

“I was in nineteen hard-fought battles in the Departments of Ohio, Tennessee, and Cumberland Armies. I did the work of one, and I tried to do it well.” So stated Mary Anne Ball “Mother” Bickerdyke, one of the most resourceful and colorful Civil War nurses. Following the death of her husband, Robert, in 1859, Mary Anne supported herself and her two sons by practicing as a “botanic physician.” Early in the Civil War, her home town of Galesburg, Illinois gathered together \$500 worth of medical supplies and selected the 44-year-old Widow Bickerdyke to deliver them to the ill-equipped Camp Cairo. She stayed on in the Union service acquiring supplies, attending wounded soldiers, and cleaning dirty hospitals—picking up the nickname “Cyclone in Calico.” Surgeon Benjamin Woodward described her as “a woman rough, uncultivated, even ignorant, but a diamond in the rough.” As a field agent for the U.S. Sanitary Commission, Mother Bickerdyke served with Ulysses S. Grant’s army en route to Vicksburg and was with William T. Sherman’s army throughout the Atlanta Campaign.

Organized in June of 1861, the U.S. Sanitary Commission provided care for sick and wounded soldiers as well as aiding their dependent families. With the help of 500 agents the commission supplied more than one million nights’ lodgings during the war. Its convalescing camps offered soldiers special diets and even furnished paper and stamps for the men to write home. Its members, among them some of the country’s best-known doctors and most prominent business, government, and civic leaders, served without pay. With its central office in Washington D.C., the commission formed more than 7000 aid societies and had main branches in ten of the North’s largest cities. During the war the commission raised and spent more than \$7 million and distributed donated supplies valued at \$15 million. In March, 1864 at the closing of the Sanitary Commission Fair in Washington D.C., President Lincoln stated: “If all that has been said by orators and poets since the creation of the world in praise of woman applied to the women of America, it would not do them justice for their conduct during this war.”

On **MONDAY, MARCH 31**, the Michigan Regimental will proudly present “Images as Living Historians,” starring Karen Thyer as Mother Bickerdyke and Don Allen as an inspector with the U.S. Sanitary Commission. Together these two put on a sterling performance in a living history program. Afterward, Karen and Don will play a couple of selections on the fiddle and banjo. Copies of their recordings will be sold (\$15 for CD’s and \$10 for cassettes). Come join us for this special program on “Ladies’ Night”—March 31.

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The MRRT expresses its thanks to last month’s speaker, Liz Stringer, for her exceptional program, “‘Crazy Bet’: Union Spy, Elizabeth Van Lew.” If you weren’t in attendance, you missed an excellent talk.

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ODDS & ENDS:

- **FALL FIELD TRIP:** Our annual trip is scheduled for the Shenandoah Valley [1864 Campaign] on the weekend of October 18-19. Our guide will be Dennis Frye. Dennis led us in 1993 to Harper’s Ferry/South Mountain/Antietam and in 1999 to the Shenandoah Valley [1862 Campaign]. Our members uniformly agree that Dennis is one of our favorite guides. He has completed his work on the movie “Gods and Generals” and should be rarin’ to go for this trip. More information will be given at this month’s meeting. You’ll want to be in attendance to put your name on the sign-up sheet.
- **YEARLY DUES:** Treasurer Carroll Tietz hopefully will return to collect any dues that haven’t been paid by mail. If you haven’t paid yet, have your check ready (made out to Carroll). [\$15 regular/\$10 for seniors and students.]

- On July 18, 2000, Stonewall Jackson's Presbyterian Church in Lexington, Virginia was destroyed by fire. Miraculously, a brass plaque, marking Jackson's pew, was found undamaged. The congregation will rebuild the church at a cost of \$4.7 million. Insurance will cover \$3.8 million, but they remain \$900,000 short of their goal. Tax-deductible contributions can be made to the Church Restoration Fund in care of Lexington Presbyterian Church, Main and Nelson Streets, Lexington, VA 24450.

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QUIZ: All questions pertain to events that happened in the month of March.....

1. March 1, 1861: Name the U.S. Secretary of War who ordered a Brigadier General dismissed from the U.S. Army "for his treachery to the flag of his country" in surrendering military posts and Federal property in Texas. And, which aging general, a hero of the War of 1812 and the Mexican War, and a future Confederate general did he fire?
2. March 18, 1861: Who did President Lincoln appoint as Minister to Britain and Minister to France?
3. March 11, 1862: Which 2 generals did Jefferson Davis relieve for the fiasco at Fort Donelson a month earlier?
4. March 28, 1862: What battle took place at a spot called Pigeon's Ranch in New Mexico? And, which Federal Major, who later gained a notorious reputation for an indiscriminate slaughter, helped save Union forces by destroying Confederate wagons and supplies, causing them to retreat to Texas?
5. March 14, 1863: Which critical Louisiana bastion on the Mississippi River did Admiral David Farragut lead his squadron past? And, what was Farragut's flagship?
6. March 16, 1864: Which Confederate Major General took command of the District of Arkansas: And, which incompetent Lieutenant General, sometimes called "Old Granny General," did he succeed?
7. March 21, 1864: On this date President Lincoln approved an act of Congress enabling which two territories to become states?
8. March 23, 1864: Which Major General became head of the U.S. Fifth Army Corps? And, which general, nicknamed "Tardy George," did he supercede?
9. March 1, 1865: Which Union state ratified the 13th Amendment to end slavery? And, which Union state rejected the same amendment?
10. March 9, 1865: Which Federal general was almost captured in his bed at Monroe's Cross Roads, South Carolina, by Wade Hampton and Joe Wheeler? And, because he ingloriously fled without his trousers, what nickname was given to this episode? [Extra Credit: Name this general's comely bedmate and traveling companion.]

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Private William McCarter of Company A, 116th Pennsylvania of the Irish Brigade described some of the horrors of the fighting at Fredericksburg:

Rebel shells were flying in all directions, and falling and bursting in every street in the town. While in position here, I witnessed many horrid sights. Here and there Negro women were seen rushing out of half-demolished houses, frequently with young children in their arms, and others crying and clinging to their skirts, perfectly frantic with fright. They evidently wished to escape to some place of safety outside of the town and out of the range of the falling, bursting Rebel shells, yet, at the same time, did not seem to know which way to run in their confusion. All were to be pitied, and although our troops could render them no assistance, they had our sympathy, and the little children especially who were being dragged along shoeless and barefooted over the rough street, and in front of a line of soldiers. One aged Negro woman in particular attracted our attention and pity. She was coming along in a terrible hurry with a large basket in her arms, and three crying youngsters holding on to her old and torn dress. Upon reaching the intersection of two of the

streets, not 15 yards from where I stood, a solid Rebel shot struck her, cutting her badly literally in two, and killing her instantly. Two of the children were also killed by the same missile, and the third fatally injured.

The ground on top of the embankment was literally covered with dead Union soldiers, shot down in their attempt to cross it. Wounded men also lay thick on the face of the bank, and along its base, close to the railroad, whither they had crawled out of the Rebel range. Whilst myself and my regiment were passing over the same ground, my companion, Sergeant John Strechabock, who afterwards lifted me off the battlefield, suddenly attracted my attention by shouting out, as he pointed down to the railroad, “Oh, look there, Bill. Look at the watermelon.” We were then on a run to clear the dangerous ground, and had not a second of time to lose for the enemy was hammering away at us, from the heights. I merely glanced at the object he pointed at. It was the body of a dead soldier, face downwards, lying on the railroad, in the center of the track. He had evidently been struck on the head by a cannon ball, which cut it in two, as clean as if cut with a knife. Then I fully understood what my companion and friend meant by the “Watermelon,” for the poor, unfortunate, dead soldier’s head, or rather the part of it still attached to the body, presented, at our distance, from it, exactly the appearance of a large, ripe watermelon cut through the center, “red.”

Lieutenant Christian Foltz, who, to avenge my wound, or in trying to do so, was shot through the head and instantly killed. Foltz, almost at whose feet I lay on the ground, stooped down and said to me, “Bill, we’ve got to get—Are you badly hurt—I wish to God I could get you out of here.” Suddenly he seized my loaded musket by my side, and in an unusually excited manner, moved a few yards forward, saying, “Well, I see the bastard that laid you low and I’ll fetch him.” Foolish man thought I—how could you “designate the man” that “shot me,” among such a multitude of Rebel soldiers? He knelt down on the ground with his left knee, placed the butt end of the musket upon the other, and took deliberate aim at something in the direction of the stone wall. I watched him closely, but ere he pulled the trigger, the musket fell out of his grasp, he nervously raised his hand to his brow, and then fell to the earth a bleeding corpse, pierced through the head by a Rebel bullet. His face was towards me, revealing the fatal wound immediately above his left eye. The profound sorrow that I then experienced, no tongue or pen could describe. There lay my late beloved, friend, and companion in his blood, almost at my side, stiff and cold and dead, and all to avenge only a wound received by myself.

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Quiz Answers:

1. Joseph Holt and David E. Twiggs
2. Charles Francis Adams (Britain) and William L. Dayton (France)
3. Gideon J. Pillow and John B. Floyd
4. La Glorieta Pass and John M. Chivington
5. Port Hudson and *U.S.S. Hartford*
6. Sterling Price and Theophilus Holmes
7. Nevada and Colorado
8. Gouverneur K. Warren and George Sykes
9. Wisconsin and New Jersey
10. Hugh Judson Kilpatrick and “The Battle of Kilpatrick’s Pants” [Extra Credit: Mary Boozer]

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A reminder of our meeting on **MONDAY, MARCH 31**—“Images as Living Historians” with Karen Thyer as Mother Bickerdyke and Don Allen as a U.S. Sanitary Commissioner Inspector. It’s certain to be a lively program. We will continue to meet at the Farmington Public Library (Grand River and Farmington Road) until further notice. The meeting begins at 6:30 P.M. Come early and enjoy the fellowship.

Have you checked out our website? <http://www.farmlib.org/mrrt/>.