



**ABOUT the ALCWRT**

- *The Abraham Lincoln Civil War Round Table is the oldest Civil War Round Table in Michigan, founded 1952.*
- *Meetings are each 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday, September through May (except December), 7:30 pm, at the Charter Township of Plymouth City Offices, 9955 N. Haggerty, in the Chamber Council Room.*
- *For more information, contact ALCWRT President Liz Stringer at [stringerL@aol.com](mailto:stringerL@aol.com)*
- *Our web site is [ALCWRT.org](http://ALCWRT.org)*

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**YOUR CHANCE to DECODE HISTORY -- Anyone can help decipher Civil War telegrams, including messages from Lincoln himself.**

A trove of nearly 16,000 Civil War telegrams, about 5,400 in code and about 100 sent by Lincoln himself, was discovered in 2009 by the heirs of Thomas T. Eckert, the director of the Military Telegraph Office at the War Department during the Civil War. He took this batch of records home with him when he retired in 1867, as there were no laws then governing disposition of public documents. Along with the telegrams, he also took some 35 ledgers, code books, and records of correspondence.

These documents were put up for auction in 2009, and sold again in 2012 to the Huntington Library in San Marino, CA. The Huntington’s “Decoding the Civil War” project is a collaboration with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, NC State University’s Digital History and Pedagogy Project, and Zooniverse.org (a crowdsourcing platform associated with several academic and research institutions). In Phase 1 of the multi-year project, scans of the 15,971 telegrams, code books, and ledgers were put online in the spring of 2016. Anyone could register at the Zooniverse.org site to be guided through the process of assisting with transcribing the documents. In Phase 2, which began in the fall of 2016, participants are working to collaboratively decipher the documents, which is complicated by the fact that only six of the original ten code books survived.

**Would you like to help? Here’s how to get started:**

From your internet browser, search “Decoding the Civil War”, and you’ll see links telling you about the project and how to register through Zooniverse.org to participate.

Here’s part of a coded telegram from Lincoln on April 12, 1865:  
*“Whats next news I the prayers I to while coming star what you you mean dispatch zebra I you spirit there understanding any if the piloted your offer there such of any and have was I to Emma never seen of of no toby Zodiac....”*

Confused? Lincoln was communicating with Maj. Gen. Godfrey Weitzel, whose forces were occupying Richmond, about some of the issues facing the Union forces there, such as: Would churches in the defeated city be permitted to open that Sunday? Would they be required to offer the customary prayer for the president of the newly reunited nation? Lincoln had visited Richmond’s ruins, and had instructed Weitzel to “let ‘em up easy”. Weitzel decided churches would open that Sunday, and, while no loyalty prayer would be required, neither would any prayers asserting contrary loyalties be permitted. War Secretary Edwin Stanton objected to this apparent leniency, but Lincoln did not. One decoded sentence reads *“I have no doubt you have acted in what appeared to you to be the spirit and temper manifested by me while there”*.

**If you or anyone you know is already participating in this decoding effort, or if you decide to join in and try your hand at it, the rest of us would love to hear about your experience!**

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## **JANUARY PROGRAM -- "A SURGEON'S LIFE ABOARD the USS MONITOR"**

Mark Laubacher will present his talk "A Surgeon's Life Aboard the USS Monitor".

Mark is well-known to our Round Table as this will mark his third appearance with us.

His most recent presentation to us was this past fall on "A Hospital of Firsts: USS *Red Rover*".

"A Surgeon's Life..." promises to be equally enlightening.

Mark is a nurse and an EMT and has done remarkable research on medical issues in the Civil War era.

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## **SPRING TRIP INFO -- The 1862 SHENANDOAH VALLEY CAMPAIGN**

Our spring trip is scheduled for **April 21 – April 24**, 2017 to study the 1862 Shenandoah Valley Campaign.

Our tour guide will be Scott Patchan.

Flyers will be available soon, and will provide details on price, deposit due date, and final payment due date.

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## **REFRESHMENT SIGN-Ups -- DON'T BE SHY ..!**

Our self-described "overworked Treasurer" volunteered his truly "overworked" spouse for refreshments for this month's meeting.

Thanks, Audrey!

Look for the sign-up sheet on the refreshment table if you'd like to volunteer to help out with refreshments for an upcoming meeting.

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## **THIS and THAT --**

- **Meeting start time is now 7:30pm** - Don't forget to update your calendars.
- **Station 885 pre-meeting dinners** -  
Reservations have been made at Station 885 (on Starkweather, just off Main St) at 6pm.  
Everyone is welcome! It's a good chance to meet informally with the speaker and other Round Table members.
- **Condolences** to long time member Seymour Weiner at the passing of his wife Jane on December 26, 2016.