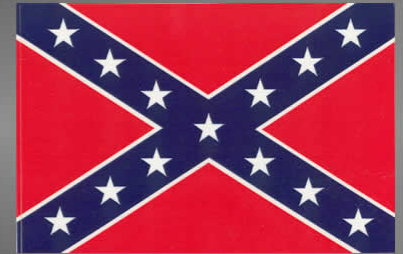
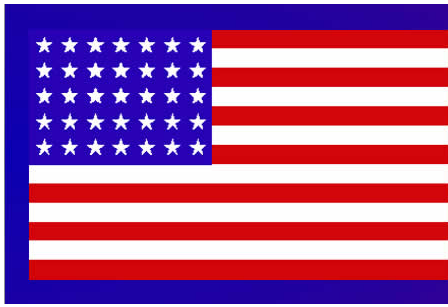
Poe, foreseeing how events would transpire, wrote a January 1861 letter to Ohio Gov. Dennison offering his help to help suppress the rebellion. But Dennison replied that he was still hoped trouble could be averted. Soon Dennison's attitude changed. He appointed George McClellan to be head of Ohio troops and "Little Mac" met Poe and requested that he be added to his staff. **Poe's initial assignment was to collect information about the situation in northern Kentucky.** Poe then returned to Detroit on leave and married Eleanor.

**Too soon, he returned to war and helped McClellan plan the Rich Mountain campaign in the future state of West Virginia. This small victory was his first taste of actual warfare. After Bull Run, McClellan was called to Washington and Lt. Orlando Poe went with him. Poe was kept busy laying out camps for the shattered Union army and designing some of the forts intended to protect the city. After serving on McClellan's staff, Poe took command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Michigan,** a unit that had shown indiscipline since its formation. His regular army ways were initially not welcomed by these soldiers, but they came to value his leadership as they entered battle. Little Mac's Peninsular Campaign began in March 1862 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> was in the Yorktown and Seven Pines battles. At Seven Pines, the 2<sup>nd</sup> lost heavily after being ordered to advance across an open field to no purpose. During the idle periods of the early campaign, Poe attempted to pursue promotion to regular army Captain. Here, and in the future, he would be frustrated by army and Congressional politics. On return from sick leave in August 1862, Poe was given temporary command of the brigade which included the 2<sup>nd</sup>. **At Second Bull Run, Poe's command formed the extreme right of Pope's army and missed the bulk of the fighting.** After Pope's retreat back to Washington, the brigade remained as part of the defenses during the Antietam battle in September. Poe's brigade, which now included two other Michigan regiments, was then transferred to Burnside's old Ninth Corps now under Gen. Orlando Willcox of Michigan.

### Quiz Answers:

1. The first Medals of Honor were given to many of the participants in the Andrews' Railroad Road. James Andrews did not receive one because he was a civilian and thus ineligible at the time.
2. Dr. Mary Edwards Walker, a surgeon, became the only woman to win the Medal of Honor.





3. President Obama awarded the Medal of Honor to Union Army First Lieutenant Alonzo Cushing on November 6, 2014, 151 years after his actions at the Battle of Gettysburg
4. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton promised a Medal of Honor to every member of the 27<sup>th</sup> Maine who reenlisted in the unit. Eventually, all 864 members of the regiment received a Medal because there was no official list of names. An Army Review Board revoked all of these medals in 1916, as well as others.
5. During the Civil War, the Medal of Honor was the **only** military decoration available. As a result, it was awarded for reasons that would not satisfy the stringent modern criteria.

**Civil War Essentials – Dentistry** The dental profession was in its infancy when the Civil War started. The first dental school, the Baltimore College of Dentistry, opened in 1840 with five students. By 1860, there were 400 graduates from 3 dental schools practicing across the country. Far more numerous were “dentists” who traveled from town to town, treating patients who had no way of knowing whether they were competent or quacks. Most were quacks.

**Union Dental Care – During the 1850’s the U.S. Army was unable to create a dental corps because the necessary funding was denied by the U.S. Congress. As a result, there was no formal Union military dental care during the entire war. The high command did not even distribute toothbrushes to the soldiers.** The soldiers had to rely on medical surgeons and stewards, most of whom had no dental experience.

Dr. John McQuillen, wrote in the Dental Journal in December 1861 that “*It is extremely doubtful whether one out of ten can diagnose between an aching and sound tooth. . .*” Surgeons would make matters worse for their patients with careless tooth extractions. The surgeon’s normal equipment was inadequate for dental work.

**Lieutenant Ziba Graham of the 16<sup>th</sup> Michigan had to have a tooth pulled out (without anesthetic) shortly after fighting on Little Round Top during the Battle of Gettysburg.** He wrote that the surgeon “*who had been hard at work all night on the amputation table, made but short work and little ado about one tooth. He laid me on the ground, straddled me, and with a formidable pair of nippers pulled and yanked me around until either the tooth had to come out, or my head off. . . I then made up my mind to never to go to a surgeon for a tooth-pulling matinee the day after a fight*”.

**Union soldiers would consult civilian dentists when available. The capture of Savannah, Georgia by General Sherman’s army resulted in numerous soldiers going to dentists in the town.** One dentist remarked that the emergency cases alone “*would have required 100 dentists to work six months on these soldiers.*” If the soldier was unable to pay for the dental work out of his own pocket he would have to go to the regimental surgeon.

**The term “4F” derived from Civil War dental concerns.** Union soldiers that lacked the four front incisors were disqualified from military service because they had to tear open cartridges with their teeth to load muskets. These men were the first to be classified “4F” because of the four missing teeth. The term “4F” came to mean exemption from military service for any physical disability.

**Dentists and dental groups unsuccessfully tried to provide care for Union soldiers.** There was little success in convincing dentists to join military dental units. **The U.S. military did not create a dental unit until 1911.**

Dr. James Garretson, the “Father of Oral Surgery” offered his services to the military. Surgeon General William Hammond turned down Dr. Garretson’s efforts to be appointed as surgeon in charge at the military hospital in Red Bank, New Jersey, stating “*Your request cannot be granted, as the Red Bank hospital is to be placed in charge of a surgeon of regular service*”.

