

TWO IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS: This month we will meet in the Farmington Library on 12 Mile Road (Just east of Farmington Road on the south side of 12 Mile next to the Post Office). Also the meeting will also be a week earlier than usual, **Monday, May 19.**

Robert Gould Shaw, Colonel of the famous 54th Massachusetts Infantry, once said of abolitionist and theologian Thomas Wentworth Higginson: "*I never saw one who put his whole heart into his work as he does; I was very much impressed with his open-heartedness and purity of character.*" Although praised to the limit by some, Higginson, a controversial man, drew much scorn and hatred from others. Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts on December 22, 1823, Higginson had descended from a line of protestant ministers dating back to the 17th Century. He graduated from Harvard at age seventeen and later received his divinity degree from the same institution. Beginning his career as a Unitarian minister in Newburyport, Massachusetts, Higginson was relieved from his pulpit two years later because, said the local Whig Party newspaper, "*he seems tinctured with those radical and imaginative notions which would fain seek to govern society at large more wisely than God has seen fit to guide it ever since the dawn of creation.*" Clearly, Higginson's beliefs in temperance, women's suffrage, and especially, the abolition of slavery did not endear him to all.

Several times the tall, slightly awkward Higginson openly defied the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, culminating in an attack on the Boston Courthouse in an attempt to free runaway slave, Anthony Burns. Higginson helped recruit and arm Free Staters in Kansas after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. In the late 1850's he actively supported John Brown as a member of the "*Secret Six*" in Brown's failed insurrection at Harpers Ferry. To Higginson's credit he was the only one of the group who stood his ground without fleeing the country or feigning insanity.

In September of 1862 Higginson enlisted as captain in the 51st Massachusetts Regiment and helped fill its ranks by advertising, "*What will you say to your children's children when they say to you, 'a great contest was waged between Law and Disorder, Freedom and Slavery, and you were not there'* "? Two months later on November 14, 1862, Higginson was appointed colonel of the 1st South Carolina Volunteers, the first Negro regiment recruited in the Civil War, composed entirely of slaves freed by Union forces. The New York Times announced that "*the hour and the man*" had arrived."

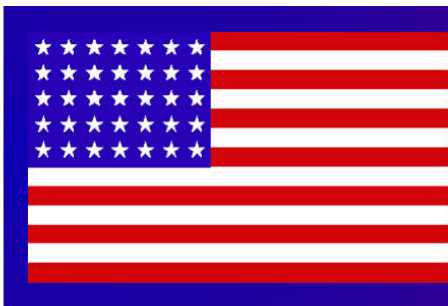
Following the war, Higginson was a prolific writer. He lived to see the slaves freed, given citizenship and granted the right to vote. Two of his favorite causes he did not live to witness: prohibition and women's suffrage. He died on May 9, 1911.

This month guest speaker and MRRT member **Tilden G. Edelstein** will present the story of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "*A White Colonel of a Black Regiment*" Tilden has authored many articles on a variety of subjects from baseball to Emily Dickinson to slavery. Graduating from the University of Wisconsin with a degree in history, Tilden received his PhD from Johns Hopkins University. He has been a Professor of History at Rutgers and became Chair of its History Department and later Dean of Arts and Sciences. He also served as Provost (Chief Academic Officer) at State University of New York and the Vice President for Academic Affairs at Wayne State before retiring in 1999.

You'll want to be in attendance for this one. Circle the date: **MONDAY, MAY 19.**

FALL FIELD TRIP: Once again the sign-up sheet will be passed around for the trip to the Shenandoah Valley (Saturday/Sunday, October 18-19). Any additional information on the trip will be given out at this month's meeting.

The Michigan Regimental expresses its thanks to last month's speaker, **Dan LeBlond** for his fine talk on Andrews' Raiders, "*The Great American Train Chase.*"

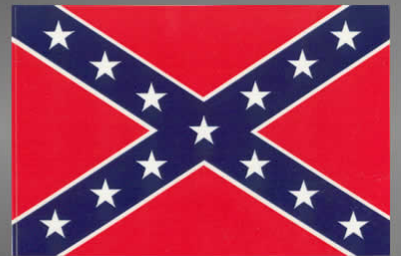
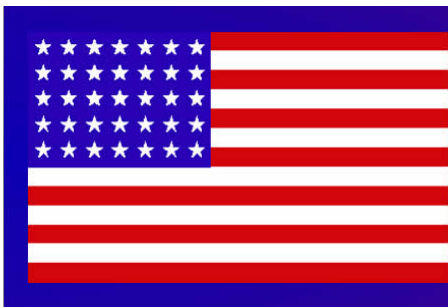
**QUIZ: All questions pertain to the Abolitionist Movement.**

1. Which Alabama abolitionist and former slave owner ran for President in 1840 and 1844? And, what was his political party?
2. Which self-ordained Virginia minister led the bloodiest slave revolt in American history in the summer of 1831? And, what was his outcome?
3. How long did the rebellion last and how many whites were killed during the insurrection?
4. What proposal was passed in the House of Representatives (117-68) in 1836 which forbade any further petitions to outlaw slavery from the anti-slaveryites? And, what part of the Compromise of 1850 did abolitionists despise?
5. Which Ohio evangelist, considered by many to be the most influential abolitionist in the movement, converted thousands, wrote *Slavery As It Is*, and organized the Great Debates at Lane Seminary? And, why was he basically unknown to modern day historians?
6. How did we eventually find out his true importance to the movement? And, who was his famous wife, a slave owner's daughter from South Carolina?
7. Which Harvard educated minister was called the "most learned American of his time" and supported John Brown as a member of the "Secret Six"? And, which member of the "Secret Six" started a school for the deaf and blind, but his wife was even better known?
8. Which mulatto abolitionist edited *The North Star* and visited President Abraham Lincoln in the White House? And, which Southern white wrote *Impending Crisis of the South: How To Meet It*, hating slavery because he believed it hurt poor Southern white boys who could not compete with slaves on the labor market? (He later committed suicide.)
9. Which ex-slave was nicknamed "Moses" because she helped liberate 300 slaves, forcing some out of the South at gunpoint? And, which female ex-slave and outstanding public speaker is buried in Battle Creek, Michigan?
10. Which abolitionist newspaperman published the antislavery *St. Louis Observer* and was instantly martyred when murdered by a mob in November, 1837? And, in which Illinois town did this murder take place?

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Near twilight on July 18, 1863, Federal General George Crockett Strong sat on his gray horse facing the 54th Massachusetts Infantry. In the distance stood the Confederate-held Battery Wagner. "*Boys, I am a Massachusetts man,*" stated Strong, "*and I know you will fight for the honor of the State. I am sorry you must go into the fight tired and hungry, but the men in the fort are tired too Don't fire a musket on the way up, but go in and bayonet them at their guns.*" Then, pointing to the man holding the staff of the U.S. flag, Strong asked, "*If this man should fall, who will lift the flag and carry it on?*" Standing nearby, the 25-year-old colonel of the 54th Massachusetts, Robert Gould Shaw, removed a cigar from between his teeth and calmly replied, "*I will.*" The members of the 54th cheered Shaw's pledge, and Strong nodded proudly and rode off. A fellow officer remembered that Shaw was pale and that "*a slight twitching at the corners of his mouth plainly showed that the whole cost was counted*" Shaw walked quietly among his troops and spoke words of encouragement. "*I want you to prove yourselves, the eyes of thousands will look on what you do tonight.*"

The all-black 54th Massachusetts Infantry had been the brainchild of Governor John A. Andrew. He believed that such a regiment would offer "*an opportunity for a whole race of men*" and would "*go far to elevate or depress the estimation in which the character of colored Americans will be held throughout the world.*" The regiment, organized on January 26, 1863, would, of course, be led by white officers. Governor Andrew selected young Robert Gould Shaw, formerly a captain of the 2nd Massachusetts, to lead the 54th. Shaw was born in Boston on October 10, 1837, into a world of gentility and wealth. He had lived and attended school in Switzerland and Italy. He entered Harvard in 1856 but abandoned his studies during his third year. He moved to New York and joined the 7th New York National Guard. Transferring to command the 54th Massachusetts would be the "*highlight*" of his youthful military career. By May of



1863, when the 54th paraded through Boston, Shaw's mother, Sarah, exclaimed, "*What have I done that God has been so good to me.*"

Now standing before Battery Wagner at 7:45P.M., young Shaw gave the order to his men. "*Move in quick time until within a hundred yards of the fort, then double quick and charge!*" He paused a moment, unsheathed his sword and issued a sharp command to march. When the fort was merely two hundred yards ahead, the Confederates opened fire. The murderous fire that poured from the fort had instant effect. Men were struck all around, spinning to the ground in a dance of death. Brandishing his saber, Shaw valiantly led his men forward. The ground behind Shaw was a wasteland of dead and broken men, but more swept onward over the bodies of their fallen comrades. Reaching the top of the rampart, Shaw turned and shouted, "*Onward, Fifty-fourth!*" He suddenly lurched and fell, killed by a ball to the chest. He would be buried in a common gravesite with those who died around him—272 of the 650 men sent into action.

The entire siege of Battery Wagner lasted from July 10 to September 6, 1863. Total casualties during the siege numbered 1515 Union and 174 Confederate. A Charleston journalist exaggeratedly wrote: "*probably no battlefield in the country has ever presented such an array of mangled bodies in a small compass.*" One disgusted Federal called it the "*most fatal and fruitless campaign of the entire war.*" General Strong, wounded in the thigh, contracted tetanus on his way to New York for treatment. He died in NYC on July 20, one day before the U.S. Senate confirmed his nomination to Major General.

In 1897 Thomas Wentworth Higginson wrote in Century Magazine, "*The attack on Fort Wagner, with the picturesque and gallant death of Colonel Shaw, made a great impression on the North, and did more than anything else, perhaps, to convince the public that Negro troops could fight well, not merely as skirmishers, but in line of battle.*" In the same year sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens unveiled his famous monument to Shaw and the 54th Regiment in Boston's Public Garden.

Quiz Answers:

1. James G. Birney and the Liberty Party
2. Nat Turner and hanged in Jerusalem, Virginia on November 11, 1831. His body was boiled into grease and skinned.
3. 48 hours. 55 whites were killed (24 children, 18 women, and 13 men).
4. "Gag Rule" and the Fugitive Slave Law (which included provisions that Northerners had to return runaway slaves, no jury and no attorneys allowed at their trial, accused runaways could not testify in their own behalf, and judges were given an additional bonus fee per case of \$5 if the accused were freed and \$10 if sent back to slavery.)
5. Theodore Dwight Weld~ he refused publicity and gave no interviews to reporters.
6. Boxes of letters were found in an Ohio attic giving details of his influence to the movement and Angelina Grimke.
7. Theodore Parker and Samuel Gridley Howe, the husband of Julia Ward Howe
8. Frederick Douglass and Hinton R Helper
9. Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth
10. Elijah P. Lovejoy and Alton, Illinois

You'll want to be on hand for **Tilden Edelstein's** "*A White Colonel of a Black Regiment,*" the story of Thomas Wentworth Higginson. **REMEMBER:** the meeting will be held at the 12 Mile Road Farmington Public Library at an earlier date--**MONDAY, MAY 19.** It's best to park on the west side of the building. The meeting will begin at 6:30P.M. See you there.... Have you tried out our website? Give it a shot. <http://wlvw.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.