

# MARCHING ALONG

21st Michigan Volunteer Infantry, Co. H

December 2012

[www.twentyfirstmichigan.org](http://www.twentyfirstmichigan.org)

Volume 7 Issue 12



**from the President,  
Jim Cary**

**Christmas, Christmas time is here...**

Another year is nearly over. I don't mean that in a sad way, just stating the facts. Christmas is actually my favorite holiday. Mostly because most of the world pauses to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. But, also because of the way many people act toward others with goodwill and charity. Many charitable organizations count on people's generosity during the months of November and December to fulfill most of their budget for the following year. I personally wish some of that attitude would carry over into the rest of the year, as the world would be a much better place if that were true. Hey, why don't we of the 21st Michigan start a new trend?!? Let's all promise ourselves that we will be nicer to others, be more generous to charities, and just be better people next year!!?! I'm not saying that to anyone in particular. I think our members are some of the nicest people I know. I just think there is always room for improvement.

Okay, I'll get off my soapbox now.

Ken G. and I were able to attend the Roundtable in Lansing to get information on the events for next year. It sounds like next year will be just as awesome as this year was. I want to encourage you all to attend our annual meeting in February (date and place not determined yet) to help us set our schedule for the year.

Be sure to read the article (on page 6) about the Unit Christmas party. We don't want anyone to miss it for lack of information.

*Merry Christmas to all,*

Jim Cary,  
President

President - Tom Giorlando  
Secretary - Carrie Graber  
Treasurer - Jim Cary

Military Commander - JR Schroeder  
Civilian Coordinator - Ken Giorlando  
Newsletter Editor - Jim Cary

# CIVILIAN CORNER

by Ken Giorlando

As many of you know, Christmas is my most favorite time of year. And since becoming a living historian, this Holiday has become even more wonderful than I could ever have imagined, for there are numerous opportunities to bring Christmas Past back to life.

For instance, on the dreaded “black Friday” a few of us went to Greenfield Village in our period clothing and enjoyed the ambience of oil and candle lit houses against a cold, grey, and even snowy sky. Oh! What a fine time we had



moving house to house, dining at the Eagle Tavern, and speaking with our Village friends, including 21<sup>st</sup> member (and Firestone Farm house lead) Larissa. Similar to when a few of us ventured there on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, it was a time-travel moment. Sometimes these non-official events can be just as good – if not better – than the official events.

**“LINCOLN”**: On November 16, eighteen of us dressed in our 19<sup>th</sup> century finest went to the movie theater to see the new “Lincoln” movie starring Daniel Day-Lewis and Sally Field. The movie itself was done very well, not being the typical Lincoln flick you've seen previously. It was an intense drama about the passing of the 13th Amendment - did I say intense? - and everything about it lent to a strong taste of authenticity. Day-Lewis, Field, Tommy Lee Jones, and the other actors did an amazing and realistic job portraying men and women from history. As I read more of the background in the making of “Lincoln” the information really made me stand up and take notice. Besides the clothing and fashions being pretty much spot on, the sets and lighting technique were exceptional - very authentic. In fact, to keep the actors in that 1865 mode, those who worked behind the scenes – the cameramen, directors, script people, etc. - were all dressed in period clothing as well. It was in this way the actors could remain channeled into history and their roles. It's this sort of thing that gets my undivided and immediate attention.

But there is one bit of information I read that had to do with the sound effects to this film. To help make this movie come alive, the film makers actually used original sounds that Lincoln himself had heard to give it that note of accuracy. For instance, the pocket watch Mr. Lewis (as Lincoln) has is a prop. But the ticking sound you hear coming from it is not. That's because the sound man, Ben Burtt, recorded the ticking of one of the real time pieces Abraham Lincoln owned. But that's not all...

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The ringing of the steeple bell from St. John's Episcopal Church, of which our 16th President attended often, is heard as well, along with the sound of the church floor boards - the very same that Lincoln walked upon 150 years ago. The sound techs went so far as to even record the sound Lincoln's pew made as he sat down and got up. But there's *still* more: In the executive office of the White House, there is a clock that's been there since the time of Andrew Jackson's administration, and the sound of that clock is used in many office scenes. Other sound effects from the White House include door latches and the opening and closing and the

knocking upon those doors - the very same doors when Lincoln was there.

We also get the opportunity to hear the squeaks from the springs of the original carriage that took the President and his wife to the Ford Theater on the evening of April 14, 1865.

The lighting, the sound, the clothing, the characters/actors all brought history to life and drew the viewer right into "Lincoln." And it especially drew those of us wearing period clothing into the scene even more.

I would like to thank everyone – even the few who were dressed modern - who joined us on this fine evening. Can't wait for the next one!

By the way, Lynn Kalil and her husband had the advantage of seeing "Lincoln" with the Lincolns (Fred & Bonnie Priebe) while in Gettysburg – how cool is that?

### **Christmas (From Godey's):**

Elsewhere in this newsletter there is an article about our January 5<sup>th</sup> Christmas party, so there's no need to speak of that here. But I would like to give to you a gift of Christmas past as written from one who was there:

*The little mantel clock struck nine. As the last stroke died away, Marian pointed with a smile to the clock, and the youngest children rose and went merrily to bed.*

*"There is much to do to-morrow, Gracie," said Marian, as the chamber door closed, shutting out the sound of the merry voices, "there are so many things to attend to that I think we will dress the tree this evening. We can shut the folding doors and keep the children from the back parlor tomorrow."*

*"Oh, yes, we will dress it now. I'll call father." And the young girl danced off, humming a merry tune.*

*Continued...*

The tree was a large evergreen, reaching almost to the high ceiling, for all the family presents were to be placed on it.

The process of dressing commenced. From a basket in the corner, Marian drew long strings of bright red holly berries threaded like beads upon fine cord. These were festooned in graceful garlands from the boughs of the tree, and while Marian was thus employed, Grace and the Doctor arranged the tiny tapers. This was a



delicate task. Long pieces of fine wire were passed through the taper at the bottom, and these clasped over the stem of each branch and twisted together underneath. Great care was taken that there should be a clear space above each wick, that nothing might catch fire. Strings of bright berries, small bouquets of paper flowers, strings of beads, tiny flags of gay ribbon, stars and shields of gilt paper, lace bags filled with colored candies, knots of bright ribbons, all homemade by Marian's and Gracie's skillful fingers, made a brilliant show of a very trifling cost, the basket seeming possessed of unheard of capacities, to judge from the multitude and variety of articles drawn from it. Meantime, upon the wick of each little taper, the Doctor rubbed with his finger a drop of alcohol to insure its lighting quickly. This was a process he trusted to no one else, for fear the spirit might fall upon some part of the tree not meant to catch fire.

At last, all the contents of the basket were on the tree, and then the more important presents were brought down from an upper room. There were many large articles seemingly too clumsy for the tree, but Marian passed around them gay colored ribbons till they formed a basket work, and looped them over the branches till even Hester's work box looked graceful. Dolls for each of the little girls were seated on the boughs, and a large cart for little Eddie, with two horses prancing before it, drove gayly among the top branches, as if each steed possessed the wings of Pegasus. On the moss beneath the branches Marian placed a set of wooden animals for Eddie, while from the topmost branch was suspended a gilded cage ready for the canary bird the Doctor had purchased for the pet-loving Lizzie. Various mysterious packages, wrapped in paper and marked Grace, Marian, or Papa, were put aside, that all the delicious mystery of Christmas might be preserved. At length all was ready and, carefully locking the doors, the trio went up to their respective rooms.

What a wonderful description of what it was like to "dress" the family Christmas Tree during the era of which we reenact. I particularly enjoyed reading of the careful placing of the tapers to insure no unwanted fire would occur, and of father wetting the wicks with

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alcohol so the candle would light quickly. As you know, we also light our 'tapers' that are placed carefully upon our tree.

It's really not hard to have a period Christmas look in your house, no matter the age of the structure. I visit and photograph many period homes during the Christmas season, including those at Greenfield and Crossroads Villages, the Crocker House Museum in Mt. Clemens, and Waterloo Farm out in Grass Lake. I also have numerous books on period Christmas décor (my favorite being Christmas at Historic Houses by Patricia and Katherine McMillan) which are filled with beautiful photos taken throughout the U.S. including Colonial Williamsburg, Old Sturbridge Village, Monticello, and other historic places.

Finding a feather tree – even if it's not a real one but a well-made fake – is a fine start. Feather trees can add greatly to the period look you may be after. And just because you have a feather tree doesn't mean you can't have your normal-size Christmas tree as well.

The style of ornaments that we hang on our tree are pseudo-Victorian - not necessarily authentic, mind you - we can't afford that - but are in the *picture-book* vein of Victoriana. We use decorations that we have purchased over our 27 year marriage - most bought in shops from Frankenmuth and at Greenfield Village. With the variety of decorations, I like to think that our tree is fun and interesting to look at, yet gives the sense of a time long past.

Also, if you have a fireplace with a mantel or just a plain old wall shelf you can easily decorate it to look authentic to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Adorning it with greenery and a candle or two is a must. Fruit, being rare in the northern states during the Christmas season, was used frequently in decorating homes, especially the pineapple. Yes, the pineapple! What does a pineapple have to do with Christmas? During early Colonial days in the United



States, families would set a fresh pineapple in the center of the table as a colorful centerpiece of the festive meal, especially when visitors joined them in celebration. This symbolized the utmost in welcome and hospitality to the visitor, and the fruit would be served as a special dessert after the meal. Often when the visitor spent the night, he was given the bedroom which had the pineapples carved on the bedposts or headboard--even if the bedroom belonged to the head of the household. Since the closest

country to the U.S. that grew pineapples in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was Mexico, it took some time to get the fruit this far north, especially during the Civil War. But they did.

As you can see, period decorating isn't that hard; just these small touches can help to easily give your home the period look of Christmas long ago.

So, with that, my friends, I would like to wish you all the merriest of Christmases and the safest & healthiest of New Years. May God bless and keep you in His care. 🏠

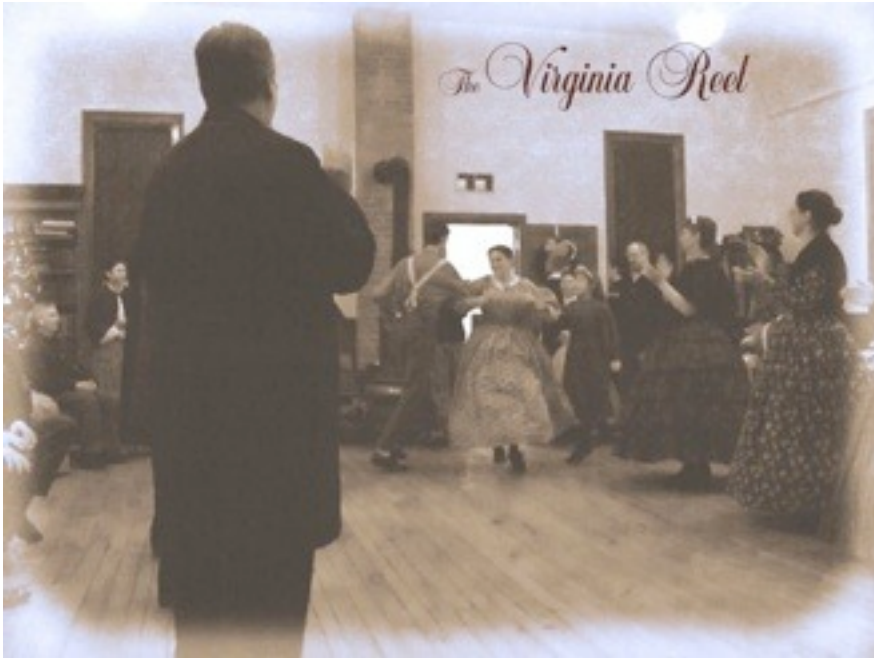
# 21<sup>st</sup> Michigan Christmas Party

“Just like the ones I used to know...”

*Saturday, January 5, 2013 from 4:00 until ?*

*Arrival any time after 3:30*

*Supper at 5:00*



It's hard to believe but it's that time of year again – time for the annual 21<sup>st</sup> Michigan Christmas party. We have a unique party amongst many of the reenacting units out there: we not only have it in a period correct building, but we dress the part as well. And that's what makes our party so special – the attempt to bring back to life the Christmas celebrations from over a century ago.

This is a **period-dress gathering** so we are asking, once again, to have the members of the 21<sup>st</sup> Michigan dress in their period

finest, be it military or civilian. This in itself always creates a very unique atmosphere. *Think of it: a period party in a period building!* Spouses and significant others do not have to dress in the style of the 1860's if they choose not to, of course, but are encouraged to do so. (I don't know about the rest of you, but I sure think the ladies all look beautiful in their period-finest Christmas dresses!)

The last couple of years we have made the gift exchange our main focus. If you don't mind, I'd like to change that up a bit; Mrs. Cook and I had a discussion about this and we thought it would be good to refocus our attention back to the celebration of Christmas and being with friends & family. Oh, there will be a gift exchange – the white elephant presents will still go on, but rather than make it into the long and drawn-out choosing or stealing game that we've done lately, we felt we should just have folks pick a gift and leave it at that – no “stealing” of others' packages. That tends to take way too much time.

By doing the gift exchange straight forward – choosing a gift and that's what you get - will allow us to bring back the Christmas Carols sing-a-long and maybe even have a small Christmas dance like we did a couple years ago. (See top picture taken at the 2009 party).



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In other words, let's bring it back to more of an old-time period-correct celebration.

**As for the gift exchange mentioned above, they are 'white elephants' – something from your home you don't want anymore. But not broken junk, please. It is also asked that you do not go out and purchase anything new to put into the exchange. Bring something from your home – it doesn't even have to be period-correct, though items Civil War-oriented are nice. It could be a book, a movie, maybe even photographs, a diary, a collectable you may not want anymore, writing implements... you get the idea.**

For the younger set, Judy Rock used to purchase gifts for all children 12 and under. Unfortunately she is not able to do that this year, so I thought that for those of us with younger children we could buy something small for our own kids - \$10 or under – and wrap them up to bring to the party. We do not want any child attending to not receive a gift, so those of you who plan to come with younger children please make a note of this while you are reading this newsletter so you don't forget.

And speaking of children: **it has been asked of all of us with young children to please supervise them closely and to not allow them 'free reign'. Remember that the building in which we are having this party is a restored historic structure built in 1872 and deserves the same respect as given to any home at Greenfield Village.**

**Also, in the 1860's, children would not have been out of control and running about without a care. Maybe you can bring some period appropriate games to help keep the little ones busy.**

What would a period Christmas party be without period food? In the last couple of years we've had venison stew, ham, turkey, stuffing, baked beans, wassail, desserts galore, and so much more – all very period correct for "our" time. So, once again, we are asking members to all pitch in and bring a plate to pass. ***Please keep an eye out for an e-mail that will be sent to all members to sign up to contribute to the feast.***



It will have a list of the various foods and accessories (napkins, etc.) we are hoping to have. If you plan to attend, please plan to bring something to share. And a big thank you to everyone who brings **their own period cups, plates, and silverware**. Not only does it look authentic, but we usually only have one small bag of garbage instead of multiple large bags to put at the curb. If possible, let's please continue doing so again this year.

*Continued...*



**I need you to respond to whether or not you plan to attend and, if so, what you plan to bring. It takes a lot to get this party together. Please be courteous and take thirty seconds out of your day and let me know by December 20th.**

Everything together helps make for a fine and fun evening spent in the past with your pards and pardettes from the 21<sup>st</sup> Michigan.

As I just stated, I would like to have you to please RSVP for this festive affair as soon as you can – by the 20<sup>th</sup> of December at the latest: my e-mail address is

([historicalken@giorlando.net](mailto:historicalken@giorlando.net)) or phone me (cell 586-863-6346). Nice and easy. And courteous, too.

For our new members who have never been to the schoolhouse, it is located at

**15500 9 Mile Road, Eastpointe, Michigan 48021~~~~~**

It's just about a quarter mile west of Gratiot. From I-94, get off at 9 Mile and head west for under two miles. And, from I-75, take I-696 east exit to I-94 West and then exit at 9 Mile and head west.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email me.

**What:** 21<sup>st</sup> Michigan Christmas Party

**When:** January 5, 2013 from 4 until ?

**Where:** 1872 Halfway School House 15500 9 Mile Road, Eastpointe, Michigan 48021 and

**Wear:** Civil War era period clothing

~Please read the details in the body of this article so you'll have a more detailed idea.~

