

On May 7, 1858, 49-year-old attorney Abraham Lincoln stood in the courthouse in the small Illinois community of Beardstown. He was there in response to the tearful pleas of an old friend, Hannah Armstrong, whose son, William “Duff” Armstrong, was about to be sentenced for murder. Although extremely busy with politics and his law practice, Lincoln made the 45-mile trip from Springfield only the day before. Duff and a crony, James Norris, were accused of deliberately killing one James Metzker. Supposedly, the two viciously waylaid Metzker—Norris striking him on the back of the head with a heavy stick or oxen yoke, while Duff whirled a “slung shot” against the victim’s right eye. Metzker, severely battered, died three days later. Norris was tried, convicted of manslaughter, and sentenced to eight years. Duff’s sentence could be worse: an eyewitness, Charles Allen, swore he saw young Armstrong commit the murder in the bright moonlight.

Now, Lincoln rose to cross-examine. With his long fingers hooked under his gallus straps, Lincoln calmly asked Allen to repeat his account with full detail. Afterward, the tall attorney declared to the jury: “Now I will show you that this man Allen’s testimony is a pack of lies; that he never saw Armstrong strike Metzker with a slung shot; that he did not witness this fight by the light of the full moon, for the moon was not in the heavens that night!” While the courtroom buzzed with astonishment, Lincoln produced an almanac which proved the moon that night was not full but setting, hence you couldn’t see your own hand in front of your own face. An eyewitness stated, “The Almanac floored the witness.” Next Lincoln produced the owner of the slung-shot who admitted he had thrown the instrument away at the murder spot the day after the episode occurred. Further testimony proved that Metzker, weaving drunk, had fallen off his horse several times that night. Lincoln followed up with a desperate plea for young Duff’s life. An assistant prosecutor noted that tears brimmed Lincoln’s eyes. “But they were genuine. . . . His terrible sincerity could not help but arouse the same passion in the jury.” Within an hour the jury returned a verdict of “not guilty.” Lincoln turned to a sobbing Hannah, stating: “I pray to God this lesson may prove in the end a good lesson to him {Duff} and to all.”

Abraham Lincoln spent twenty years “riding the circuit” in the Eighth Judicial District of Illinois. Here he traveled the muddy roads to such places as Petersburg, Clinton, Metamora, and Logan County. Our speaker this month is Ken Baumann, a 30-year member and 3-time past president of the MRRT. He has given numerous outstanding talks, noted for their pithiness and excellent research, to our Round Table over the years. A renowned expert on artillery and Illinois history during the Civil War, Ken is the author of *Arming the Suckers*. Ken retired as a horticulturist from Milan Federal Prison and is now a gentleman farmer. His topic is “Lincoln and Logan County, Illinois” (Ken’s family area—directly north of Sangamon County and 40 miles from New Salem). Lincoln named the county for Dr. Samuel Logan, who served together with Lincoln in the state legislature. Three of the surviving courthouses from Lincoln’s time remain—two are located in Mt. Pulaski and Metamora, Illinois; the other from Logan County stands in Greenfield Village.

You’ll want to be in attendance for this special talk, so circle the date now—**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 26**.

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Our thanks to September speaker, Steve Hawks, for his enlightening program, “The Union Surrender at Harpers Ferry.” Steve’s fine presentation was appreciated by all.

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FALL FIELD TRIP: The “Road Warriors” have returned! Nearly 50 hearty souls spent two lovely fall days seeing the sites in the Richmond area. On Saturday we visited the areas of the “7 Days Battles,” guided by the expert,

Robert E.L. Krick. Bob received the highest rave reviews. Sunday we trekked through historic Hollywood Cemetery before spending the afternoon at the White House of the Confederacy and Museum. Lots of photos were taken (hopefully some will be displayed), and many good stories were amassed. Ask those who attended about the trip. (The rumor that Gary Pike and Don Kadar were arrested for their unsightly behavior at the restaurant Saturday night is totally unfounded.)

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January marks the beginning of the MRRT's 42nd year of existence. That means it's time to pay your yearly dues. There ain't no better bargain in town, and certainly not one with a handier system. Just fill out a check (\$15 regular or \$10 for seniors and students) made out to Carroll Tietz, and mail it in the envelope provided. Don't forget the stamp.

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QUIZ: All of these questions pertain to the month of November.....

1. Two dates in this month were extremely memorable for Abraham Lincoln—November 4, 1842, and November 19, 1863. What happened on these dates?
2. Which former general in the Army of Northern Virginia, who had fallen out of favor with Robert E. Lee, took command of the Confederate District of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona on November 29, 1862? And, where had he failed to support a Confederate attack in July during the “7 Days Battles”?
3. Which Confederate cavalry general commandeered two Federal vessels and led his “navy” up the Tennessee River wreaking havoc on Union forces from November 1-4, 1864? And, name either of the two gunboats he had captured for this unusual task:
4. On the evening of November 9, 1863, President Lincoln attended the theater in Washington D.C. What play did he see and who was the leading actor?
5. Three days later, on November 12, Lincoln attended the wedding of the daughter of a cabinet member. Name her and the shallow and erratic Rhode Island Senator she married:
6. On two successive days—November 4 and 5, 1861—the Confederacy named a commander of the Shenandoah Valley District and another to head up the new Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and East Florida. Name these two well-known men:
7. Which Union general is credited for the Federal victory at Franklin, Tennessee on November 30, 1864? And, which Union general, who commanded the XXIII Corps, was actually in command of the field?
8. On November 25, 1863, the Federal army assailed Missionary Ridge at Chattanooga. Which Federal general led the attack at Tunnel Hill but failed to carry his objective? Also, which Confederate general stopped this assault?
9. Which Union professor launched one of his first observation balloons from the deck of a ship in the Potomac River on November 11, 1861? And, on the same day, which Federal officer, a close friend of Lincoln's killed at Ball's Bluff, was given formal obsequies in New York City before his body was sent to San Francisco?
10. On November 10, 1865, which Confederate officer was hanged in Washington D.C.? Also, in which battle had he lost the use of his right arm from a serious wound?

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More on Duff Armstrong and Abraham Lincoln.....

Following Lincoln's victory in the Duff Armstrong case, he went back to the National Hotel for a much-needed rest. He was stopped in the street by an 18-year-old novice photographer, Abraham Byers, who had witnessed Lincoln's courtroom brilliance. Byers had recently acquired a gallery and excitedly requested that Mr. Lincoln go upstairs to have an ambrotype taken. But Lincoln refused. Byers lamented, "[Lincoln] cast his eyes down on his old holland linen suit which had no semblance of starch in it, and said: 'These clothes are dirty and unfit for a picture.'" Young Byers, however, refused to take "no" for an answer: "I insisted and he finally went with me." Byers took two ambrotypes of Lincoln that afternoon and retained one of these. It was not until 1895 that the second turned up, published by Ida Tarbell in *McClure's* magazine. In 1947, Byers' widow willed her original to the University of Nebraska. Lincoln's weary face is noticeable, and a dirty smudge is apparent on his left sleeve.

Oddly, the future President Lincoln would be called upon a second time "to save" Duff Armstrong. During the Civil War, Duff enlisted in Company C of the Eighty-fifth Illinois Volunteers. In 1863 Duff contracted rheumatism but was unable to obtain a discharge from the military. His mother, Hannah, once more called on Lincoln for assistance. She asked a friend, "Uncle Jakey" Garber, to write a letter for her asking the President to obtain her son's discharge. Within a short time, she received the following letter from Washington D.C. dated September 18, 1863: "I have just ordered the discharge of your boy William [Duff], as you say, now in Louisville, Ky." It was signed: A. Lincoln.

QUIZ ANSWERS:

1. Lincoln married Mary Todd and Gettysburg Address
2. John B. Magruder and Malvern Hill
3. Nathan Bedford Forrest and *Venus and Undine*
4. "The Marble Heart" and John Wilkes Booth
5. Kate Chase and William Sprague
6. Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee
7. John Schofield and Jacob D. Cox
8. William T. Sherman and Patrick Cleburne
9. Thaddeus Lowe and Col. Edward Baker
10. Henry Wirz and Seven Pines

Reminder that the MRRT meets on **MONDAY, NOVEMBER 26** at the Farmington Public Library at Grand River and Farmington Road. Our speaker, Ken Baumann, will present "Lincoln and Logan County, Illinois." The meeting starts at 7:30 P.M. It plans to be a rousing, good time. You'll want to be there early. See you there.....

Since we won't meet again until January, have a great Holiday Season!