



**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 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary is 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.*  
**\*\*\*\* NO APRIL MTG \*\*\*\*\***  
**\*\*\*\* due to SPRING TRIP \*\*.**
- *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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**"MEDICAL ASPECTS of the LINCOLN ASSASSINATION"** will be presented by **Thomas Mudd** at the March 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ALCWRT.

**PREVIEW -- Per Tom Mudd:**

*"It would take a very thick book to cover such a topic in depth, so I will be discussing some of the more interesting sidelights concerning those involved."*

**ABOUT our SPEAKER --**

Tom graduated with B.A. and M.A. degrees from Michigan State University, majoring in History, English and Education. He taught in Saginaw, Virginia, Maryland, U.S. Virgin Islands, Okinawa (Japan), Germany, and Bermuda. He currently serves as president of the Saginaw Valley Historic Preservation Society, the Saginaw County Hall of Fame, and as a board member of the City of Saginaw Historic District Commission, the Friends of Hoyt Park, and the Catholic Heritage Museum.

Tom last spoke to our group in March, 2011: "In Defense of Dr. Mudd". We look forward to another stimulating and educational presentation ! \*\*

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

**DEPOSIT DEADLINE:** At the Feb 16<sup>th</sup> meeting, Liz let us know that she needs **deposits by March 21 \***. Deposit is \$50 / person.

**Why:** She has to release any "unclaimed" hotel rooms on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**STILL DECIDING whether or not to JOIN the SPRING TRIP? --**

Get details and the registration form at **ALCWRT.org**, under "**Battlefield Tours**". We'll visit the Shenandoah Valley, one of the most crucial areas of the Civil War, guided by our old friend Scott Patchan, well- known for his mastery of battlefield tours, along with his particular knowledge and background of both Valley Campaigns. \* We will concentrate on the 1862 Campaign that made Stonewall Jackson a legend as the Confederacy's foremost hero, earning the sobriquet "Foot Cavalry" for his soldiers who marched over 350 miles. \*\*

- WHEN's the TRIP:** April 21 – April 24, 2017
- WHAT's the COST?** \$ 545 (double occupancy) – Single supplement \$ 224
- WHAT to do NOW:** \* Get your deposit & registration form to Liz by 03/21.  
 \* Final payment due by 04/10.

## TOP SECRET: The Stager Ciphers in the Civil War

In the January newsletter, we learned about a project currently underway to decipher a batch of over 5,000 coded telegrams (including approximately 100 by Lincoln) discovered in an attic in 2009. The whole batch of nearly 16,000 telegrams (both the coded and the uncoded ones) were found by the heirs of Thomas T. Eckert, director of the Military Telegraph Office at the War Department during the Civil War. (*The January newsletter is posted at [alcwrt.org](http://alcwrt.org) under "Newsletters", and tells you how to view the telegrams online, and even help in the decoding, if you're so inclined.*)

**Who created that most widely used – and some say most effective – secret code?** Anson Stager, born in Ontario County, NY in 1833 had, by the time of the Civil War, worked his way up from telegraph operator to general superintendent of the Western Union Telegraph Company, headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio. When the war broke out, Stager was given responsibility for all telegraph lines in the Ohio military district, and was also asked (though he had no particular expertise or prior interest) to develop an encryption scheme to protect government communications. When McClellan learned of it, he asked (ordered?) Stager to prepare a cipher for use in the field. It later became the official cipher of the War Dept.

### How did the cipher work?

It was a simple word transposition, or "route," cipher. Here's how a Civil War telegrapher described it:

"The principle of the cipher consisted in writing a message with an equal number of words in each line, then copying the words up and down the columns by various routes, throwing in an extra word at the end of each column, and substituting other words for important names and verbs".

But the real key to the code's success was absolute secrecy. Only a few people were allowed access to the codebook. In fact, when Grant ordered telegraph operator Corporal Samuel Beckwith to disclose the key to a staff officer, Beckwith refused point blank, stating orders from the War Dept. Caught between two chains of command, Beckwith finally yielded when Grant threatened punishment, but was subsequently reprimanded by the War Dept and ordered to be relieved. (He was ultimately reinstated after intervention by Grant). Even after all that, Halleck upheld Stager's order to protect the codebook, and told Grant that in future no special ciphers would be communicated to Grant's staff (unless authorized by the War Dept). Even Lincoln, a frequent visitor to the War Dept telegraph office, was denied access! \*\*

**WINSLOW HOMER'S DEFIANCE at the DIA** Looking to get out of the house while waiting for spring?

Don't forget that Winslow Homer's *Defiance: Inviting a Shot Before Petersburg* is owned by the DIA.

If you can't get there, you can view it online at the DIA website.

**WHAT DID WE LEARN ?** Thanks to **David Ingall** for his February talk "*Michigan Civil War Sites and Stories*".

Here's a **quick quiz** to see what we learned..!

(Answers in "*This and That*" below).

- (1) In the 1830's, what future general surveyed the state line between Michigan and Ohio?
- (2) What was James Longstreet's connection to Michigan?
- (3) What is Sarah Emma Edmonds' claim to fame?

**THIS and THAT -- \*\* SPECIAL NOTE: No April Meeting due to the Spring Trip leaving the next morning \*\***

- **2017 DUES are DUE:** Please pay Worley at the next meeting. Not sure if you've paid?: email him at [alcwrt@AOL.com](mailto:alcwrt@AOL.com)
- **David Ingall will present "Michigan Civil War Sites & Stories" on APRIL 10<sup>th</sup> 7pm at the Ann Arbor OWRT**
- **Google '2017 Michigan CW events by Keith Harrison'** for a calendar of upcoming events in Michigan this year.
- **MEETINGS now start at 7:30pm -- DINNER at STATION 885 at 6:00pm before the meetings.**
- **REFRESHMENTS** - Volunteer to bring cookies to a future meeting, and everyone will love you !!
- **QUIZ ANSWERS** - (1) R.E. Lee (2) He married the granddaughter of Flint's founder. The land he owned there was returned to him after the war. (3) She's the only woman admitted to the GAR.