



### **ABOUT the ALCWRT**

- *The Abraham Lincoln Civil War Round Table is the oldest Civil War Round Table in Michigan, founded in 1952. Our JUBILEE (65<sup>th</sup>) anniversary was September, 2017.*
- *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)*
- *Like us on FACEBOOK...! "Abraham Lincoln Civil War Round Table"*

### **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

#### **FEBUARY PRESENTATION:**

*Last Veterans of the Blue & Gray ..... p.1*

**MARCH PRESENTATION PREVIEW .. p.1**

**MOUNT VERNON in the CIVIL WAR ..p.2**

**HOLD THE DATE! ..... p.5**

**THIS and THAT ..... p.5**

**LARRY HATHCOCK** will be our featured speaker for the February 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Abraham Lincoln Civil War Round Table.

### **THE LAST VETERANS of the BLUE AND GRAY --**

On December 19, 1959 on the eve of the Civil War Centennial, Walter Williams of Houston, Texas died at the age of 117. He had been celebrated as the last Confederate soldier and the last Civil War veteran. Ulysses S. Grant III, Chairman of the Civil War Centennial Commission, said that his death was an occasion for national mourning. President Eisenhower ordered that all American flags be flown at half-staff until his funeral four days later.

Unfortunately, the claims made by Williams were not true. This month's speaker will demonstrate why Williams' claims were false and will discuss the lives of the two men who were the last veterans of the Blue and Gray.

### **ABOUT OUR SPEAKER --**

Larry Hathcock is a retired upper elementary teacher from the Holly Area Schools where he taught for thirty years. He has a B.A. from Oakland University and an M.Ed. from Wayne State. Larry is a past president of the Michigan Regimental Round Table and the G.W.Lee Roundtable.

Larry was born in northern Alabama where he developed his interest in the War Between the States. Members of his family served in the Confederate and Union armies during the war. Over twenty Hathcock men served in the Army of Northern Virginia and fought in the Battle of Gettysburg. In 1992, Larry participated in the making of the movie "Gettysburg" at Gettysburg, PA.

Larry served six years in the U.S. Naval Reserve with three years active duty in the U.S. Navy as a Radioman 3<sup>rd</sup> Class. Larry has previously given talks to the ALCWRT on Civil War naval subjects.

**MARCH SPEAKER:** Dr. Roger Rosentreter will be the featured speaker at our March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting.

His topic: *Bold, Brave & Brash: Michigan's Civil War Generals.*

## MOUNT VERNON in the CIVIL WAR

In February we celebrate Presidents' Day, in honor of arguably our two greatest US Presidents.

Instead of focusing on our round table's namesake, this month's essay takes a look at George Washington's home Mount Vernon, and how it fared during the Civil War.

### MOUNT VERNON from 1734 to 1858 -

In 1734, George Washington's father Augustine built a modest one and a half story house on the banks of the Potomac. George did not inherit the estate outright until 1762, but began one of several expansions to the house in 1758 while his uncle lived there. The 1774 additions -- the north and south wings, the cupola and piazza -- resulted in the two and a half story house that we see when we visit today. Washington's holdings at the time included five farms, a gristmill, and a whiskey distillery.

Washington died at Mount Vernon in 1799, and the house passed to his descendants through his nephew.

By 1858, the house was in very bad shape. Here's a picture of its familiar portico being held up by old ship's masts:



... continued ...

**The MOUNT VERNON LADIES' ASSOCIATION -**

*"If the men of America have seen fit to allow the home of its most respected hero to go to ruin, why can't the women of America band together to save it?"*

Prompted by these words of her mother, South Carolinian Ann Pamela Cunningham challenged women in the South (and later in the entire country) to save Mount Vernon. The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association was formed, and convinced John Augustine Washington III to sell them the house and 200 acres for \$200,000.

Funds to purchase the home were raised from donations small and large, e.g., \$4.18 from a group of New York newsboys; \$500 from a benefit performance of "Our American Cousin" starring Edwin Booth and Laura Keane. Final payment was due by the end of 1861, but the MVLA, through its successful fundraising efforts, made the final payment two years early in December, 1859, and took possession of the house in early 1860.

**A ROYAL VISITOR -**

It's typical today for dignitaries visiting Washington, D.C. to take a tour of Mount Vernon. This custom started on October 5, 1860 when the Prince of Wales (Queen Victoria's eldest son, and the future King Edward VII), accompanied by President Buchanan and other dignitaries, took a steamer from D.C. to the Mount Vernon wharf for an afternoon visit. His visit included a stop at Washington's tomb, where it's said that with his own hands he planted several large horse chestnuts. Because of the state of the house at the time of his visit, the MVLA presented Mount Vernon as an ongoing patriotic restoration process.

The Prince had travelled to D.C. via Detroit, where he had entered the U.S. in September. This U.S. trip was an extension of his two-month visit on official business to Canada, and the side trip was intended to foster good relations with the U.S. Because of growing tensions between the north and south, the Prince did not plan to visit any southern states, but public pressure resulted in his attending Sunday Mass in Richmond at St. Paul's Episcopal Church and touring the city with the Governor, after which his party traveled to Baltimore, then on to Philadelphia.

**THE CIVIL WAR YEARS -**

How was the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association able to keep the estate protected, neutral, and open to the public during the Civil War?

Mount Vernon sits on the Potomac River in Virginia within 100 miles of Richmond, less than 30 miles from Manassas, less than 50 miles from Fredericksburg, and within 20 miles of Washington, DC. By late May, 1861, Union troops had occupied Alexandria, just nine miles to the north, and Confederate patrols and pickets were posted just a few miles to the south, putting the estate firmly between the lines. By 1862, the Potomac was a busy thoroughfare for steamers ferrying troops back and forth. Confederate cavalry raids were common in the area throughout the war. These all posed a great challenge for the safety and security of Washington's home and also to its caretakers.

**The Caretakers** - Sarah C. Tracy of New York and Upton H. Herbert of Virginia were the on-site caretakers of the Mount Vernon estate during the Civil War. Sarah Tracy was the secretary to Ann Pamela Cunningham, founder of the MVLA, and had moved to Mount Vernon with Cunningham when the MVLA took possession of the property in early 1860. Upton Herbert had been recommended by his long-time friend John Augustine Washington III to be the first Resident Superintendent. Between the two of them, they negotiated life in the no-man's land. As a northerner, Tracy could negotiate with the Federal side for travel passes to buy supplies, sell produce, and conduct other business in managing the estate. As a Virginian, Herbert played a similar role negotiating with the Confederacy.

**Order Number 13** - Ann Pamela Cunningham was still head of the MVLA, but was unable to return from South Carolina where she had gone in late 1860 upon the death of her father. She felt it imperative that, in order to protect the house, no military outposts be allowed on the estate. To that end, Sarah Tracy made a visit to General Winfield Scott, who issued Order Number 13 declaring the estate's status as non-partisan. When she saw that General Scott's letter had erroneously reported that Rebel troops had overrun the property and damaged Washington's grave, Tracy wrote to newspapers to correct the misrepresentation. A similar declaration of neutrality was issued by the Confederacy as well. As commanders changed over the course of the war, Tracy and Herbert would have to get similar orders reissued to maintain Mount Vernon's status as a non-partisan site.

**Sarah's Egg Basket** – When John Augustine Washington III, a member of R. E. Lee's staff, was killed in 1861 in a skirmish in W. Virginia, Federal troops tried to confiscate his bank account as enemy property. That account contained a great deal of the money paid by the MVLA for Mount Vernon. The banker, Mr. Burke, anticipating this, hid the money and bonds at his home and alerted Sarah Tracy. She made a trip into the city with her egg basket (she had secured a travel pass), tucked the funds away under the eggs, then crossed into Washington, D.C., where she deposited the funds in a Union bank to be held for the Washington family. *Side note: If JAWIII had still owned Mount Vernon at the time of his death, would it have been confiscated by the Union and used by Federal troops? Given the state of disrepair of the house at that time, what affect would that have had on later preservation efforts?*

On another occasion, when her travel pass had been revoked, Tracy talked her way in to see President Lincoln, as he was the only person (she had been told) who could reinstate her pass. She informed Lincoln that in the future his soldiers should stand aside when she passed with her groceries for sale, as this income was for the preservation of Mount Vernon.

**Military Visitors to Mount Vernon** – Since the estate had been declared neutral by both sides, any soldiers visiting were required to lay down their arms and remove any insignia before entering the property. If soldiers had no other clothing, they would sometimes cover their uniforms and insignia (including buttons) with a shawl. If they could, they would pay the 25 cent admission fee. The fact that soldiers of both sides revered George Washington, either as the first President or as a Virginian, helped in enforcing the rules for military visitors.

**Other income** - In 1860 the MVLA had built a new wharf to facilitate visitors. By August 1862, after the Second Battle of Bull Run, river traffic to Mount Vernon had virtually stopped, taking with it the estate's main source of income. Sarah Tracy, after the war, recounted how difficult it was "...to make both ends meet. To contrive that peas, beans, cabbage, and flowers shall pay for rakes and hoes; flowers and photographs shall pay a gardener; that bricks shall pay for little odds and ends of plastering, bricklaying, etc., and when these fall short, and the corn has failed, or been stolen from the fields as it was last year, and feed is to be bought, to contrive where we can pinch out the means to foot the bill. Mr. Herbert is very good at managing these things."

#### **THE MVLA's LEGACY** -

Much of what is known about Mount Vernon during the Civil War comes from the correspondence between South Carolinian Ann Pamela Cunningham and New Yorker Sarah Tracy.

The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association continues to maintain and preserve George Washington's home today, taking no federal funding for their work. The MVLA was the first national historic preservation organization and is the oldest women's patriotic society in the United States. It was a pioneer in the field of preservation. The MVLA's ability to preserve Mount Vernon in the Civil War years is due to the vision of its founders and the gumption of its caretakers.

And what of those caretakers? Sarah Tracy and Upton Herbert, after resigning from their posts at Mount Vernon, married in 1872.

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**HOLD the DATE..!**

**A celebration of the Abraham Lincoln Civil War Round Table's Jubilee Year is being planned for the spring of 2019..!!**

\* Watch for an email soon, once the date and other details are confirmed.

\* Yes, technically the Jubilee was this past Fall, but who could turn down what is expected to be a wonderful party!

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**THIS and THAT --**

\* **THANKS to TOM NANZIG** for his January presentation "Civil War Trivia: Little Known Facts of the Civil War", and to all the great audience participation..!

\* **SPRING TRIP? FALL TRIP?** *People have been asking:*

~ There's no trip planned for this Spring, but we're hoping to schedule something in the Fall.

\* **REFRESHMENTS for FUTURE MEETINGS –**

~ Let Liz know if you're interested in bringing refreshments to a future meeting.

\* **ANNUAL DUES –**

~ Worley is always happy to collect your dues

~ \$20 for a single ~~ \$35 for a couple

~ Dues are payable by the calendar year (January through December)