

Following the Battle of Stones River, a correspondent of the *New York Herald* wrote: “Colonel Cyrus O. Loomis is the envy of all artillerists. He is not only the quickest among them, but the most lucky of artillerists...When the War Department comes to sum up its heroes and the honors to be conferred, let it not, if heroes overbalance the honors, blot out the name of that admirable soldier and unflinching patriot who bears the name of Loomis.”

Of the same battle, a writer for the *Detroit Advertiser and Tribune* reported: “[We were] exposed to a terrible cross fire. Our infantry in the cedars were driven back in a perfect panic, while it was only through the skillful management of Colonel Loomis that we got out of this slaughter-pen safe and without the loss of a gun. A large portion of our infantry were running panic-stricken in all directions....[The Loomis Battery], which was stationed in a most important and perilous position, drew forth repeated praises for the terrible execution it did among the enemy’s infantry. The battery was recognized by the rebels and a most desperate attempt was made to take it. Every man of the battery stood bravely and firmly at his post, while the bullets flew around [them] like hail. Some of the guns were double-shotted with canister, and the firing became most rapid, the rebels falling by hundreds. A small party of rebels was seen emerging from the woods, bearing a white handkerchief. The firing was stopped and they surrendered....Thus the center, and perhaps the whole army, was saved from a most disgraceful defeat. Well may [Michigan] be proud of that noble band—Loomis’ Battery.”

Long before the Civil War, an artillery company, recognized as part of the state militia, existed in Coldwater, Michigan. At the war’s beginning, its services were tendered to Governor Austin Blair. Cyrus O. Loomis was soon selected as its commander. Mustered into U.S. service on May 28, 1861, the battery left Michigan for the field in Western Virginia on May 31. Seeing action in various skirmishes for the remainder of the year, the Loomis Battery was ultimately transferred to the Western Theater where it would win laurels for its excellence. It returned to Michigan on July 12, 1865, and was mustered out of service sixteen days later at Jackson. During its service it had borne on the rolls 311 officers and men, and lost 1 officer and 10 men killed in action. Another man died of severe wounds and 25 perished of disease.

This month’s topic, “The Loomis Battery,” will be presented by our guest speaker, Matthew C. Switlik. Born in Southeastern Kansas, Matt developed an early interest in the Civil War. After moving to Michigan Matt attended Western Michigan University and the University of Detroit where he received a Bachelor of Arts Degree. Matt’s work on his Masters at Wayne State was interrupted by military service in the Korean War. He later returned to Wayne State and finished his Masters with a thesis on Battery A, 1st Michigan Light Artillery. In 1963 Matt joined the Loomis Battery as a reenactor and has served as director of the Monroe County Historical Museum since 1969. Over the years Matt has owned approximately 50 cannon. His current collection of 16 field guns includes a 10-pounder Parrott #23 that served with Battery A, 1st Michigan, the Loomis’ Battery.

You’ll want to be attendance on **MONDAY, MARCH 26** for this outstanding presentation.....

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The MRRT offers its thanks to last month’s speaker, Bill Phillis. Bill’s talk on his two Civil War relatives, Kellian Van Rensaleur Whaley and John Williams Patterson, was superb. His sincere dedication to preserve their memory is certainly appreciated by our Round Table. Thanks again, Bill, for a moving program.

ODDS & ENDS:

- FALL FIELD TRIP: Trip Chairman Jerry Maxwell informs us that Dennis Frye will be unable to guide us around the Shenandoah Valley this fall. This meeting, therefore, we will need to vote on another destination. You are urged to attend and express your opinion.
- Congratulations to our current officers who, by acclamation, were approved for another year in office: President Gary Pike, Vice President Mark Farrell, Secretary Bea Friedlander, and Treasury Carroll Tietz.
- Hopefully our Treasurer will return from Florida this month. For any that have not paid their dues, have your check ready, made out to Carroll Tietz. (He'll be the one at the back of the room with the darkest tan.)

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QUIZ: All questions pertain to Civil War artillery.

1. Which cannon factory was the Confederacy's most renown, and which general was its supervisor?
2. What was the nickname, coming from the unusual sound of its swirling projectiles, given to the 18-pounder cannon used by Confederates in the defense of Vicksburg? And, what was the nickname given to the Union mortar mounted on a railroad flatcar used during the siege of Petersburg?
3. When firing a cannon, what tripped the friction primer, and what was the leather apparatus placed over the vent called?
4. What type of projectile purposely broke apart on firing and was used as an antipersonnel load? And, what 2 cannon did the *U.S.S. Monitor* carry in its turret?
5. What type of projectile generally consisted of 9 iron balls in 3 rows with an iron plate on top and bottom? And, what make of gun was the Federal "Swamp Angel"?
6. What type of cannon did Edmund Ruffin fire against Fort Sumter, and what size was the projectile?
7. What were the 2 most commonly used breechloading cannon during the war?
8. Among the oddity weapons, which rocket scattered "liquid damnation" as these "unearthly serpents went zigzagging among [the men]"? Also, what was the most commonly used hand grenade?
9. Which Confederate artillerist was in charge of the bombardment of Federal lines prior to Pickett's Charge? And, which Federal general, a native Detroit, headed the Union artillery at Gettysburg?
10. Which common smoothbore field piece, developed in the Netherlands at the turn of the 18th Century, was noted for its short barrel and ability to arch a projectile over walls and fortifications? And, what was the preeminent and most accurate rifled cannon?

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The following are stories of the Loomis Battery.....

One of the horses furnished for the battery at Coldwater was known by the name of "Old Sam." After the war this horse was brought back to the town as a relic. Upon being released from a railroad car, "Old Sam" went of his own accord directly to his old stable and into the stall where he had been originally kept. Colonel Loomis presented him to Mr. O.B. Clark, the former owner. "Old Sam" was the only remaining horse from those that left the state with the battery in 1861.

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During the fighting at Stone's River, General Lovell Rousseau rode up to Loomis' Battery and observed a youth attached to the battery holding some horses. The boy did not waver though shot and shell flew dangerously in all

directions. The lad was so unconscious of fear, and so elated and excited, that, being debarred from better occupation than holding horses, his high spirits found vent in shouting out songs and dancing to the music. General Rousseau, pleased with the boy's behavior, rode up to him and stated, "Well done, my brave boy; let me shake hands with you." A few days later General Rousseau visited the camp of the battery, and mentioning the circumstances to the commanding officer, expressed a desire to see the youth again. "Step out McCarty," ordered the officer. The youth came forward, blushing deeply. The General again commended his conduct, and stated: "I shook hands with you on the battlefield, and now I wish to do it again in the presence of your brother soldiers. May you carry the same brave spirit through the war, and come out safely at last, as you are sure to come out honorably." The General once again shook his hand warmly in the presence of his officers and companions. Young James P. McCarty was killed nine months later at the Battle of Chickamauga.

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When the Coldwater Light Artillery was first quartered at Fort Wayne in Detroit, it became the envy of other troops stationed there. Some of its members found a young woman, described by the newspapers as beautiful, wandering naked in the woods near the Fort. Her clothing was discovered hanging on the branch of a tree. She was immediately taken in charge by the Light Artillery, whose members established her in a vacant house near the Fort and resisted attempts of civil officials to remove her to a hospital. For several days the soldiers "nursed her with all the tenderness of women." She was finally identified as Georgiana Bishop of Cincinnati. It was said that she followed either her brother or sweetheart to Detroit. "She is apparently about 20 years of age," stated the *Detroit Advertiser* on June 1, 1861, "and very handsome....The artillerists take turns attending upon her."

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QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. Tredegar Iron Works and Joseph Reid Anderson
2. "Whistling Dick" and "The Dictator"
3. Pulling the lanyard and a thumb stall
4. Case shot and 11-inch Dahlgrens
5. Grape shot and a 200-pounder Parrott rifle
6. Columbiad and a 68-pounder
7. 12-pounder Whitworth and the Armstrong
8. Congreve Rocket and a Ketcham Grenade
9. Edward Porter Alexander and Henry Jackson Hunt
10. Howitzer and a 3-inch Ordnance Gun

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Once again you are reminded to be in attendance for Matt Switlik's presentation of "The Loomis Battery." It's a meeting you won't want to miss. **MONDAY, MARCH 26** at the Farmington Public Library on Liberty Street (SW of Grand River and Farmington Road). The business meeting will commence at 7:30 P.M. See you there.....