



ABOUT the ALCWRT

- *The Abraham Lincoln Civil War Round Table is the oldest Civil War Round Table in Michigan, founded in 1952. Our JUBILEE (65th) anniversary was 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"*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

MARCH PRESENTATION:

Bold, Brave, Brash: Michigan's Civil War Generals p.1

APRIL PRESENTATION PREVIEW p.1

CIVIL WAR PENSIONS:

Then, ... and Now? p.2

WHAT DID WE LEARN? p.4

HOLD THESE DATES! p.5

THIS and THAT p.5

Dr. ROGER ROSENTERETER will be our featured speaker for the MARCH 15th meeting of the Abraham Lincoln Civil War Round Table.

BOLD, BRAVE & BRASH: Michigan's Civil War Generals

How many generals did Michigan produce during the Civil War? Historians usually count seventy-three Michigan generals. The well-known Custer, Willcox, Richardson and Williams. Students of Grand Rapids history will recognize Alger, Pierce and Innes. But who were William Sanborn, Elisha Mix, Herman M. Whittelsey and all the others? Roger Rosentreter assesses our state's "star-studded cast".

ABOUT OUR SPEAKER --

A native Michiganiaan, Roger Rosentreter teaches courses on American history (Michigan history, Civil War and Modern U.S. Military) at Michigan State University. He served as editor of *Michigan History* magazine from 1988 through 2009, and has published extensively on Michigan history, including *Michigan: A History of Explorer, Entrepreneurs and Everyday People* (University of Michigan Press, 2014) and *Grand Rapids in the Civil War* (History Press, April 2018).

Rosentreter earned his MA and PhD degrees from Michigan State University's Department of History.

APRIL SPEAKERS:

Ken Giorlando & Larissa Fleishman will be the featured speakers at our April 19th meeting, in which they will role-play the life of an everyday farming family in the Civil War era.

CIVIL WAR PENSIONS: Then ... and Now?

At our February meeting, Larry Hathcock gave a fascinating presentation about *The Last Veterans of the Blue and Gray*. He referenced in his talk the pension systems that provided stipends for Civil War veterans.

While both the former Union and Confederate veterans received benefits, the rules and administration of them differed.

WHERE DID THIS IDEA OF A MILITARY PENSION COME FROM? -

Pensions were originally devised as a form of extra compensation to entice men to join the military. In what is now the U.S., there is a record from the 1630's of the Plymouth colony offering a pension to those disabled when defending the colony from the Indians. In the Revolutionary War, our first pension law was passed that formalized this promise of extra compensation for eligible veterans, with the states being responsible for making the actual payments. By 1789, the U.S. federal government assumed responsibility for making the pension payments to disabled vets. Prior to 1818, pensions were only offered for a few years. By 1818, benefits were expanded to all eligible veterans for life.

CIVIL WAR ERA PENSIONS -

Pension systems in the Civil War became more complicated than those from earlier wars. There were two pension systems (North and South) each with differing rules and eligibility requirements. And as the years went on, the rules were loosened so that more and more groups of people were covered.

The Union's pension system for veterans –

A pension system for Union soldiers began in 1862 for soldiers disabled during military service. Rank and type of injury determined the payment. When first enacted, this first pension system provided a totally disabled private \$8/month. As the war dragged on and it became harder to recruit new soldiers, the pension amount was increased.

Originally, pension payments started from the time a veteran applied for a pension. In 1879, the Arrears Act passed. This provided a lump sum payment to cover the time between when the disabled veteran left the service and when he received his first pension payment.

In 1890, the Dependent Pension Act expanded eligibility to veterans who were disabled and unable to do manual labor, even if the disability was not a direct result of the war. A vet just had to show that he had served at least ninety days and had been honorably discharged. The result? More people signed up, but also a large number of men transferred their disability pensions to this new service pension, which paid more.

In 1892, Union nurses who had served a least six months, had been honorably discharged, and who could not support themselves were also added to the pension rolls. They received \$12/month as their pension.

In 1907, old age itself was considered a disability, and the amount paid depended just on the veteran's age. By 1910, 90% of living Union veterans were receiving some kind of pension. By 1912, the monthly payment had increased from the initial \$8/month to \$30/month.

While pension eligibility was color-blind, the early qualification requirements made it less likely that black veterans would qualify initially. Black soldiers had not been assigned to combat roles until later in the war, and they were less likely to be hospitalized so that disability resulting from service was harder to prove.

Pensions for Union widows followed the same pattern of increasing eligibility over the years, too. Originally, a widow received a pension if her husband had died while in service, she was married to him at the time of his death, and she had not remarried. The 1890 Act provided a pension to a widow if her husband was disabled for any reason (not necessarily war-related) at the time of his death. By 1901, a widow was eligible if she had remarried but her second husband was now deceased. By 1916, a widow of any honorable discharged veteran could receive a pension, whether or not she had remarried.

Pensions in the former Confederacy –

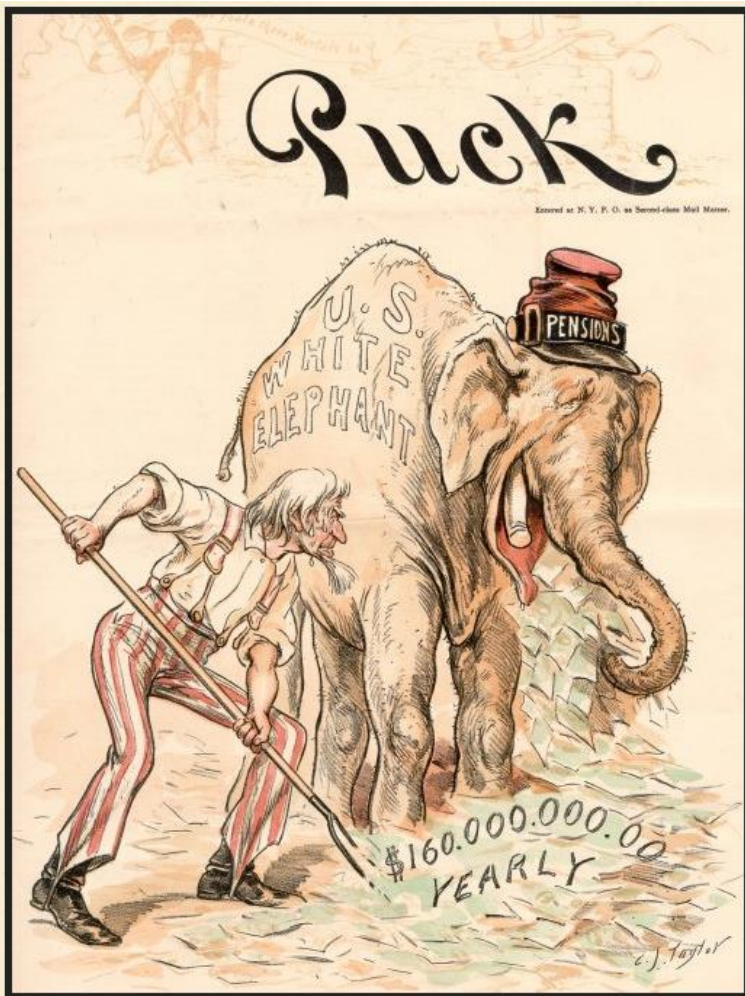
Confederate veterans were not eligible for federal government assistance, and they were returning home to states that were devastated economically, thus less able to compensate them for their service. Each former Confederate state had its own rules and eligibility requirements. Georgia's plan helps to illustrate the types of assistance provided to Confederate veterans.

The first tangible assistance Confederate veterans could receive was artificial limbs. In 1871, Georgia began providing these at no cost, though the veteran paid to travel to the state capitol, and there was no compensation for work time lost. In 1889 Georgia began providing annual pension payments to "disabled and diseased" veterans, depending on the amount of disability. In 1893, widows became eligible. By 1896, those unable to care for themselves economically were added to the rolls. By 1920, this income restriction was removed. By 1944, remarried widows could receive a \$30/month pension.

Because these Confederate pensions were funded and administered at the state level, and the states could not issue tariffs to fund them like in the North, states in the South relied on tobacco taxes. But during the Depression, these revenues proved inadequate. In 1937, Georgia had 232 veterans and 1,377 widows receiving pensions, and the state missed a few payments during this time for lack of revenue.

PENSIONS and POLITICS –

In 1873, less than a decade after the war, there were 8,000 people receiving Civil War era pensions from the federal government. By 1893, when there were fewer and fewer living veterans, that number had grown to a million people, and the payments were consuming about 40% of the federal budget. Here's a typical cartoon of the time:



... continued ...

A new cottage industry is born –

Applying for a pension required a veteran to fill out a form listing his service, disability, and current status; to supply witnesses testifying to what was in his application; and (for disability claims) getting a physical from a government-approved doctor. This process took time, money, and often some travel. Most veterans didn't have the ready cash and couldn't afford time away from work or the farm. The new profession of pension attorney emerged to help veterans get through the application process in return for a cut of the future monthly stipend. This, along with the laws that loosened eligibility requirements, helped to fuel the increases in the pension systems.

Presidential politics –

By the time Grover Cleveland was elected to become 22nd president in 1885, Congress had developed the habit of passing private relief bills to give out individual pensions to those who didn't qualify under the already-loosened pension rules. Congress would take up 100 or even 200 of these private bills on a Friday afternoon and pass them with a single vote. From 1885 to 1887, fully 55% of all the bills introduced in the U.S. Senate were these private pension bills.

Grover Cleveland began vetoing these private bills right away, and would include an often acerbic note on each one with his veto. The reason he still holds the presidential record for most vetoes is precisely because of this situation. His reward for vetoing 220 of these private pension bills in his first term was to lose re-election to Harrison. But Harrison began signing these pension bills regardless of their validity, and Cleveland defeated Harrison in the 1892 campaign on charges of perpetuating this corruption of the rules.

AND NOW...? –

Along with the expansion in eligibility over the years for veterans and widows, orphans and other dependents were also added to the rolls. Which brings us to today...

A U.S. News article in May, 2017 (yes, 2017!) reported that the U.S. government was still paying a Civil War era pension to the 86-year-old daughter of a Civil War veteran. Irene Triplett was collecting \$73.13/month for her father's Civil War military pension. (Her identify was first reported by the Wall Street Journal in 2014).

Reportedly, Irene is the daughter of veteran Moses Triplett and his second wife, who was 50+ years his junior. Moses, born in 1846, joined the Confederate army in 1862 but later deserted and joined the Union army. Irene was the fourth of his five children with his second wife Elida, and Moses was reportedly 83 when Irene was born.

WHAT DID WE LEARN...?

Thanks to Larry Hathcock for his enlightening presentation at our February meeting, *The Last Veterans of the Blue & Gray*. Here's a **quick quiz** to see what we learned..! (Answers in "This and That" below).

- (1) Walter Williams was celebrated in Texas as the last surviving Confederate veteran.
Where was he born, and when?
- (2) Larry Hathcock's research indicates that his ancestor from Crawford's Cove, Alabama, is most likely the last surviving Confederate veteran. In what Army did Pleasant Riggs Crump serve?
- (3) Albert Henry Wilson of Minnesota, the last Union veteran, attended the last GAR encampment in 1949.
What was his rank when he served?
- (4) Why is James Hart of New York state also given the designation as last Union veteran?

HOLD THESE DATES..!

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**ALCWRT's JUBILEE YEAR CELEBRATION -**

**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 great party!

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FALL TRIP -

Yes, the ALCWRT "powers that be" are planning a FALL TRIP for 2018..!!

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

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**THIS and THAT --**

**\* QUICK QUIZ ANSWERS -**

(1) Walter Williams was born in Itawamba County, Mississippi.

Up through the 1910 census, he was reported to have been born around 1854/1855.

By the 1920 census, though, he was listed as born between 1848 and 1850.

He applied for and began receiving a Confederate pension from the state of Texas in 1932.

(2) Pleasant Riggs Crump, Larry Hathcock's ancestor, served in the Army of Northern Virginia near Petersburg.

At the time he was deployed there, Petersburg was under siege by Grant.

(3) Albert Henry Wilson was a drummer boy.

(4) James Hart, who died three years before Albert Wilson, was the last surviving Union combat veteran.

**\* STATION 885 -**

~ Yes, the group still meets for dinner prior to the monthly meetings...

~ Please join us for spirited and enlightening conversation !

**\* 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)