

\* It's finally here..!  
 You've been holding Oct. 14 for the  
**ALCWRT Anniversary Party at the GAR**  
 \* See the last page for details \*



### 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**
- Like us on **FACEBOOK**...!  
 "Abraham Lincoln Civil War Round Table"

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## ALCWRT ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

### with special guest Will Greene

Please join us on **Monday October 14<sup>th</sup>** at the beautifully renovated **GAR Building** in Detroit to celebrate ALCWRT's sixty-seven year history. Drinks & dinner at 6pm followed by a presentation by A. Wilson Greene, author of the highly acclaimed new book (volume 1 of 3),  
 "A Campaign of Giants: The Battle for Petersburg".  
 Also joining us will be one of the Carleton brothers who rescued and restored the Detroit G.A.R. building, a fascinating story!

### FRIENDS & FAMILY are WELCOME..!

This will be a fascinating opportunity for any future history buffs and budding scholars to meet the author and historian Will Greene.

### PLEASE RSVP by Oct. 04 at the latest.

\* Invitation & details are on the last page of this newsletter \*

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### \*\* OCTOBER MEETING REMINDER \*\*

The Oct. 14<sup>th</sup> celebration at the G.A.R. takes the place of our regularly-scheduled meeting in Plymouth.

See you in Plymouth on November 21<sup>st</sup>.

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**THANKS to DAVE JORDAN** for his enlightening presentation in September: **"General Trimble at Gettysburg"**.

\* For a **Quick Quiz** about Dave's talk, go to page 5.

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## DETROIT'S G.A.R. BUILDING

*Detroit's G.A.R. Building is the location for the upcoming **ALCWRT Anniversary Dinner** on October 14<sup>th</sup>. Here's a little background about this historic building, and how it was rescued.*

### WHAT WAS THE G.A.R.?

The G.A.R., or Grand Army of the Republic, founded by Dr. Benjamin F. Stephenson in Springfield, IL in 1866, was a fraternal organization for veterans of the American Civil War. It became an advocacy group for voting rights for black veterans, improved veterans' pensions, and making Decoration Day (now Memorial Day) a national holiday.

The Detroit chapter was organized in May, 1881, as the Fairbanks Post, with 25 charter members. The group met at various locations in the city until it found its home at what is now known as the Detroit G.A.R. Building.

Membership peaked in the 1890's, corresponding to a time in which there were many Civil War commemorative and monument dedication ceremonies, triggered by the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the war. The Detroit chapter membership peaked at 1,556 members; national membership peaked at close to 410,000.

By 1942, the Detroit chapter had closed when the last living Civil War veteran in this area passed away. In 1956, the national organization officially dissolved as well.

### 1899 - 1939

In the 1890's demand for a permanent meeting place led to development of the G.A.R. Building that stands today on a triangular lot at the corner of Grand River and Cass Avenues. Construction financing came from the City of Detroit (a \$38,000 bond sale) and from G.A.R. chapters (\$6,000). The building was designed in the Richardson Romanesque style, popular at the time. (Another nearby landmark in the Richardson Romanesque style is the Detroit Club, a few blocks south on Cass at Fort Street). The cornerstone was laid July 4, 1899 and the ceremony to dedicate the new building was held January 15, 1901.

The G.A.R. Building sits on land willed to the City of Detroit in 1866 by General Lewis Cass. His will stipulated that the city owned the land on the condition that it forever be used for a "market place". By the 1890's, the meaning of the term "market place" had broadened to include storefronts. The city gave the local G.A.R. chapter a 30-year rent-free lease (a nod to the political power of the G.A.R. in those years) and, in keeping with Cass's will, the G.A.R. rented space to shopkeepers. The G.A.R. used the rents paid by the stores to heat and maintain the building. Fourteen other G.A.R.-affiliated organizations also shared use of the building.

When the 30-year lease expired in 1930, the city extended it year-to-year. But by 1934, membership in the Detroit G.A.R. chapter had dwindled to just 24 men. Only two stores remained and these did not bring in enough rent for the aging veterans to continue to maintain the property.

In 1939 the city took over the building. The G.A.R. chapter was given a room in which to continue to meet, and each member had a key to the building, until the chapter folded in 1942. Some of the affiliated organizations – the Daughters of the G.A.R., the Children of the G.A.R. the Daughters of Union Veterans, the Women's Relief Corps – formed the G.A.R. Memorial Association in an effort to have the building saved as a memorial, and were granted continued use of the second floor for their group.

*... continued ...*

**1939 – 2011**

When the city took over the building in 1939, it leased it to the city's Welfare Department for its Aid to Dependent Children Bureau. By the early 1940's, the city's Department of Parks and Recreation had taken over from the Welfare Department. For the next few decades, the building became a popular meeting spot -- everything from the G.A.R. Memorial Association, Alcoholics Anonymous, dance troupes, youth bands, theater rehearsals, checkers and chess tournaments. In 1982 in a cost-cutting move, Mayor Coleman Young closed the building and had it boarded up to limit deterioration.

In 1984 local architect Roger Margerum bought the building with plans to rehab it for offices but without success. The building reverted to city ownership. Other proposals -- for a B&B, condos, for a Knights of Columbus property -- similarly did not pan out.

In 1986, the G.A.R. Building was added to the National Register of Historic Places and thus became eligible for historic tax credits for redevelopment. But the Michigan Monumental Buildings Act of 1889 presented a challenge to such activity. That century-old law forbade governments from selling buildings jointly constructed by municipalities and the G.A.R. It states that such buildings "shall be forever dedicated to the memory of the Union soldiers of the War of the Rebellion."

In 1996, the city recommended the G.A.R. Building (and a dozen other nearby properties) be sold to Mike Ilitch for \$1.6 million, for inclusion in the development of Comerica Park. In 2000, descendants of Civil War veterans battled to stop the sale, citing the stipulations in Cass's original deed and also their desire that the building be used for its original purpose: a memorial to Union veterans. The Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War drafted an ambitious proposal -- a bank on the ground floor; a gift shop; event space for rent for seminars and banquets; a military museum; a fourth-floor ballroom to be available free of charge for local high school ROTCs; a Victorian tearoom; a fifth-floor space for the Mosaic Youth Theatre and for re-enactment groups. This proved to be another plan for the building that did not pan out. At the same time, the Ilitches backed off and the G.A.R. Building continued to sit boarded up and unused.

In 2005, the city filed a Complaint to Quiet Title, which sought to have the Michigan Monumental Buildings Act annulled and also to terminate the Sons and Daughters groups' rights to the building. The Sons and Daughters groups argued the city could never vacate the deed and must maintain ownership for all time. In 2006, the city settled the suit and the Kilpatrick administration stepped up its efforts to find a buyer. The price was set at \$220,000 with the stipulation that the G.A.R.'s historic architecture be preserved.

Six bidders submitted proposals in November, 2006. Ilitch had the winning bid. But he sat on the property for a couple of years, and the sale was eventually rescinded by the city as the City Council was skeptical of the low price paid.

Into the breach stepped one of the other of the six bidding entities from 2006, brothers David and Tom Carleton and partner Sean Emery. They purchased the building from the city in 2011 and began extensive repairs and renovations. Their efforts restored the beauty of the dramatic staircase and framed windows, and overall preserved much of the building's original charm.

*... continued ...*

## DETROIT'S G.A.R. BUILDING TODAY



After extension renovations, the G.A.R. Building is open once again. Housed on the top two floors is Mindfield, the film and video production company owned and operated by the Carleton brothers and Emery. Castle Hall, a private event space, occupies the second floor. At ground level is a kitchen supporting the building's two restaurants. Parks & Rec is a breakfast diner, its name a nod to the building's longtime use as a rec center starting in the 1940's. The other restaurant, Republic, is an upscale American-style eatery whose motto is "We're Just Friends Cooking for Friends".

The development agreement with the city requires that the owners create a memorial to veterans of the Civil War. **The memorial room is targeted for a 2020 opening**, and will house artifacts found in the building during renovation – a Spencer rifle, a uniform, portraits, whiskey glasses – along with donated items. The owners are working with Bruce Butgereit of Grand Rapids, a Civil War preservationist and executive director of History Remembered, Inc. He describes the planned memorial room this way:

*"The memorial room will help tell the story of the building through text, photos, artifacts and more, in a timeline format... While other museums and memorials focus on a broad local history or a certain subject in general, this memorial room will be a person experience about the building and its place in Detroit history."*

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## QUICK QUIZ on Dave Jordan's September presentation: "General Trimble at Gettysburg"

Here are four questions based on info from Dave's presentation in September.

Answers are at the bottom of this page.

- (1) What was Trimble complaining about to Lee in the clip from the film "Gettysburg" that Dave showed us at the start of his presentation?
- (2) What was Trimble's relationship to the two Ewell brothers?
- (3) How many times was Trimble wounded in his left leg?
- (4) After the Civil War, Trimble sued and won his case at the Supreme Court. What was he suing for?

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### FUTURE SPEAKERS

A few revisions since we published this list in September, and at press time a few more changes are in the works. \*\* Watch for an updated list in the November newsletter \*\*

OCT 14:	* ALCWRT ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION at the GAR Building in Detroit <u><b>Note:</b> This takes the place of our regularly-scheduled October meeting in Plymouth.</u>
NOV 21:	* Ron Carley as (who else?) Abe Lincoln..!
JAN 16:	* Jack Dempsey
FEB 20:	* -- tba
MAR 19:	* Roy Finkenbine on "Much Apu about Nothing: What Caused the Civil War"
APR 16:	* Bob Allen on "The Assassination & Booth's Escape and Killing: Sifting Fact from Myth"
MAY 21:	* -- tba
SEPT 17:	* Jerry Eising on "Untold Stories of the Civil War"

## ANSWERS to the QUICK QUIZ.

- (1) In the clip from the film "Gettysburg", General Trimble was complaining bitterly to General Lee that Ewell would not order an attack on Culp's Hill.
- (2) At one point in Trimble's career, Ewell's younger brother was Trimble's subordinate. As we saw in the film clip referenced above, at the time of Gettysburg, Trimble reported to the elder Ewell.
- (3) Trimble was wounded twice in his left leg. The first time he expected his leg to be amputated, but it was saved. When he was wounded the second time in the same leg, he observed that an earlier amputation would have saved him the pain and suffering of the second wound.
- (4) At West Point, Trimble was assigned to topographical duty to survey proposed railroad routes. He eventually earned patents for some of his bridge-building innovations. After the Civil War, he sued to collect royalties from Union railroads that had used his designs. His suit went all the way to the Supreme Court, where he prevailed.





*The Abraham Lincoln Civil War Round Table, founded in 1952, is celebrating its  
**"Jubilee Plus Two" Anniversary**  
 with a dinner and presentation at the beautifully restored GAR Building in Detroit.  
 Please join us for this special evening...!*

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We'll congregate in the GAR Building's  
**Castle Hall & Republic Tavern**  
 for the Chef's Tasting Dinner and open bar  
 (wine & beer).

Following dinner, our special guest will be  
**A. Wilson Greene**  
 author of the highly acclaimed new book  
*"A Campaign of Giants:  
 The Battle for Petersburg"*



**WHEN:** Monday evening, October 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm

**WHERE:** The GAR Building is located at  
 1942 W. Grand River Avenue, Detroit, MI 48226

**COST:** ALCWRT Members: \$90      Non-Members: \$100

**RSVP by** To reserve your space for this special evening,  
**Oct 4th** please mail a check payable to ALCWRT by October 4<sup>th</sup> to:  
 \* Liz Stringer, 23959 Brookplace Court, Farmington Hills, MI 48336  
 \* Questions or for further information, contact Liz at 248.561.1368

**PARKING:** Surface lot adjacent to the building \$7  
 \* If there is sufficient interest, Liz may be able to arrange bus  
 transportation from Plymouth. Let her know right away, please.