



The Presidential Election of 1864 promised to be a frantic one. Incumbent **Abraham Lincoln** continued to stave off military defeat while vowing to complete the war against a stubborn Confederacy. His opponent, **General George McClellan**, ironically a peace candidate, condemned the war effort as a failure and called for immediate cessation of hostilities and a negotiated settlement.

Interestingly, the largest voting bloc in the canvass, the one that could make the difference and that was being madly courted, was far from the polling place, would vote absentee, and carried a gun. In no presidential election in the nation's past had the soldier vote mattered. It hadn't existed. Always before when a soldier went off to war he lost his franchise, for the only place a man could legally vote was at his home polling place. When the war came there was no legislation in the country, in any state, that allowed a soldier or a sailor to vote anywhere outside his home district. Leave your state and you lost your vote. It wasn't fair, but that was the way it was. Wisconsin and Minnesota were the first states, early in the war, to pass laws to allow their soldiers to vote in the field. Ohio and Vermont followed. Now, as the election approached in 1864, thirteen states allowed voting in the field and would count the votes separately. Four others had laws to permit soldiers to vote from the seat of war by proxy, but their vote could not be counted separately. In five states—Indiana, Illinois, Delaware, New Jersey, and Oregon—the soldiers remained disenfranchised unless they could find a way to get home on election day. But how the soldiers voted could well dictate the outcome.

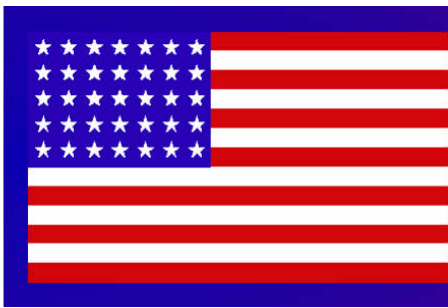
McClellan was one of the most popular generals with his soldiers who had ever put on a uniform. And Little Mac, his mind lit by the memory of the overwhelming cheers that had greeted his every ride through his army, had no doubt that his men would stand by him in November. He fully expected to win the soldier vote. A **New York World** reporter wrote in October that "*we are as certain of two-thirds of that vote for General McClellan as that the sun shines.*" The Democratic concern was not that they couldn't carry the soldier vote, but that they would be cheated out of it. The Democrats even planned for a special committee to take every precaution to keep the soldier vote from fraud. Lincoln's attitude was "*that all loyal men may vote, and vote for whom they please.*"

On **MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26**, our guest speaker, **David A. Collins**, will present "***Absentee Voting Rights for Civil War Soldiers.***" David will concentrate on Ohio's experience, but he will focus on three aspects of this election. 1) Soldier voting mattered in election outcomes, 2) It was a bitterly partisan issue, with Republicans favoring absentee voting rights and Democrats opposed, and 3) The new soldier voting laws transformed the meaning of "election" by removing a previously indispensable participant from the voting process: the community in which the voter resided.

David Collins last spoke to the MRRT in May, 2007, on the "The McClellan Effect." He is a practicing attorney and is enrolled in the PhD program in the History Department at Wayne State University where he expects to earn his doctoral degree in 2013. You'll be sure to want to be in attendance for this one, so mark your calendars now.

The MRRT extends a special thank and welcome back to last month's speaker, **Jerry "Old Sarge" Maxwell** for his "Tribute to Dr. Weldon Petz" entitled "*Abraham Lincoln: From Log Cabin to White House.*" Thanks for a captivating and timely program on Abraham Lincoln. In Jerry's indubitable style, the evening was replete with interesting insight and anecdotes about the life and times of President Lincoln. Great to have you back.





FALL FIELD TRIP: Our Annual Fall Field Trip is scheduled for Saturday/Sunday, October 22-23. We will gather on Friday, October 21 at the Hilton Springfield [700 East Adams St.—217-789-1530] at 7:30 P.M. The Saturday night dinner will be at Maldaner's Restaurant [222 S. Sixth St.—217-522-4313].

Our itinerary for the two weekend days includes tours of the Old State Capital, Abraham Lincoln House, Lincoln-Herndon Law Office, Lincoln Tomb/Oak Ridge Cemetery, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and New Salem.

If you haven't yet paid, two separate checks (both made out to Carroll Tietz) should be brought to this meeting. One check for \$35 will cover Saturday night's meal. The other check for \$30 will cover all entrance fees. If you are going on the trip but cannot make this meeting, please mail two checks to Jeanie Graham at 29835 Northbrook, Farmington Hills, MI 48334. Any other essential details will be provided at this month's meeting.

QUIZ: All questions pertain to the Election of 1864.....

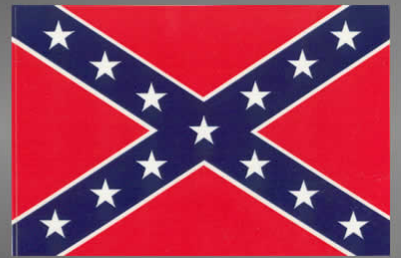
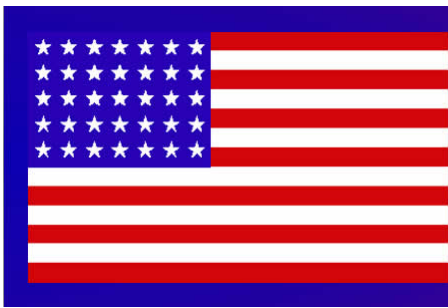
1. What was the name given to the 1864 anti-Lincoln letter that was probably written by a Kansas senator? And, which cabinet member did it support for the presidential nomination?
2. In which cities did Abraham Lincoln and George McClellan receive their nominations for the presidency?
3. Who were their Vice Presidential nominees?
4. What new party name did the Republicans adopt for this election?
5. What were the only three states that McClellan captured in this election?
6. What two jobs did McClellan take after his presidential loss?
7. Lincoln took twenty-five states in the election. How many electoral votes did he receive from the state of Michigan?
8. Which five former presidents were still alive when Lincoln was inaugurated?
9. Who administered the oath of office to Lincoln on March 4, 1865?
10. Fill in the missing words to Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address: "With ___ toward none, with ___ for all."

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More stories from the Election of 1864.....

It seemed the only two men in the campaign doing little and saying nothing were the two presidential candidates themselves. Both **Lincoln** and **McClellan** were closemouthed, and had been from the minute the campaign began. Everybody understood. It was generally thought indiscreet for a presidential candidate to make public speeches on his own behalf during the campaign—lest he be betrayed into saying something indiscreet. All the political dirty work and rabbit-punching were being done by others. It was with the soldiers that McClellan felt most comfortable. And he expected them to vote for him in overwhelming numbers. He wrote many of his fellow officers, old friends who had served under him in the Army of the Potomac, urging their help with the soldier vote. A Union-wide McClellan Legion was formed of veterans to rally the ex-soldiers and men home from the army on furlough and sick leave.

Lincoln was just as happy as McClellan to sit out the campaign publicly. At a serenade in October, Lincoln did take aim at two rumors that had surfaced. One was that if defeated he would, between then and the end of his term, do what he could to ruin the government. The other was that McClellan, if elected, would at once seize control. "I am struggling to maintain government, not to overthrow it," Lincoln told the serenaders. "I am struggling especially to prevent others from overthrowing it....I shall do my utmost that whoever is to hold the helm for the next voyage, shall start with the best possible chance to save the ship."



On election day Lincoln had kept an eye out all evening for news of how the soldiers were voting. And it was coming in nearly unanimous for the Republicans—about ten to one in the western armies, closer in the eastern. The heaviest soldier opposition had come from the immediate neighborhood, from Carver Army Hospital, which Lincoln and Edwin Stanton passed on a regular basis on the way out to the country. It had gone one vote in three against the Republicans. Lincoln turned to Stanton and said wryly, *“That’s hard on us, Stanton! They know us better than the others.”*

By the morning it was clear that Ohio had piled up a whopping 50,000-vote majority for the Republican Party. Indiana too had come in solidly Republican. Pennsylvania was still undecided. It would take nearly the rest of the month before the soldier vote would verify a 13,000-vote Republican majority. Until then both sides would claim victory. The Western Army, where McClellan had never set foot, seemed intent on voting for the Lincoln administration. *“I would hide my head with shame,”* wrote a surgeon in Sherman’s army, *“sooner that vote for any man nominated under the Chicago banner. Should McClellan be elected, I think that the question of ‘Union’ is at an end.”* Another of Sherman’s soldiers wrote his wife that he was for Lincoln against McClellan, for *“we must have the man who dares to say: the Nation must live. We can trust ourselves to no other pilot.”*

When it was all over and all the votes counted, Lincoln would win by a 411,428 margin over McClellan—2,213,665 to 1,802,237. In the electoral vote he would win by a devastating 212 to 21. Where the Democratic debacle was all it appeared to be was where McClellan least expected it—in the vote of his beloved soldiers. They went overwhelmingly against him. No other part of the electorate rejected him so emphatically. In the Army of the Potomac, his old command, he was winning but three votes in ten. Among Pennsylvania’s soldiers, who had the largest number voting in the field, only six of fifty-one regiments were giving their old commander a majority. In Sherman’s army in the West it was worse—only two votes in ten. Of the total of 150,635 soldier votes finally counted separately, McClellan would win but 33,748 to Lincoln’s 116,887.

On election night Tad Lincoln burst into his father’s office and hustled his father to the window to see the soldiers *“voting for Lincoln and Johnson.”* The boy pointed to the Pennsylvania soldiers quartered on the White House grounds, voting under the supervision of a commission sent from their state. Lincoln saw Jack, Tad’s pet turkey, long since pardoned as Christmas dinner, strutting among the voters. *“What business has the turkey stalking about the polls in that way?”* Lincoln asked. *“Does he vote?”* Tad replied, *“No, he’s not of age.”* And Lincoln laughed.

QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. Pomeroy Circular and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase
2. Baltimore (Lincoln) and Chicago (McClellan)
3. Andrew Johnson of Tennessee (Lincoln) and George Pendleton of Ohio (McClellan)
4. National Union Party
5. Delaware, Kentucky, and New Jersey
6. Chief Engineer for the New York City Department of Docks, 1870-72, and Governor of New Jersey. 1878-81
7. Michigan had eight electoral votes
8. Martin Van Buren, John Tyler, Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, and James Buchanan
9. Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase
10. “malice” and “charity”

Don’t forget our next meeting date—**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26**—for **David A. Collins’** presentation of *“Absentee Voting Rights for Civil War Soldiers.”* The meeting will begin at 6:30 P.M. at the Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road). See you there! Also try our website: <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>