



This month **Bob Myers**, the curator of the Berrien County Historical Association, will present a one-man show, *“Hard Bread and Coffee,”* based on the life of Corporal Martin W. Stafford of Niles. Stafford enlisted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Michigan Volunteer Infantry at the beginning of the war and served in campaigns in Virginia, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Stafford’s story is that of the common soldier, and his views on politics, culture and the everyday events of a soldier’s life, will be presented by Myers. *“I’ll be focusing on the things that were of greatest concern to the soldiers: events at home, worry about families, food, the boredom of army life and friends in the regiment,”* Myers states. *“I talk a little about the First Battle of Bull Run, but really don’t dwell on combat; soldiers spent relatively little time in battle and didn’t like to talk about it anyway.”*

Corporal Stafford was involved throughout most of the war, and through Myers, is able to describe what an individual soldier would have experienced. *“Martin Stafford was a common soldier,”* says Myers, *“but then so were 99.9 percent of the people who endured the Civil War.”* Myers has portrayed his character for eighteen years and continues to research the time and events surrounding the Civil War so that he can add new material to the program. There is no set script, therefore every presentation is unique to each audience.

Myers earned a master’s degree in history from Western Michigan University. He works as curator of the Berrien County Historical Association’s 1839 Courthouse Museum. His publications include several books on local history, most recently *Adeline and Julia: Growing Up in Michigan and on the Kansas Frontier* (Michigan State University Press, 2000) and *Lost on the Lakes: Shipwrecks of Berrien County, Michigan* (Andrews University Press, 2003). Bob has also published articles in Michigan History Magazine.

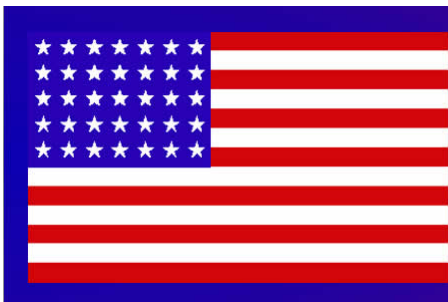
You’ll want to be in attendance for this one. So mark your calendar now for this unusual presentation: *“Hard Bread and Coffee,”* by **Bob Myers**. **MONDAY, APRIL 26.**

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If you weren’t at last month’s meeting, you missed a dandy. **Ron Cleveland’s** program, *“The Presentation Flag of Battery M, 1<sup>st</sup> Michigan Light Artillery,”* was exceptional. Not only did Ron give the history of the unit—with some intriguing characters and events—he also proudly displayed the original flag of Battery M. Ron concluded with several memorable slides (well, not all of them), and answered questions from an enthusiastic crowd. A terrific performance!

**ODDS & ENDS:**

- **FALL FIELD TRIP:** Last month 45 people signed up for the trip to Chattanooga/Chickamauga (Oct. 23-24). Assuming all of them go, this leaves little room on the bus for others. So if you’re interested in going, or you signed up and must cancel, see Jerry Maxwell at this month’s meeting. Jerry will also be collecting a first check for \$45 which will cover the costs of the bus rental, bus driver’s tip and lunches, Jim Ogden’s fees, lunches, and dinner, etc. Please make this check out to Jerry or Carroll Tietz [but give it to Jerry]. Another check will be collected in the future for the Saturday night dinner.
- Treasurer Carroll Tietz returns this month from his annual Florida trip. So, if you owe yearly dues or you’ve been carrying around coffee receipts, make sure you see Carroll and take care of these business items.

**QUIZ: All questions pertain to the Common Soldier**

1. What was a “dogrobber”? A) a company cook B) a common thief C) a poor quality pair of shoes D) a forager E) an undeserved rank F) a type of cannon blast And, what were tenaculum, raspators, catlins, and sounds? A) apparatus for artillery B) nicknames for foods C) types of musical instruments D) medical tools
2. What was unique about the 37<sup>th</sup> Iowa Infantry? And, the shortest Union soldier was in the 192<sup>nd</sup> Ohio Infantry. How tall was he at age 24 when he enlisted?
3. Approximately what percentage of Federal soldiers was foreign born? A) 10% B) 15% C) 20% D) 25% E) 30% And, approximately how many American Indians served in the Confederate forces? A) 6000 B) 17,000 C) 12,000 D) 20,000
4. What was a crude Confederate homemade shelter of brush and oilcloths arranged over a framework of poles called? And, what was the Dutch word, extremely common in the Civil War, meaning “to undertake low offices”?
5. What were the “Haystack,” “Hooker’s Headquarters,” “The Ironclad,” and “Madam Russell’s Bake Oven”? And, which Civil War soldier observed, “War is an organized bore”? A) Sam Watkins B) John Mosby C) Moxley Sorrell D) Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. E) Rice Bull
6. What were the standard shoes called, worn by both Confederates and Federals, which came slightly above the ankle and tied at the front? And, canned rations were first served in the Civil War. What did the soldiers call canned meat?
7. What were “gallinippers”? And, what were “wagon dogs”?
8. What was the most popular cannon of the war? And, what was the most commonly used bullet caliber?
9. What was the term for a mounted sentry on picket duty? And, who were called “goober grabbers”?
10. How much pay did a Union private receive per month in 1861? And, how much was a Confederate private’s pay at this time?

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Camp life, especially in the early part of the war, was indescribably filthy as new recruits gathered by the thousands without knowledge of sanitation. An inspector in late 1861 found most Federal camps “*littered with refuse, food and other rubbish, sometimes in an offensive state of decomposition; slops deposited in pits within the camp limits or thrown out broadcast; heaps of manure and offal close to the camp.*” In 1863 a Virginia soldier confided to his diary that “*on rolling up my bed this morning I found I had been lying in—I won’t say what—something though that didn’t smell like milk and peaches.*” It is not surprising that flies, lice and fleas swarmed all over the camps. “*I get vexed at them and commence killing them,*” one Confederate said of the flies, “*but as I believe 40 of them comes to every one’s funeral, I have given it up as a bad job.*”

Some soldiers joked that they found in their clothing lice with the letters *I.W.* engraved on their backs—evidence that the vermin were “*In for the War.*” Even in battle the men were conscious of their passengers. In one fight, a Yankee colonel was seen waving his sword with one hand while feverishly scratching himself with the other.

Although most men were revolted by the filth and the vermin, neither the troops nor their doctors understood the real peril—the bacteria and viruses carried to the soldiers by the insects. Thus carelessness compounded by ignorance led to devastating epidemics of dysentery and typhoid fever. Bowel disorders constituted the soldier’s most common complaint. Although numerous remedies were proscribed, not much could be done for the sufferers. A Southern minister wrote that chronic diarrhea seemed to break down the will power of the troops more than any other ailment of the War. “*The patients seemed to lose not only desire to live but all manliness and self-respect,*” he wrote. “*They whined and died in spite of all we could do.*” One Confederate surgeon stated in his diary that “*few soldiers ever had a natural or moulded*



*evacuation.*” Still the death rate from dysentery remained low compared with the toll from typhoid fever. Perhaps one fourth of non-combat deaths in both armies resulted from this disease, commonly called “*camp fever.*” One Connecticut soldier wrote of men who were “*staggering skeletons covered with fever sores, jabbering and muttering insanities, till they lie down and die.*”

Just as widespread, though less often fatal, was malaria. “*Poisonous vapors*” arising from stagnant water were blamed, and care was taken to camp upwind from swamps. The men did not, however, identify the real villain—the millions of mosquitoes bred in such waters and swarming in the air. “*We are more afraid of the ague than the enemy,*” wrote an Illinois soldier. In the 38<sup>th</sup> Iowa, 421 men out of 910 were either killed or incapacitated by the disease, and in the entire Federal Army, some one million cases of malaria would be reported during the War. Winter brought a respite from malaria, but it aggravated other maladies. During the winter of 1862-1863, a member of the 13<sup>th</sup> New Hampshire remembered: “*It is fearful to wake at night, and to hear the sounds made by the men about you. All night long the sounds go up of men coughing, breathing heavy and hoarse with half-choked throats, moaning and groaning with acute pain, a great deal of sickness and little help, near or in the future.*”

Severe winter weather often took unsuspecting lives on guard duty. In January of 1862 one of Stonewall Jackson’s soldiers reported that eleven men of the command froze to death at their posts. “*Two of them, a little in advance of the others, were standing with their guns in their hands, as cold and as hard frozen as a monument of marble—standing sentinel with loaded guns in their frozen hands!*” Seven months later, in a sweltering August heat wave, several members of the Stonewall Brigade would die of sunstroke on the march to the Battle of Cedar Mountain.

It hardly helped the soldier’s well-being that his food was often as unsanitary and vermin-ridden as his surroundings. “*We live so mean here the hard bread is all worms and the meat stinks like hell,*” complained one private, “*and rice two or three times a week & worms as long as your finger. I liked rice once but god damn the stuff now.*”

#### QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. A) a company cook and D) medical tools
2. Nicknamed the “Graybeards” it had 145 soldiers at age 60 or older and 3’ 4”
3. C) 20% and C) 12,000
4. “Shebang” and sutler
5. Four of the 450 bordellos in Washington D.C. and D) Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.
6. “Davis Boots” and “Embalmed Beef”
7. Nicknames for mosquitoes by Confederate soldiers and nickname for Confederate soldiers who pretended to be ill and dropped back to the wagon trains
8. 12-pound Napoleon and .58
9. Vidette and a nickname for Georgia soldiers who had a zest for peanuts
10. \$13 and \$11

And don’t forget to join us on **MONDAY, APRIL 26** for the **Bob Myers** one-man show, “*Hard Bread and Coffee*”—the story of Cpl. Martin W. Stafford of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Michigan Infantry. It promises to be a special evening. The meeting, held in the Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road), will begin at 6:30 P.M. Show up early for some extra fellowship.

And have a look see at our website: <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.