



## 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@northbrook.com); or simply bought to the meeting and given to Jeanie. Cash is always welcomed.

Our Monday, April 24, 2017 meeting begins at 6:30 pm in the basement of the Farmington Library with member Dr. Ernest Lawrence Abel, PhD sharing with us the fascinating story of “President Lincoln’s Assassin and the Women Who Loved Him”. Please visit our website at <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt>

The Roundtable has voted to visit Shiloh and Corinth this fall! Our outstanding trip committee has started working on the details of the trip.

The Roundtable welcomes member Dr. Ernest Lawrence Abel, PhD, who will speak on “Lincoln’s Assassin and the Women Who Loved Him”. During the early 1860’s John Wilkes Booth was the “sexiest man in America”. Women packed the audiences wherever he played as a Shakespearean actor. He was the first actor on record to have his clothes torn by women desiring something of him as a souvenir. When he was searched after dying, his belongings included a pocket diary and the photos of four stage actresses and the daughter of a United States Senator to whom he was engaged. Dr. Abel will discuss John’s background and what may have driven him to what is probably the most infamous crime in American history. Dr. Abel previously spoke to our Roundtable on “*A Finger in Lincoln’s Brian*”. He is a professor of psychology, obstetrics, and gynecology at Wayne State.



The Michigan Regimental Round Table wishes to express its appreciation to Dr. David Stoddard for his excellent presentation on the Red River Campaign. David was especially interested in this campaign because an ancestor, a

Union soldier, saw action during it. Dr. Stoddard concentrated on the Louisiana portion of the campaign; there was also an accompanying Arkansas campaign.

**The rationale for the campaign included the Union desire to recover Louisiana and Texas for the Union** - doing so would ensure France would not be tempted to recognize the Confederacy - as well as to acquire supplies of precious cotton believed to be available along the Red River for the hungry mills of New England. U. S. Grant did not believe it worthwhile but was overruled by Lincoln and Henry Halleck.

**The primary target was to be Shreveport near the Texas border with a possible further move into Texas if Shreveport was taken. It was not. The Union forces included an army under General Nathaniel Banks**, a New Englander with connections to the textile industry there. He saw the campaign as an opportunity to garner fame and further his political ambitions. **The Navy contributed a large fleet of heavily armed vessels under David D. Porter.** The two commanders distrusted each other and failed to cooperate during the

campaign. W. T. Sherman contributed some troops after his request to command the operation was denied.





**Gen. Edmond Kirby Smith** was overall Confederate commander in the area. A cautious man, he clashed with and impeded aggressive **Gen. Richard Taylor**, the local CSA leader, who actually directed the Confederate forces during the battles of the campaign.

The Union forces under Banks moved from New Orleans while the troops lent by Sherman originated in Vicksburg. The first action was the nearly bloodless capture of Fort DeRussy on March 10, 1864 followed by Alexandria 2 weeks later. Delays due to weather, cotton speculation and political activity followed. The Confederates suffered a loss of most of their Louisiana cavalry at Henderson's Hill. Lower water levels on the river forced Porter to leave several of his deeper draft vessels behind at this point. Banks reached Grand Encore on April 4. **Here Banks made a mistake in choosing to take a road that ran away from the river thus losing the mutual protection the combined army/navy force had enjoyed.** By April 7, Taylor's Confederates succeeded in blocking the Union advance; the next day his troops attacked Banks and forced him back at the Battle of Mansfield. Banks withdrew 14 miles to Pleasant Hill and won a defensive victory there on April 9. **He then gave up any idea of continuing the campaign** toward Shreveport and retreated to Grand Encore.

Porter learned of Bank's retreat and began returning downriver. His fleet was harassed by Texas cavalry at Blair's Landing on April 12. **The continuing fall in the water level threatened to strand the fleet.** An engineering officer named Bailey was able to construct a dam which locally raised the water depth allowing the fleet to pass some rapids saving it from disaster. As Banks continued his retreat he made the mistake of traversing an island in the Cane River instead of fording it. This led him into a Confederate trap which was only foiled by a flanking force which forced the rebels to give up their position at Monnett's Ferry. The Union land forces reached Alexandria on April 25, 1864. The fleet's hazardous return was complete by mid-May.

**The Red River Campaign was a dismal failure for the Union and a story of lost opportunities for the CSA.** Perhaps it's only hero was that clever engineer, Bailey.

**MRRT Minutes for March 27, 2017: Call to Order** 6:50 pm, about 25 present for business meeting **Pledge** Dedicated to Greenberry Stanton, William Anderson and John Nelson, USA Colored Troops, who were interred with honors at Indiantown Gap National Cemetery in Annville, PA from unmarked graves near Carlisle, PA after local cemetery closed. **Introduction of Guests and New Members** Guest Dana Hathcock, wife and driver for Larry Hathcock **Secretary's Report** Accepted **Preservation** We should try to use our preservation money on projects with a Michigan connection. The Ann Arbor Roundtable divides their money 50% to the East and 50% to the West. **Newsletters** No report **Website** None **Program** None **Items of Interest** Franklin, TN has made a lot progress in preserving battlefield land but is expensive. Larry Hathcock's surgeon for his triple bypass is descended from Confederate General John Gordon New **Business** None **Old Business** Joe Epstein wants to know what his preservation budget is.

**Quiz Questions: This month's questions and answers pertain to John Wilkes Booth.**

1. Which state did John Wilkes Booth come from?
2. Who was included in the famous Booth family of Shakespearean actors?
3. Which actress stabbed Mr. Booth in a jealous rage?
4. Where did John die?
5. What were John's last words before he died?

**Orlando Poe – adopted Michigan Hero – Conclusion After Atlanta fell; Sherman had Poe design a defensive line much shorter than that used by the Confederates in order to reduce the size of the force needed to hold it. This**



**required forcibly evacuating all civilians which also eliminated the need to feed them.** Hood attempted to disrupt the Union supply line by attacking a depot at Allatoona Pass. Poe's two well designed redoubts allowed the small Federal brigade defending it to hold off Gen. Samuel French's larger rebel force. After chasing Hood's army around for several weeks, Sherman decided on his famous march through Georgia. **Poe received an order from Sherman to destroy all public property and everything of military value in Atlanta as no garrison was to be left behind.** As private homes were not to be touched, fire was to be used sparingly. Despite Poe's best efforts, arson was committed by both Union soldiers and southerners.

**Poe took the 1<sup>st</sup> Michigan Engineers, equipped with axes, picks, hatchets, and saws as well as bridge-building materials, with him on the march through Georgia.** Once again, the engineers were kept busy both building bridges ahead and destroying railroads, public property, and bridges behind the march. Unlike Sherman, who did not try too vigorously to restrain his "bummers", **Poe tried to avoid damage to purely civilian property.**

**The campaign through the Carolinas required the same engineering expertise as the march to Savannah had. The atrocious weather with freezing rain forced the building of numerous bridges and corduroying of countless miles of primitive roads. The speed of Sherman's advance under these conditions caused despair to the small Confederate force left to defend the two states.** Much of Columbia, the South Carolina capital, was torched by some unknown combination of drunken Yankees (including escaped prisoners) and departing Confederate cavalymen. Poe knew that the alcohol made available to the arriving Union troops as well as strong winds and lots of cotton would lead to tragedy. After the fire was finally out, he was ordered to complete the destruction of any remaining public property and manufacturing facilities in the city. After this, his engineers were kept busy bridging more swollen rivers to permit Sherman's continuing advance. **. During the entire campaign, Poe calculated that his men had corduroyed 1000 miles of roads and built 14000 feet of pontoon bridging and 9000 feet of bridges in addition to destroying strategic assets. It is not surprising that Joseph Johnston declared that Sherman's army could only be likened to that of Julius Caesar.**

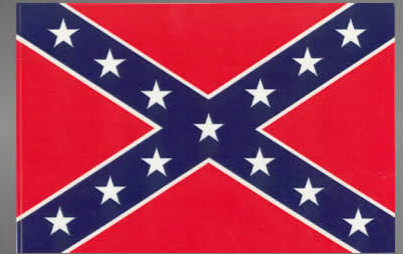
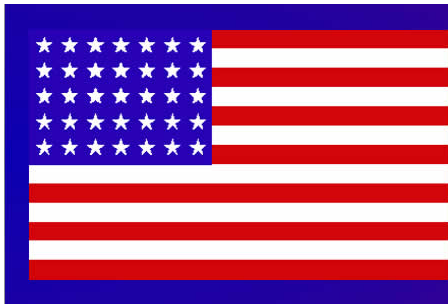
Following the war's end, Sherman made a successful effort to gain a brevet brigadier generalship for Poe. **Poe was then assigned to the Lighthouse Board which he held until 1870. He would again spend lots of time in Michigan constructing and inspecting Great Lakes lighthouses. In order to move his growing family back to Detroit, he accepted the position of chief army lighthouse engineer and superintendent of river and harbor work on the upper Great Lakes. A number of the lighthouses he designed and built are still in service. Other achievements were beginning the design of a new lock at Sault Ste. Marie and the deep dredging of a ship channel through Lake St. Clair.**



In 1883, as Sherman retired, (now Colonel) Orlando Poe returned to his previous responsibilities in the upper Great Lakes and moved his family back to Detroit. He designed an 800 foot lock similar to the lock he had been

involved in a decade before.

Although content with his family and professional life, **Poe's final years were sorrowful – his youngest son, his oldest daughter and Sherman died within a brief span. The final blow was the death of his eldest son in early 1895. Later that year Orlando Poe, 63 years old, slipped and fell at the lock and injured his leg. The wound became infected, and Poe died in October 1895. He was honored when the new Soo lock was dedicated in August 1896 as the Poe Lock.** Orlando Poe is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.



### Quiz Answers:

1. Maryland
2. The father—Junius and the three sons, John Wilkes, Edwin, and Junius. The three sons performed together only once. Edwin was a staunch Unionist who did not get along with John at all.
3. The actress Henrietta Irvin
4. The Garrett farm in Virginia. The site of the farm and barn is now part of the U.S. 301 median.
5. “Useless, Useless”

**Civil War Essentials – Technology - The Minie ball** significantly changed the nature of warfare during the Civil War. French Army officer Claude-Etienne Minie invented the Minie ball in 1849. The British Army used the Minie ball to devastate the Russians during the Crimean War from 1853-1856. Shortly thereafter, both the Union and Confederate armies began using the Minie ball during the American Civil War.

**Prior to the Minie ball, rifles were not used in combat because of the difficulty in loading bullets.** The bullet had to be forced into the rifle barrel because it was the same diameter as the barrel in order for the bullet to engage the grooves of the rifled barrel. **As a result, smoothbore muskets were used. The round balls fired by smoothbores usually remained lodged in the body, and often took a winding path through the body.**



**The Minie ball was smaller than the diameter of the rifled barrel, resulting in loading the bullet quickly by dropping the bullet down the barrel. The bullet had a deep cavity at the base of the ball, which filled up with gas and expanded the bullets upon firing. The effective firing range of the rifle was four times that of the**

**smoothbore, and the bullet was cheaper to produce.**

The Minie ball tended to cut a straight path through the body and usually went all the way through the injured part; the ball seldom remained lodged in the body. **If the Minie ball struck a bone, the bone usually shattered; making an amputation necessary. A hit on a major blood vessel was a serious problem.**

**Unfortunately, battle tactics changed minimally, if at all, with the advent of the Minie ball, causing higher casualties.**

