

**/HEADS UP /** In JANUARY & MARCH, our meeting will be in the **MULTI-FUNCTION Room** instead of in the Chamber Council ROOM.



### **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"*

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### **JACK DEMPSEY** will be the featured speaker on **JANUARY 16**.

His presentation is based on the first-ever full-length biography of one of Michigan's great heroes and one of the Civil War's most unsung generals, **ALPHEUS S. WILLIAMS**. Williams's Civil War correspondence has, since publication in 1959, been frequently quoted by major works and preeminent historians. Williams's key roles at Cedar Mountain, Antietam (including the Lost Order), Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, the Atlanta Campaign, the March to the Sea, and the final saga of the March through the Carolinas, have never been appreciated or recounted. His deliverance of formerly enslaved during the March to the Sea has never been highlighted. The story of his private life, growing up in New England, graduating from Yale law school, moving to Detroit as a young man and taking up civic and militia service, suffering personal loss, culminating in being stricken with a fatal illness while serving as Congressman in the U.S. Capitol, has never been told.

**NOTE:** *Proceeds from book sales benefit the effort to erect a Michigan monument at the Antietam National Battlefield.*

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**Jack Dempsey** is an author, attorney, church leader, historian, and public servant. He has authored three books on the Civil War and three on Michigan heritage, besides numerous articles on history and the law. Two of his works merited the coveted Michigan Notable Books award. A graduate of James Madison College at Michigan State University and the National Law Center at George Washington University, Jack practiced law for over 40 years and is nearly a lifelong student of American history. He served on the Michigan Historical Commission from 2007-2018, being elected five times to the post of its President, as well as on the Michigan Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee and the Michigan World War I Centennial Commission. He has formed and served on the boards and as officer of several Michigan heritage nonprofits. He was the top vote-getter for Trustee of Plymouth Township in November 2016. \* His latest book is the first full-length biography of an unsung citizen-soldier hero, Alpheus Starkey Williams.

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**Thanks to Ron Carley** for entertaining us with a game of Presidential Jeopardy at our November meeting. When all was said and done, he allowed as how our group was one of the best he's encountered with knowing historical trivia. Thanks, too, to all those who attended the November meeting and making it a fun evening..!

## WHY WAS ANDREW JOHNSON IMPEACHED?

*In the film version of The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, Sam and Frodo make this observation while wandering lost in the wilderness:*

*Sam: "This looks strangely familiar."*

*Frodo: "That's because we've been here before..."*

### THE SHORT VERSION

On March 2-3, 1868, the U.S. House of Representatives voted eleven articles of impeachment against Andrew Johnson, the 17<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, and sent them to the U.S. Senate for adjudication. The Senate trial began three days later.

Thirty-six votes, the two-thirds hurdle, were needed to impeach. On May 16, the Senate failed to convict Johnson on one article of impeachment by one vote: 35 to 19. After a ten day recess, the Senate voted on the next two articles, and again the vote was 35 to 19. Having failed to convict on three articles, the trial was adjourned May 26, ending the first impeachment trial of a President of the United States.

### WHAT WAS JOHNSON'S IMPEACHMENT ABOUT?

Specifically, Johnson was impeached over his violation of the Tenure of Office Act.

(Nine of the eleven articles of impeachment were about this Act). Congress had passed the Act a year earlier, in an attempt to prevent Johnson from replacing some members of the cabinet he had inherited from Lincoln's administration. The Tenure of Office Act required a President to get Senate advice and consent before removing any member of his Cabinet or any other federal official who had previously required Senate advice and consent before being appointed.

The Tenure of Office Act had passed in 1867 over Johnson's veto, but Johnson went ahead and attempted to replace Edwin Stanton as Secretary of War anyway. The Act allowed a President to replace a Cabinet member when Congress was not in session. That's when Johnson made his move and asked Stanton to resign – but Stanton refused..! So Johnson suspended Stanton and named General Grant as interim Secretary of War. When Congress returned to session and adopted a resolution of non-concurrence with Johnson's actions, Grant resigned, and the Senate reinstated Stanton in January 1868.

Johnson did not give up, though. He offered the Secretary of War position to General William Tecumseh Sherman who was, to put it mildly, not an admirer of Stanton's. (Recall that Stanton had publicly rebuked Sherman in 1865 for Sherman's leniency when accepting Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston's surrender). When Sherman and then General Jacob Cox both rejected Johnson's offer of the Secretary of War position, Johnson named Lorenzo Thomas, a former Union brevet major general. Stanton reacted by barricading himself in his office and ordering Thomas arrested for violating the Tenure of Office Act. Thomas remained under arrest for several days until Stanton realized that going to court would put the constitutionality of the Tenure of Office Act up for review.

*... continued ...*

### **WHY WERE JOHNSON and the CONGRESS at ODDS over STANTON?**

The fight with Congress was about Reconstruction policy, and this fight had really started earlier, with Lincoln. In 1863, after Gettysburg and Vicksburg, Lincoln had begun to look at how to bring about a reconciliation and reunification with the Confederate states. To this end, Lincoln had put forward a lenient plan for Reconstruction (the "ten percent plan"). This did not please the Radical Republicans (Stanton was one), who countered with the Wade-Davis Bill and its more stringent requirements for re-admittance to the Union. But Lincoln did not sign the Wade-Davis Bill; he pocket-vetoed it, which needless to say did not improve his working relationship with Congress.

So, along with inheriting Lincoln's Cabinet, Johnson apparently inherited some of the animosity that had been bubbling up between Congress and Lincoln. And many in Congress were leery of Johnson, who was, after all, a Southerner. When the Civil War broke out, Senator Johnson of Tennessee was the only Senator of a Confederate state who remained loyal to the Union and continued to serve in the Senate. Now that he was President and leading the reconstruction effort, many suspected his policies would be overly lenient, as they felt Lincoln's had been.

Their fears were confirmed in the first few months of his presidency in 1865. Johnson issued proclamations of general amnesty for most former military and government Confederates. He oversaw creation of new governments in the Confederate states, led in many cases by ex-Confederate officials. He vetoed legislation extending the Freedmen's Bureau and expanding its powers, which Congress did not have the votes to override. Johnson also denounced several of the "radicals" as traitors. Later, Congress was able to override vetoes of a second Freedmen's Bureau law and a civil rights act. Congress and the new President were clearly at odds over the policies of Reconstruction.

In 1866, Johnson appealed directly to the American public in a "Swing Around the Circle" speaking tour. He urged the crowds to elect representatives in the upcoming mid-terms who were supportive of his policies. His plan backfired. After the mid-terms of 1866, Congress had veto-proof Republican majorities in both houses of Congress. The Radical Republicans took control of Reconstruction, and passed a series of laws -- the Reconstruction Acts -- laying out the requirements for Confederate states to be re-admitted to the Union. Each of these Acts was passed over Johnson's veto.

The first of these Reconstruction Acts divided the Confederate states (except for Johnson's home state of Tennessee) into five military districts, and placed the states' governments under control of the military. As Commander-in-Chief, Johnson had control of the military, but Secretary of War Stanton, a staunch Radical Republican, was in a position to comply with Congress' directives to the military and end-run Johnson. So Congress passed the Tenure of Office Act in 1867 to prevent Johnson from removing their guy Stanton from his position as Secretary of War. When Johnson attempted to replace Stanton anyway, this triggered the House to pass the eleven articles of impeachment against him.

*... continued ...*

## WHO VOTED NO?

As noted above, three of the eleven articles of impeachment came up for a vote, and each failed to pass by just one vote. All nine Democratic Senators voted not to convict, along with ten Republican Senators. Seven of those Republicans voted no over their concerns that the proceedings had been manipulated. There is evidence of monetary bribes and offers of ambassadorships and other positions in exchange for votes to convict: *“Tell [the Senator] that if he wants money there is a bushel of it here to be had”* – for the right vote, of course. So this handful of seven Republican Senators voted no in objection to these quid pro quo vote-buying efforts by the “convict” crowd.

One of the key no votes was made by Senator Edmund G. Ross of Kansas, who is profiled in a chapter of JFK’s *Profiles in Courage*. Another no vote was by Lyman Trumbull of Illinois, who was concerned with erosion of the separation of powers. He explained his no vote later in a speech this way:

*If Johnson had been convicted, then the main source of a President’s political power – the freedom to disagree with Congress without consequences – would have been destroyed, along with the Constitution’s system of checks and balances.*

... Which leads us back to the Tenure of Office Act.

## WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TENURE OF OFFICE ACT?

The Tenure of Office Act was amended under President Grant, watering down restrictions by Congress on a President’s ability to appoint members of his own administration. Twenty years later, in 1887, the Tenure of Office Act was repealed by Congress.

Later rulings by the Supreme Court supported Johnson’s position that as President, he was entitled to fire Stanton or any other member of his administration. In 1926, in *Myers v. United States*, the Supreme Court upheld a President’s ability to remove (in this case) a postmaster without getting Congress’s approval. The majority opinion of that ruling explicitly states “the Tenure of Office Act of 1867 ... was invalid.”

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## **The EGG NOG RIOT of 1826 -- also known as The GROG MUTINY**

In 1826 there were 260 cadets at West Point, supervised by Col. Sylvanus Thayer, who had been brought in to improve discipline at the institution. One reform was to ban booze on campus: no drinking it, no possessing it, and no showing up drunk on campus. Violations of this rule could mean expulsion.

Back then, many cadets couldn’t make the long trip home for Christmas. Thayer’s ban meant no Christmas egg nog. Now egg nog in those days was not the bland fare we get at Kroger’s. For example, George Washington’s own recipe contained not just rum, but sherry, brandy, and whiskey, too. Ho Ho Ho..!

Several cadets snuck off to a local tavern Christmas Eve, returning with a few gallons of nog to share with their comrades in the North Barracks. One of the leaders was Jeff Davis – yes, that Jeff Davis. Thayer had posted guards, suspecting foul play. Around 4 a.m. all you-know-what broke loose. Drunken cadets tried to attack the guards, and an estimated 70 to 90 drunk cadets were brawling and breaking windows and furniture. The North Barracks was so badly trashed that it was later demolished.

At roll call the next morning, South Barracks cadets – including one R.E. Lee -- were well-dressed and well-rested. Those North Barracks cadets, though, were quite hungover. Needless to say, heads rolled after courts-martials. Nineteen of the worst offenders were expelled – but not Jeff Davis. Somehow he beat the rap.

**... Hope everyone had a nice holiday season, with all the egg nog you desired ...**

## ***LIST of SPEAKERS for 2020***

\* If you have suggestions for a future speaker, please contact Brian Mayer: [bwmayer@umich.edu](mailto:bwmayer@umich.edu) \*

<b><u>date</u></b>	<b><u>speaker</u></b>	<b><u>topic</u></b>
JAN 16	Jack Dempsey	"Alpheus S. Williams"
FEB 20	Pam Dawson	"Mary Todd Lincoln: the White House Years"
MAR 19	Roy Finkenbine	"Much Apu about Nothing: What Caused the Civil War?"
APR 16	Bob Allen	"The Lincoln Assassination & J.W. Booth's Escape and Killing: Sifting the Facts from the Myths"
MAY 21	Mark Hoffman	"Michigan Civil War Soldiers & Their Communities"
SEPT 17	Jerry Eising	"Untold Stories of the Civil War"
OCT 15	Jillian Drapala	"Women in the Civil War"
NOV 19	Liz Stringer	"Elmira Hancock's Diary"

## ***THIS and THAT***

### **MEETING ROOM for our January & March meetings --**

The ALCWRT meetings in January & March will be in the Multi-Function room instead of in the Council Room.

### **DINNER before the MEETINGS at STELLA's TRACKSIDE in PLYMOUTH --**

At 5:30pm on meeting nights, the group hosts the speaker for dinner at Stella's Trackside in Plymouth.  
All are welcome – No need to call ahead.

### **ANNUAL DUES --**

Worley is always happy to collect your dues: ~ \$20/single ~ \$30/couple ~ Payable by calendar year.