



ABOUT the ALCWRT

- *The Abraham Lincoln Civil War Round Table is the oldest Civil War Round Table in Michigan, founded 1952. This year is our JUBILEE ...! Our 65th anniversary is September, 2017.*
- *Meetings are each 3rd 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*
- *Our web site is ALCWRT.org*
- *Like us on **FACEBOOK**...! "Abraham Lincoln Civil War Round Table"*

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"DID LINCOLN's DOCTORS DOOM HIM?"

Forensic and Medical Aspects of the LINCOLN ASSASSINATION"

will be presented by E. Lawrence Abel, Emeritus Professor, Wayne State University, at the **October 19th** meeting of the ALCWRT.

PREVIEW -- Professor Abel will discuss forensic aspects of the Lincoln assassination, the medical treatment Lincoln received after he was shot, and whether his doctors doomed any chance he had for recovery. The talk concludes with a discussion about whether Lincoln could have been saved if he had been shot today.

ABOUT OUR SPEAKER -- E. Lawrence Abel is former professor in the Departments of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Psychology. He is past president of the Behavioral Teratology Society, and the Fetal Alcohol Study Group, and former director of the Mott Center for Human Growth and Development at WSU. Professor Abel has published over 40 books and more than 200 peer-reviewed papers on fetal alcohol syndrome and marijuana (as Ernest L. Abel). He has published several books on the American Civil War ("Singing the New Nation", "Confederate Sheet Music", "A Finger in Lincoln's Brain") (as E. Lawrence Abel), as well as articles in trade market magazines such as Yankee, Home Life, Science Digest, California Highway patrol, Civil War Times Illustrated, and American History Illustrated.

NOVEMBER PREVIEW -- "THE BARREL"

Bill Christen will be our speaker at the November 16th meeting. He'll share information about a cache of over 300 letters and military documents from a Connecticut family in the 1860's that were inherited in a barrel in 2010.

BOOKS from DIRK --

Dirk Oltman's family would like to share his "unbelievable number of Civil War books" with ALCWRT members, in Dirk's memory. They'll bring a selection to upcoming meetings, beginning in October, where members can help themselves. Dirk's wife Sally also said that if people feel they should make some kind of donation for the books, her family wants the ALCWRT to receive that money as a final gift from Dirk.

WHEN the FORMER EIGHTH met the FUTURE SIXTEENTH

William Herndon, Abraham Lincoln's law partner in Springfield, IL, wrote in his book "Life of Lincoln", about a meeting on June 16, 1842 in Rochester, IL (near Springfield) of Martin Van Buren with local politicians. Van Buren, who had served one term as our eighth president and had not been re-elected, was seeking backing for another run at the presidency. He viewed Springfield as a strategic political and geographical point in the country that he hoped would help with his political comeback.

While the reception committee was comprised mostly of Democrats (Van Buren had, after all, been a founding member of the Democratic party in the late 1820's), among the welcomers was Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln, then 33 years old, was introduced to Van Buren as "a man whose wit was as ready as his store of anecdotes was exhaustless". Herndon described a social evening in which Van Buren shared stories of politics in his home state of New York, "going back to the days of Hamilton and Burr", with the locals sharing with him descriptions of early life on the western frontier. Around midnight, Van Buren said he had to turn in because his sides were sore from laughing. In his biography of Van Buren, author Edward Widmer quoted him as saying that he "had never spent so agreeable a night in my life".

The next day, Lincoln was among those who accompanied Van Buren to Springfield, where the Mayor gave a welcome address at the Statehouse, followed by a reception. Van Buren's four-day visit to the area concluded Sunday after he attended the Methodist and First Presbyterian churches. If you visit the area today, you can see this mural depicting their meeting on a silo on Illinois route 29 near Rochester:



While Van Buren was the leading candidate at the Democratic convention in 1844, he was not successful in gaining the nomination for a second term for some of the same reasons he had not won re-election in 1840. His presidency (1837-1841) had been marred by the Panic of 1837 and his inability to deal effectively with that economic crisis. In 1840 he had denied Texas' application for admission to the Union, to avoid a war with Mexico but also to avoid upsetting the balance of free and slave states in the Missouri Compromise. He revealed that he would support annexation once the Mexican dispute was resolved, but his unwillingness to annex Texas immediately, plus his long-standing position in favor of protective tariffs on manufactured goods in the north but not on raw materials from the south, cost him the delegate votes from the southern states at the nominating convention.

Van Buren's view of slavery was complex, and sheds some light for us today on the national debate leading up to the Civil War. Van Buren considered slavery immoral (though in fact he had owned a slave himself at one time) but sanctioned by the Constitution. Thus he believed as President he had to oppose any attempt by Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia on Constitutional grounds, and that any interference with slavery in the states where it already existed must be resisted. In 1839, his administration supported the Spanish government's demand that the ship *La Amistad* and its cargo, including the Africans on board, be returned. Yet earlier, as a state senator in NY, he voted for a resolution instructing members of NY's congressional delegation to vote against admitting Missouri to the Union as a slave state. And, as noted above, his opposition as President to the immediate annexation of Texas was not over the issue of slavery but due to its conflict with Mexico.

Over time, Van Buren became increasingly opposed to slavery and his earlier views on its constitutionality weakened. He ran for president in 1848 as the candidate of the Free Soil Party against Democratic nominee Lewis Cass, who was seen as friendly to slavery. Van Buren took enough votes from Cass in NY to give the state to Zachary Taylor, who won the national election.

In 1860, Van Buren supported Lincoln's opponent Stephen A. Douglas, but Lincoln carried NY and every northern state except New Jersey. In April, 1861, former President Franklin Pierce wrote other living former Presidents asking them to meet and use their stature and influence to negotiate an end to the Civil War. Pierce asked Van Buren, as the senior living ex-President, to formally call the meeting. Van Buren thought Buchanan should call the meeting since he had served more recently, and if not, then Pierce should call the meeting. None of the three proceeded with a public call for a meeting, and so the idea died.

Martin Van Buren's life bracketed the two most significant events in our nation's history.

He was the first US President born under the United States flag, in December 5, 1782. (Despite being the first president born as a US citizen, Van Buren is the only president for whom English was not his first language. He was born in the Dutch community of Kinderhook, NY, near Albany). Van Buren died in July, 1862 at his family home in Kinderhook without knowing the resolution of the Civil War. It is reported that those tending him in his final illness would tell him that the war was going well for the Union, to avoid distressing him.

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Quint and Pam Burkhart got the idea for this month's article on Van Buren from a recent history tour that included a visit to Van Buren's home near Albany, NY. If you've got ideas or suggestions for future newsletter articles, please contact Pam via ALCWRT.NEWS@gmail.com

THIS and THAT --

* **THANKS** to **Jim Epperson** for stepping in as our speaker at the September meeting.

He did an excellent job telling a story of relatively unknowns – except for one of the more major characters who happened to be his ancestor!

* **THANKS** to **Donna Marie Meszaros** for providing refreshments at our September meeting..!

* Donna Marie also was brave and made the Chocolate Sauerkraut Cake recipe from the September newsletter. Reports are that it was absolutely delicious..!

* **DUES are DUE** -- Worley is collecting dues as we start a new "ALCWRT year" (Sept – thru – June).