

In the Crimean and the 1859 Franco-Austrian Wars, the French Army Zouaves received notoriety for their bravery, and more so, for their strange, colorful uniforms. Officially organized in 1831 in Algeria and composed of tribesmen from Zouaoua, the zouaves eventually admitted Europeans into their ranks. The zouave uniform that became famous throughout the world included white leggings, red baggy pants, a blue sash, a dark blue vest, a red cape, a dark blue bolero jacket, and a blue tasseled red fez. These Algerian troops were noted not only for their gaudy uniforms but for their unique military skills; they could even fire and reload the musket from a prone position.

The fame of the zouaves, a frequent subject of articles and illustrations in American newspapers and magazines, influenced the formation of similar units in the U.S. Probably the first of these American units, the U.S. Zouave Cadets, was organized in Chicago by Elmer E. Ellsworth, who also wrote a zouave drill manual. Later, in New York City, Ellsworth formed another zouave unit composed of firemen. The popularity of his outfits caused a stir of enlistments on both sides when the Civil War broke out. Each of these American units, which varied in size from a company to a regiment, created its own distinctive uniform. The colors of the uniforms became more than the traditional zouave deep red and navy blue. American zouaves began wearing peacock blue, forest green, and lemon yellow. A fez might also be traded in for a turban. Some traditions, however, remained the same as numerous Americans shaved their heads like the North Africans. Contrary to popular belief, American zouave units did not discard their vibrant uniforms, which made excellent targets, for others of less visibility as the war progressed.

This month—**MONDAY, MAY 18**—the Michigan Regimental proudly welcomes back John Gibney, presenting “*Elmer Ellsworth and the Cult of the Zouaves*.” John will discuss some of the major Union and Confederate Zouave units as well as other incidents of “red pants weirdness,” including “Zouave ties to Ben Hur, Lincoln’s assassins, and the ‘Best Little Whorehouses’ in New Orleans.” John promises that his program will not stop in the year 1865, but will also include some fairly modern connections.

John continues to lead a busy life as Director of Monroe County Historical Museums and is an adjunct Instructor in the Graduate Historic Preservation Program at Eastern Michigan University and Washtenaw Community College. John last spoke to us in September of 2006 with a talk on James Longstreet. John is the son of MRRT legend Abbott Gibney. This intriguing talk should not be missed by anyone in the Michigan Regimental.

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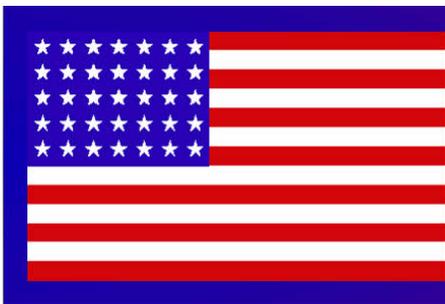
Special thanks are extended to last month’s speaker, **Bill Grandstaff**, for his exceptional program on *Walt Whitman*. As Bill indicated, it wasn’t Whitman’s talents as a poet that he found so fascinating, it was his tireless help in Union hospitals nursing and encouraging the wounded Federal soldiers. Numerous questions were asked at the end of Bill’s talk, indicating the poignancy of the program.

YEARLY DUES: The dreaded RED DOT on your newsletter envelope indicates that you haven’t paid this year’s dues. A check of \$20 given to Carroll Tietz will keep you a member in good stead and keep your newsletters coming. If you can’t make the meeting, simply send Carroll a check to: 10640 Gamewood Drive South Lyon, MI 48178.

NEW OFFICERS: At last month’s meeting President Jim Burroughs announced that a new slate of officers is to be selected. An Election Committee was organized for this purpose, and their results will be given at this month’s meeting.

The **50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE** will again be in session at 5:30 P.M. before our regular meeting.

FALL FIELD TRIP: Our trip to Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville is planned for the weekend of Saturday/Sunday, October 17-18. Guiding us around will be the premier expert on this area, historian Frank O’Reilly. We will visit the



upper pontoon crossing of the Rappahannock, Chatham Manor, the Slaughter Pen Farm, Marye’s Heights, the Lee/Jackson bivouac site, Jackson’s Flank March and Catherine’s Furnace, Hazel Grove, and Jackson’s wounding site. Of special interest we will be given a Saturday night candle-light tour of Guiney Station where Jackson died.

This month Trip Chairman, Jerry Maxwell, will be collecting checks for the bus payment. Please make out a check for \$70 to either Jerry or Carroll Tietz (absolutely no cash will be accepted). [Also, give all the checks to Jerry.] This money is non-refundable if you change your mind in the future. Remember the Motel Reservations are to be made on your own at the phone number given out at the meeting. Any questions will be answered at this month’s meeting.

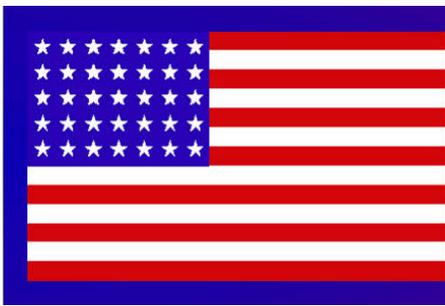
QUIZ: All questions pertain to Zouave outfits.....

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| 1. “Tiger Rifles” | A. Led by Col. Charles R. Jennison, a former doctor |
| 2. “Redlegs” | B. Firemen led by Col. DeWitt C. Baxter; lost 237 men in the West Woods at Antietam. |
| 3. 31 st Missouri | C. Known as the Keystone Zouaves; fought bravely at Deep Bottom. |
| 4. 76 th Pennsylvania Zouaves | D. With the 146 th and 140 th New York Zouaves made up half of Brig. Gen. Romeyn Ayres’ brigade; fought at the Wilderness. |
| 5. 11 th New York Fire Zouaves | E. Wore blue and white striped pants and a brown bolero jacket. |
| 6. 5 th New York Zouaves | F. Led by Col. Rush Hawkins who was home on leave while his men fought at Burnside Bridge. Motto: “Toujours prêt” (always ready). |
| 7. 155 th Pennsylvania Zouaves | G. Led by Elmer Ellsworth |
| 8. 7 th Kansas Volunteer Cavalry | H. “Wharf Rats” led by Major Chatham Roberdeau Wheat |
| 9. 9 th New York Zouaves | I. Called the “Wide Awake” Zouaves, led by Col. Thomas Clement Fletcher, who was wounded and captured at Chickasaw Bluffs. |
| 10. 72 nd Pennsylvania Zouaves | J. Members included James Butler Hickok (“Wild Bill”) and William Frederick Cody (“Buffalo Bill”)
K. Abram Duryee’s Zouaves that charged a Confederate battery at Big Bethel; 6 died in the charge. |

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In the fall of 1861 Lieutenant Colonel Charles de Choiseul was ordered temporarily to take command of Rob Wheat’s unruly battalion. “*I am,*” de Choiseul wrote a friend, “*the victim of circumstances, not of my own will.... Whether they will devour me, or whether I will succeed in taming them, remains to be seen.*” His moment of truth came when “*the whole set got royally drunk.*” During the day one drunken soldier twice snapped his loaded musket at de Choiseul’s orderly when the orderly tried to arrest him outside the colonel’s tent. Luckily the musket failed to discharge and the orderly was able to subdue him.

Later in the day, de Choiseul reported other unknown members of the battalion succeeded in “*knocking down & badly beating & robbing....a washerwomen of the battalion in a thicket not a hundred yards from the guard house.*” The camp gradually settled down after that and de Choiseul retired for the night, only to be awakened at 10:30 P.M. by a free-for-all



at the guard tent. Grabbing his revolver, he rushed out and found his guards battling seven or eight Tigers who were apparently trying to free some of their comrades. De Choiseul slugged one man who approached him threateningly and finally restored order “*with seven or eight beauties bucked & gagged in the guard tent.*”

The next day de Choiseul noticed two Tigers casually walking out of camp toward Centreville. No privates were to leave camp without a signed pass, so the colonel rode over to investigate and was told that the orderly sergeant had given them permission to leave. Suspicious, de Choiseul then went to question the sergeant but wound up arresting him when the sergeant gave “*an impudent answer*” to his inquiry. Ordered to his quarters by de Choiseul, the soldier swaggered off uttering oaths under his breath, while another Tiger came up to the colonel and began taking the side of the departing sergeant. When de Choiseul ordered this man to the guardhouse, the soldier refused. Furious at such insubordination, the mounted colonel picked the man up by the collar and threw him heavily to the ground. After picking himself up, the soldier still refused to leave, so de Choiseul knocked him to the ground a second time.

By then several other Tigers had encircled de Choiseul and were pressing closer menacingly. Realizing the danger, the colonel fingered his revolver and sternly warned that he would shoot the first man who “*raised a finger.*” The words were no sooner uttered than a “*big double fisted ugly looking fellow came at me & said, ‘G---d--- you, shoot me.’*” Not one to bluff, de Choiseul immediately drew his pistol and fired. “*125.*” The other Tigers quickly broke their encirclement and recoiled from the obviously dangerous colonel. “*That quelled the riot,*” de Choiseul nonchalantly wrote later that day.

QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. “Tiger Rifles” H, E
2. “Redlegs” J
3. 31st Missouri I
4. 76th Pennsylvania Zouaves C
5. 11th New York Fire Zouaves G
6. 5th New York Zouaves K
7. 155th Pennsylvania Zouaves D
8. 7th Kansas Volunteer Cavalry A
9. 9th New York Zouaves F
10. 72nd Pennsylvania Zouaves B

Make certain that you’ve marked your calendars for this month’s meeting—one week earlier than usual—**MONDAY, MAY 18**. You’ll be in for a special treat as **John Gibney** will present “*Elmer Ellsworth and the Cult of the Zouaves.*” We will meet in the same place: the Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road), at the same time: 6:30 P.M. Come early to get a good seat.

Also try our website: <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.