

May 1997 -

May 1998

Campaign # ①

THE FIRST DEFENDERS

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University May 1997

Inaugural Meeting

Seventy-five people attended the charter meeting of the Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University, which was held on the evening of April 15, 1997 at the Moselem Springs Inn.

Dr. David L. Valuska presided over the event, much of which was spent organizing the Round Table. After some discussion, the members adopted the name "The First Defenders Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University." Its mission will be to study the Civil War, participate in the preservation of Civil War sites and artifacts, and conduct field trips. The Round Table also elected officers: Dr. Valuska, president; Dr. Michael P. Gabriel, vice-president and program director; Dr. Ronald R. Rhein, treasurer and membership committee.

Other organizational business included adopting the second Tuesday of every month for a meeting, with a calendar running from September to May. This year's calendar will include a May meeting and a June field trip to Antietam National Battlefield, followed by a summer hiatus. The members also voted to assess a \$10 fee for this season, followed by annual dues of \$15 beginning next September. This money will help cover postage costs, phone bills, and speakers' honoraria. Additional fund-raising activities, such as raffles, were also discussed.

Following the business meeting, Dr. Valuska gave a fascinating talk on the First Defenders. He focused on militia companies from Mifflin, Lehigh, Berks, and Schuylkill Counties. Lewistown's Logan Guards, the Allen Rifles from Allentown, the Ringgold Light Artillery from Reading, and Pottsville's Washington Artillery and National Light Infantry were some of the first units to respond to Abraham Lincoln's April 15, 1861, call for 75,000 volunteers to crush the rebellion and

preserve the Union. These units' quick response truly entitles them to the name "First Defenders."

This inaugural meeting was very successful and generated much excitement. The members of the First Defenders Civil War Round Table very much look forward to their future meetings.

May Meeting Scheduled

The second meeting of the First Defenders Civil War Round Table is scheduled for Tuesday, May 12, in the President Room at the Moselem Springs Inn. Registration begins at 6:00 PM. Mark Pflum of Durrell's Battery, a Reading unit, will lecture on Civil War artillery. A Civil War cannon will also be on display, giving members the opportunity to learn more about these weapons. Plans for an upcoming trip to Antietam National Battlefield will also be discussed.

Members are invited to bring their Civil War memorabilia and artifacts to share with others. People who belong to living history groups and have uniforms or other period costume pieces are also encouraged to wear them to this meeting.

Reservations

Those planning to attend the May meeting must call Mary Henry at 683-4112 to confirm their reservations and order their meal. This month's choices are roast beef, fish, or a vegetable platter. The cost is \$15.

Members are also asked to fill out the enclosed form and return it to Dr. Ronald R. Rhein, c/o Biology Department, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA 19530, along with a \$10 check for this year's dues. The checks should be made payable to First Defenders Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University.

Please indicate how you want your name inscribed on your permanent membership name tag and certificate. Please return this and a \$10 check for this year's dues. Checks should be made payable to "First Defenders Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University." Send the check and registration form to Dr. Ronald R. Rhein, Department of Biology, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA 19530.

Name Tag: _____

Certificate: _____

Which date do you prefer for the Antietam field trip?

Saturday, June 14: _____

Sunday, June 15: _____

Be certain to confirm your May reservations by calling Mary Henry at 683-4112 and selecting your meal of roast beef, fish, or a vegetable platter. The cost is \$15.

THE FIRST DEFENDERS

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University

Summer 1997

Antietam Field Trip

Thirty-eight members of the First Defenders travelled to Antietam National Battlefield on Sunday, June 22. The weather was extremely hot and humid, but that did not stop the members from having an excellent time. During the trip, we visited such places as the Pry House (McClellan's headquarters), the Sunken Road, and the Burnside Bridge. There, Dave Valuska, lined the members up into rank and file and recreated the successful assault by the 51st New York and Pennsylvania Regiments that carried the bridge. Dave also provided a running narrative on the origins of the campaign, the battle itself, and the long-term consequences of Antietam. Special thanks also go to Mark Pflum, who gave commentary on the role of artillery at the battle.

Overall, this first field trip was a huge success and we look forward to our second annual trip in June 1998. We hope that even more members will be able to attend next time.

September Meeting Planned

The First Defenders will kick off their second season on Tuesday, September 9 at 6:30 P.M. at Moselem Springs Inn. Much of this first meeting will involve club business. There will be a presentation ceremony of certificates

and name tags to all charter members. Other items on the agenda will include: possibly establishing a membership cap; announcement of a tentative list of speakers; fund raising activities; a possible extra fee for the Christmas program in December; selection of next year's field trip site; identification of a Civil War site to "adopt"; additions to the number of officers; and a fee schedule for speakers.

All members planning to attend the meeting must call Mary Henry by September 3 at 683-1330 to confirm their reservations and order their meal. This month's selections are pot roast, catch of the day, or vegetable lasagne.

This year's annual membership fee will be \$15. Checks should be made payable to "First Defenders Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University" care of Dr. Ronald Rhein, Dept. of Biology, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA. 19530.

Other News

The First Defenders' officers, Dave Valuska (president), Mike Gabriel (vice president/program director), and Ron Rhein (treasurer) met this summer and asked Robert Grim, Esq. to join the board as solicitor. We now seek one more member from the membership to serve as secretary.

The officers have been aggressively working to get speakers both for this year and the next several. We have contacted such scholars as James Macpherson, Gary Gallagher,

William C. Davis, and Jeffry Wert, all of whom have expressed interest in addressing us at some point. We are also pursuing local speakers to address us on a wide variety of topics, such as preservation of sites, area units, and military topics.

The officers also seek the members input on speakers, topics for future talks, advertising or any other matters that you would like to discuss. The round table belongs to the members and therefore their input is always sought and welcomed!!

Membership List

The First Defenders currently have seventy-three members, all of whom will receive certificates and name tags at the first meeting.

Russell Angstadt
Julia Angstadt
Dick Auman
Richard C. Baumbach
Lenore E. Bittner
Lowell E. Bittner
John Border
Lori Border
Denny Bowers
Ike Boyer
Rick Chaveas
Arlan R. Christ
Pat Christ
Ted Clarkson
Dick Cobb
Dennis Damiani
Robert J. Davis
Dave Dreibelbis
Bruce E. Englehart
Ed Ewing
Jan J. Fisher
Dave Fox
Richard H. Frecon
Mike Gabriel

Wilbur Garlin
Roy F. Gehris
Barbara R. Goda
Bob Grim
Jack Gurney
Clark D. Guy
Don Hafer
Sharon Hartman
Chris Heffner
Dennis L. Heffner
Jim Hieter
Ed Honicker
John Houser
Matt Houser
Dick Kaufman
Cathie Kennedy
Rich Kennedy
Dave Klopp
Rodney LaPearl
Ed Matten
Dave Mengel
Diane Mengel
Henry H. Miller
Shirley Miller
Bob Mulligan
Mark A. Pflum
Bill Quinn
Steph Rauch
Tim Rearden
Tony Reilly
Jim Reilly
Ron Rhein
Joseph E. Schaeffer
Patricia Schleicher
Debbie Seidel
Tami Seidel
George Shoop
Bob Shuman
Judith A. Simon
Joseph W. Simon
Walt Staehle
Mike Straus
Don Stripling
Neal Swarmer
Ginny Swarmer
Dave Sweigert
Dave Valuska
Bonnie McLean Yuhas

THE FIRST DEFENDERS

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University

September 1997

Second Year Opens

Fifty-one members of the First Defenders began the round table's second year with a dinner meeting held at Moselem Springs Inn on Tuesday, September 9. One of the highlights was the presentation of charter member certificates and nametags to those present. Bob Grim was introduced as the newest member of the board and will serve as solicitor. Don Stripling also volunteered to join the board as the recording secretary.

The members also discussed and decided several important issues relating to the round table's future. First, and most importantly, the First Defenders have decided to establish a

MEMBERSHIP CAP of 100. This policy will be reviewed annually, but the general consensus was to keep the organization small in order to maintain a close personal relationship among the members. When the cap is reached, those wishing to join will be kept on a waiting list arranged by date. **Current members who have not renewed will be maintained on the roll until the December meeting (December 9).**

After this date, their positions will be opened to those on the list. The members also adopted a student membership of \$10. Any new members who paid their annual dues by September 9 will be considered charter members.

The meeting also addressed funding-raising topics, which becomes

more important in light of the cap. We decided to periodically raffle books at the dinners. (See the below article for further details on this point). The round table also decided to "adopt" a Civil War site each year and hopefully make a contribution to preserving it. It was suggested that perhaps the site could be where we go on our annual fieldtrip, but no final decision was reached. The memberships also approved a proposal to charge \$20 for the December meeting rather than the usual \$15. This year we hope to have a Christmas program with singers in costume, which accounts for the extra fee.

Treasurer's and Membership Report

The treasury has a balance of \$1,377.47 as of September 23. The round table currently has approximately eighty-seven members, twenty-three of whom are charter members who have yet to re-enlist. They have until December 9 to do this. Renewals cost \$15 and should be sent to Dr. Ronald Rhein, Department of Biology, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA 19530.

The First Defenders gladly welcome its **NEW MEMBERS:** Glen and Karen Ebeling, Doug and Andrea Jones, Paul Hartman, Sandra Longworth, Dr. William H. Lord, M.D., Joanne Reilly, William and Kathleen Remaley, Greg Renninger, Mary Lou Rhein, Tom Tate, Charlotte Valuska.

Fund-Raising Book Raffle

The membership voted to hold a fund-raising book raffle periodically at our monthly meetings. Members Tom Tate and Neal Swarmer will handle the raffle. Tentative plans call for raffling two Civil War-related books and possibly more depending on the results. Members may purchase as many tickets at he/she desires, and winners will have a selection of books from which to choose.

A free book raffle will be offered every several months as a special incentive. Raffle tickets purchased over the last several months should be saved. The tickets, both winner and non-winners, will be placed in a container and one will then be randomly chosen. This means that the more tickets you buy each month increases your chance of winning the special book. We plan to have an autographed copy of a recent work as this bonus prize.

The raffle committee will post a list of books that we can purchase in order to get the members input on title and topics that interest them. This will allow us to have books available that you want and will be more willing to spend a dollar in order to win. Best of luck to all of us in making this a successful money-maker.

October Meeting Planned

The First Defenders' second meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 14 at 6:30 P.M. at Moselem Springs Inn. Ted Alexander, the Chief Historian at the Antietam National Battlefield, will present a lecture, "Not a Sight Becoming a Country that Calls Itself Christian: The Impact of the Battle of Antietam on the Sharpsburg

Civilians." Those wishing to attend should make their reservations and meal selection by October 7, by calling Judy at 683-4385. If no one answers, please leave a message on the voice mail and speak clearly. This month's selections include catch of the day, stuffed chicken with broccoli and cheese, and Tortellini Moselem. We hope to see you there!!!!

If you make reservations, we must ask that you pay even if you are unable to attend because we have to pay for all dinners that we order.

Last Minute News

The First Defenders' board again want to urge our members to always give us your opinions, insights, suggestions for speakers, etc. The round table belongs to you, not us.

We are very excited about our plans for this and the coming years. Such speakers as Jeffry Wert have already agree to address us in October 1998 and we continue to work on attracting others, both local and nationally known. We also have begun to consider next June's fieldtrip and ask that you return the enclosed ballot at the meeting or by mail to Dr. Michael P. Gabriel, Department of History, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA 19530. Please don't register your vote when you make your reservation.

Finally, we remind all of you to bring your nametags to the next meeting. Certificates and nametags will also be available for those who were unable to attend the September meeting.

THE FIRST DEFENDERS

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University October 1997

October Meeting

The First Defenders held their second dinner meeting of the new year on Tuesday, October 14, at Moselem Springs Inn. Sixty-five members attended and heard Ted Alexander, the historian at the Antietam National Battlefield, present a talk entitled "Not a Sight Becoming a Nation which Calls Itself Christian: The Impact of the Battle of Antietam on the Sharpsburg Citizens." Using a wide range of statistics and first-hand accounts, Alexander examined the often-forgotten issue of the immediate and long-term results of a major battle on the local civilian population. Aside from the actual combat, Sharpsburg, Maryland, residents had to confront overcrowding, economic loss, and health issues resulting from the Union and Confederate armies fighting in their area.

Prior to Alexander's lecture, Mike Gabriel conducted the business portion of the program, which focused on membership and next summer's field trip. Dave Valuska, also spoke of his participation in the recent reenactment which commemorated the 135th anniversary of the Battle of Antietam. Dave served as a brigadier general and commanded a division of Northern reenactors.

First Book Raffle Successful

Thanks to You it's Working...

The United Ways slogan is apt to describe the amazing success of our first book raffle. Neither Neal Swarmer nor I anticipated anything like the ticket sales that we experienced. You purchased a total of 107 tickets at \$1 each and after the cost of the books we cleared \$72!! That's great!!

We all want to thank the generosity of the members and particularly those who donated books for the future raffles. Here is a list of the books we presently hold and will raffle in the future: *The Civil War Almanac* (in large print); *Stonewall in the Valley*, Robert G. Tanner; *Chancellorsville*, Stephen W. Sears; *Conquering the Valley*, two copies, Robert K. Krick; *Andersonville*, Peggy Sheppard (autographed); *Camp Sumter*, Ken Drew (autographed).

If you have other suggestions of books, just let us know. Thanks again for your support.

Tom Tate, Book Raffle Committee.

Membership and Treasury Update

As of October 27 the First Defenders have 94 members with a cap at 100. Current members who have not renewed will have until **December 9** at which time they'll be dropped from the rolls for any members on the waiting list. Renewals cost \$15, as do new

memberships, and they should be sent to Dr. Ronald Rhein, Department of Biology, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA 19530.

The treasury has a balance of \$1881.47 as of October 27.

The First Defenders gladly welcome the following **NEW MEMBERS**: Lynne Andreas, Westley Archambault, Ron Burkhardt, Robert McLaughlin, Randy Rabenold, Peggy Reichardt, Elaine Shannon, Charlie Trafford, Kerry Williard.

November Meeting

The First Defenders' next meeting will be held on Tuesday November 11, at 6:30 P.M. at Moselem Springs Inn. This month's speaker is Dick Matthews, who will present a talk on the 149th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment, a unit from Northwestern Pennsylvania. Those who wish to attend should call Mary Henry at 683-1330 to make a reservation and order their meal by November 6. November's selections include catch of the day, baked stuffed pork chops, or vegetable lasagna. The price is \$15. If you make reservations, we must ask that you pay even if you are unable to attend because we have to pay for all dinners that we order.

It greatly helps those who check people in at the dinners if the members could pay with \$5 bills, whenever possible, as sometimes it is difficult to get enough change.

Other News

If anyone has not yet returned their ballot for next summer's field trip,

please do so as soon as possible. Once again the selections are Gettysburg (The First and Second Day), Return to Antietam (South Mountain and Harpers Ferry), and Second Bull Run. Ballots can be returned to Dr. Michael P. Gabriel, Department of History, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA 19530. Please do not cast your ballot when making reservations for this month's meeting.

Once the site has been chosen we will distribute a ballot to the members so they can select which date to hold our field trip.

The board of directors have decided to establish a preservation fund with the money raised from the book raffles. The money will then be donated to a worthy site or organization. Tom Tate, the head of the Book Raffle Committee, is in the process of contacting several different preservation societies to determine which would be best. Thus far, several organizations have responded to his letters, including The Civil War Trust and The Central Virginia Battlefields Trust. We want to be certain that our contribution will go to a site which is truly in need or to an organization that makes good use of its resources. We don't want our contribution absorbed by overhead administrative expenses.

Next year's schedule of speakers has begun to fill. If you are interested in presenting a program or know someone who might be, please let one of the officers know. Also if you have any suggestions for possible topics or speakers you'd like to hear certainly tell us that too.

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The First Defenders Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University

November 1997

Renewal Deadline Approaches

Tuesday December 9, 1997 is the last day for current members to reenlist for the September 1997-June 1998 year. After this date unpaid members will be dropped from the roll to make room for those on the waiting list. Renewals cost \$15 and should be sent to Dr. Ronald Rhein, Department of Biology, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA 19530.

New memberships are now unavailable as the First Defenders have **reached their cap of 100**. Anyone interested in joining can have their names placed on a waiting list. Several slots might open in December after the renewal deadline has passed. New memberships also cost \$15.

The First Defenders gladly welcome the following **NEW**

MEMBERS: Charles Faust, Michelle Frei, Michael Kordwitz, Ruth Kordwitz, Jake Laubach, Barbara Lord, Dick Matthews, Terry Rohrbach, Gary Weaver, Aaron Wilson.

November Meeting Well Attended

Seventy-eight members of the First Defenders attended the November meeting at Moselem Springs Inn. Dick Matthews, an independent researcher, presented a fascinating account of the 149th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Raised in central part of the state, this Bucktail regiment is best remembered for its bitter struggle near

the railroad cut on the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg. During this action the 149th suffered 74% casualties and experienced a fundamental change in its perception of glory. Never again would these veterans see war as an adventure, but rather as a violent, grim experience. Matthews also presented another side of the regiment, however. Using a variety of letters and handouts, he demonstrated the soldiers' sense of humor and compassion for their brothers in arms.

Prior to the talk Dave Valuska and Mike Gabriel conducted the business portion of the meeting. The board sought and obtained the memberships' approval of its plan to set aside the book raffle money for the preservation of Civil War sites. The board also announced the results of the vote for next summer's field trip: Gettysburg, First and Second days - sixteen votes; Second Bull Run - fifteen; Return to Antietam - fourteen. The board will mail a ballot with the next newsletter so members can select a date for the field trip. The members also discussed the possibility of purchasing First Defenders tee shirts and/or hats, which would be especially useful on our field trips. A committee from the membership will look into costs. Other topics addressed included cancellation of meetings due to weather, a change in meeting times, and members occasionally writing book reviews for the newsletter. Anyone interested in writing a review should contact Mike Gabriel at the December meeting.

New Meeting Time

The membership decided to start the meetings one half hour earlier because of the weather and it getting darker earlier during the winter months. **Starting with the December meeting, the new schedule will be:**
6:00-6:30 Registration and social.
6:30 Meeting opens
6:35 Dinner served
7:20 Speaker/Entertainment.

Winter Cancellations

Members can find out if any First Defender dinner meetings have been cancelled due to weather by listening to the following radio stations: **Reading - WEEU 850 AM, WRFY 102.5 FM; Allentown - WAEB 790 AM.** The announcements would begin mid-afternoon. Hopefully, the winter will be mild and we won't have to resort to cancelling any of the meetings.

Book Raffle Update

Your response to the monthly book raffle continues to be astounding! Not only are the sales going well -- you bought 139 tickets on November 11 -- but the number of you who have graciously donated books in a terrific blessing. Thanks to the two members who donated books to us at the November meeting. This keeps our expenses down. From the \$139 we generated only \$10 went to expenses, leaving a "profit" of \$129. We now have twelve books in our inventory. Remember to bring all your tickets from the past months' raffles to the December meeting for the special "free" raffle. We are in position to award several raffle items.

Tom Tate, Book Raffle Committee.

Christmas Meeting Scheduled

The First Defenders will hold their next meeting on Tuesday December 9 at 6:00 PM at the Moselem Springs Inn. The program will consist of a Christmas celebration featuring the music of the five piece "Oh Be Thankful String Band." Any members, male and female, who own Civil War uniforms or dresses from the era are encouraged to wear them.

Members wishing to attend the dinner should make their reservations and meal selection by **Wednesday, December 3**, by calling Judy Groff at 683-4385. If no one answers, please leave a message on the voice mail and speak clearly. The selections include catch of the day, pot roast, and vegetarian platter. Hot and cold hors d'oeuvres will also be available during the social time. The price for the December meeting is \$20. If you make reservations, we must ask that you pay even if you are unable to attend because we have to pay for all dinners that we order. We also request that members **make their reservations by the deadline.** Moselem Springs Inn needs a lead time of several days to order enough dinners. Late reservations also greatly complicates seating arrangements and can lead to overcrowding.

We hope to have a very strong turnout for this meeting and hope to see you all there.

THE FIRST DEFENDERS

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University

December 1997

Christmas Meeting Highly Entertaining

Sixty-two members attended the First Defenders Christmas dinner held at Moselem Springs Inn on Tuesday, December 9. The highlight of the meeting was a spirited musical presentation by Gaston and Purcell's American Novelty Orchestra. The band sang a wide array of Civil War era tunes including "We are Coming Father Abraham," "Rally Round the Flag," "All Quiet along the Potomac," and "Marching through Georgia."

Explanatory introductions to each song further added to the show, as did the dramatic reading of a First Defenders poem. The orchestra capped their performance with a unique rendition of "Dixie." This featured accompanying music played by one of the band member's hands!!

Before the orchestra performed, the members conducted a short business meeting. The most important announcement is that **membership is now closed. The First Defenders have 101 members. Anyone else wishing to join will be placed on a waiting list for any openings which might become available.** The treasury currently has a balance of \$2,187.41. Tom Tate held the monthly book raffle which netted another \$108 for the preservation fund. **Thank you all for your purchases and donations of additional books!!!!**

Tom also agreed to head a preservation committee from the membership which will report to the board later. The

members also discussed buying First Defenders hats, tee-shirts, or polo shirts with a collar. Members will select which should be purchased. Henry Miller has also proposed a logo (see reverse). Any additional proposals should be sent to Mike Gabriel at the History Department, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA 19530. The membership approved purchasing Mary Henry and Judy Groff Christmas presents in recognition of their invaluable help. Finally Dave Mengel brought press releases concerning the proposed Gettysburg Visitor Center.

Any members who wish to present a talk or have suggestions for topics should contact Mike Gabriel.

January Meeting

The First Defenders will hold their next meeting on Tuesday January 13 at 6:00 PM at the Moselem Springs Inn. Barry Adams, a local teacher, will speak about area cemeteries and Civil War veterans. Members wishing to attend the dinner should make their reservations and meal selection by **Wednesday, January 7**, by calling 683-3306. If no one answers, please leave a message on the machine and speak clearly. The selections include catch of the day, chicken stuffed with broccoli, and vegetable lasagna. The price for the December meeting is \$15. If you make reservations, we must ask that you pay even if you are unable to attend because we have to pay for all dinners that we order. We also request that members **make their reservations by the deadline.** Moselem Springs Inn needs a lead time of several days to order enough

dinners. Late reservations also greatly complicates seating arrangements and can lead to overcrowding.

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New Meeting Times

6:00-6:30 Registration and social.

6:30 Meeting opens

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7:20 Speaker/Entertainment.

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!!!



THE FIRST DEFENDERS

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University

January 1998

Barry Adams Presents January Program

Sixty-six members attended the January 13 First Defenders meeting held at the Moselem Springs Inn. Barry Adams, Kutztown Area High School teacher and historical researcher, presented an interesting slide program on Civil War veterans buried in Berks County. His presentation highlighted twenty-six veterans out of the approximately 8,000 buried in the county, including three Medal of Honor recipients. Barry presented a capsule summary of each veteran's life and service record. He also noted various women and Blacks who also served in a variety of capacities during the Civil War.

Prior to the main program, a short business meeting was held. Members are requested to return their ballots by January 31 on whether to buy First Defender hats, tee-shirts, or polo shirts with collars to Dr. Michael P. Gabriel, Department of History, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA 19530. Two additional logos were presented, and the members will make the selection at the February meeting. The members also voted to hold June's field trip to Gettysburg on a Saturday, with the exact day to be determined later. The First Defenders membership is closed at 101 with no one on the waiting list. The treasury currently has a balance of \$2,334.41, which includes \$309 earmarked for the preservation fund.

February Meeting

The First Defenders will hold their next meeting on Tuesday, February 10 at 6:00 PM at the Moselem Springs Inn. Dave Fox, a First Defender charter member, will speak about Reading's own General David M. Gregg, a noted Union cavalry officer. Members wishing to attend the dinner should make their reservations and meal selection by **Wednesday, February 5**, by calling 683-1533. If no one answers, please leave a message on the machine and speak clearly. The selections include catch of the day, tortellini, and chopped sirloin. The price is \$15. If you make reservations, we must ask that you pay even if you are unable to attend because we have to pay for all dinners that we order. We also request that members **make their reservations by the deadline.**

Book Raffle

The January meeting raised \$117 in ticket sales for our preservation project. No expenses were deducted; the entire amount of sales goes to the fund. To date our fund has grown to \$426.00. Thanks go to the following members for book donations: **Debbie Seidel**, December, 1997 for *Uncertainty and Dread*, concerning the civilians at Gettysburg; **Ira Boyer**, January, 1998 for *Gettysburg*; **Mike Straus**, January, 1998 for *Andersonville, the Last Depot*. I sincerely apologize to the other members who donated books and I wasn't clever enough to get your names. Tom Tate.

*The Battles for Spotsylvania Court House
and the Road to Yellow Tavern May 7-12, 1864*

By Gordon C. Rhea

Reviewed by Christopher D. Heffner

November 16th 1997

"Thro hissing shot and screaming shell"

In this follow up volume to his award winning study of the battle of the Wilderness, Gordon Rhea continues Grant's movement south against Lee as he grapples with the Army of Northern Virginia near Spotsylvania Court House. Rhea's previous work, concentrating on May 5th and 6th, was a perfect blend of command study and frontline viewpoint that enabled the reader to see the battle from all angles. His approach made a very complex and confusing battle easy to understand and thrilling to read about.

His new volume continues where he left off, taking the reader from the earthworks of the wilderness on the march south. Again Rhea deftly handles the various Corps movements and positions, ensuring the reader's understanding of the finer points of the complicated maneuvers. To further ensure understanding, a generous amount of maps are included and are placed perfectly throughout the book.

Rhea's use of diaries and first hand accounts, previously overlooked by other writers, add an even greater depth to the experiences of the foot soldiers as they continue to march and fight with little rest from the 5th through the 12th of May. Rhea's ability to capture the sensations experienced by the rank and file is magnificent and in this respect few writers can match him. Rhea also includes detailed accounts of the Cavalry operations that occurred during the respective dates. Many books in the past have overlooked this portion of the battle. Rhea, however, understands the importance of the mounted arm to the outcome of the battle of Spotsylvania, and includes analysis of the actions and engagements throughout the 6 days that he covers.

Still, for all of the important contributions this book makes to a battle that has not been given as much attention as it deserves, his second book in the series falls short of his first effort. What is most noticeably missing is the bigger picture. Too often Rhea looks at the battle through so tight a lens, failing to widen his scope to include the overall effects that the battlefield is having on the country and even more notably the Lincoln administration. Rhea skirts these issues in the epilogue but never digs deep enough to produce a true picture of the battle's effect on Lincoln's policies, or feelings toward his new general in chief.

Nevertheless, Rhea's book is an excellent, well constructed view of the battle, that provides a deeper look at a moment of the war when northern and southern soldiers met in very close, often hand to hand combat. The gruesome details and memories written in letters and diaries prove that Sherman was right - "War is Hell."

THE FIRST DEFENDERS

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University

February 1998

Member Presents February Program

Dave Fox, Reading High School Social Studies Chair and a First Defender charter member, was the guest speaker at the February 10 meeting held at Moselem Springs Inn. Seventy-one members listened to an interesting presentation of the life of Union General David M. Gregg. Dave's interest with this particular Civil War figure originated with a statue of the general located at Centre Avenue and Oley Street in Reading. Personal conversations with Gregg's daughter-in-law, Hazel Cox Gregg, who lived in the same Reading neighborhood as Dave as a child, further added to his interest. Dave detailed Gregg's life from his early childhood through his West Point years, where his contemporaries included J.E.B. Stuart and Phil Sheridan, with Colonel Robert E. Lee as the commandant.

As a cavalry officer during the Civil War, Gregg served under several different commanders in the Eastern Theater. He participated in many actions such as Brandy Station and Gettysburg, where, according to Dave, his career peaked. Gregg's post-Civil War years saw him involved in several "occupations" but never anything that lasted. He died in 1916, one year after his wife Ellen, a Reading native, and is buried in Charles Evans Cemetery.

During the business portion of the meeting, the members discussed several important issues. A committee on artifacts, co-chaired by Ed Ewing and

Rodney LaPearl, was established. Members interested in bring displays to the meetings should contact one of them. Guidelines for guests registering for meetings will be the same as members, predicated upon available space. Mike Gabriel will accept officer nominations for the 1998-1999 season until the March meeting -- the existing board is willing to serve again. A motion was made to donate \$500 to the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites (APCWS) - the motion passed. The First Defenders will present the donation to APCWS' Jeff Driscoll at the May meeting, when he'll be the guest speaker. Any member who has photographic ability and is interested in helping publicize the donation should contact Mike Gabriel. Members approved a second motion to donate the proceeds from February's book raffle to the Kernstown Battlefield Association in Virginia in appreciation of their donation of two books to our effort.

The board announced that **Saturday, June 27 will be the date for the Gettysburg trip. Complete registration details will be sent in the March or April newsletter. Seating is limited to approximately forty, so anyone interested in attending should respond promptly.** The Gettysburg trip will focus on the second day; any members wishing to write a short vignette on any aspect of the second day for the trip should contact Mike Gabriel. The members, by an overwhelming margin, chose the polo shirt with collar as the clothing item to be purchased. A

discussion then ensued over the selection of a logo. A motion to accept the crossed flags as the First Defender logo was tabled until the next meeting. In the meantime several members will gather more information on prices and the difficulty of creating a design. The members recognized Dave Mengel for his developing a First Defenders website, <http://members.aol.com/dutchpa/index.html>

All members who have e-mail addresses are invited to provide them for inclusion in a member directory. Ron Rhein gave a Treasurer's report. The First Defenders currently have \$2,327.26 with \$426.00 allocated for the Preservation Fund. Finally, the board invited any members to volunteer their time and talents to any of the projects in which the First Defenders are currently involved.

Book Raffle/Preservation

Congratulations for making the February meeting the best month yet in our book raffle income. We collected \$137. Thanks to the generous donations of you members, we had no expenses once again this month so every one of those dollars goes to preservation. Thanks to Peggy Reichart for donating James McPherson's new book, *For Cause & Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*. Thanks too to Ed Ewing for declining to accept a book he won and donating it to the roundtable. And we certainly want to thank Jack Gurney for donating the distinctive lamp with our logo on the shade and the Civil war soldier. It was indeed a hit.

From our proceeds we donated \$75 to the Kernstown Battlefield Association. As was discussed at the meeting, we thought it only fair to grant them some of the money as they had

donated two books to our raffle. I think we all can appreciate the efforts of a community of people working to preserve their local Civil War heritage and working "on a shoestring."

Presently we hold eleven book in our book raffle inventory. We should be able to present you with a choice of books throughout our remaining season with limited expenses at best. Tom Tate

March Meeting

The First Defenders will hold their next meeting on Tuesday, March 10 at 6:00 PM at the Moselem Springs Inn. As with the February meeting a round table member will be the guest speaker. **Tom Tate**, the First Defender's Book Raffle and Preservation chairman, will speak about pontoon bridges during the Civil War and some of the battles where they figured prominently. He will also have several pictures and models to visually demonstrate his topic. Members wishing to attend the dinner should make their reservations and meal selection by **Wednesday, March 4**, by calling 683-1533. If no one answers, please leave a message on the machine and speak clearly. The selections include catch of the day, vegetable lasagna, and pot roast. The price is \$15. If you make reservations, we must ask that you pay even if you are unable to attend because we have to pay for all dinners that we order. We also request that members **make their reservations by the deadline**. Moselem Springs Inn needs a lead time of several days to order enough dinners. Late reservations also greatly complicates seating arrangements and can lead to overcrowding.

THE FIRST DEFENDERS

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University March 1998

Tom Tate Delivers Talk

Tom Tate, the First Defender's Book Raffle Chairman, delivered a fascinating talk on pontoon bridges in the Civil War to fifty-five members at the March 10 meeting. Using photographs, a painting, and a scale model, Tom focused on the surprisingly sophisticated engineering techniques used to build these structures. He stressed that army engineers had developed a virtual science for this operation. They designed special tools, wooden planks and other equipment, and even developed a formula for calculating the buoyancy of local logs. With such techniques engineers could span most rivers in several hours. Tom noted that although the North built most of the pontoon bridges, the Confederates also did so, most notably at Williamsport, Maryland, following their defeat at Gettysburg in July 1863.

Before Tom spoke, Mike Gabriel and Ron Rhein conducted a short business meeting. There will be approximately thirty-eight seats available on the bus for the June 27 field trip to Gettysburg and therefore any interested members should return the enclosed form promptly. Members will have priority over non-member spouses. The members also discussed the purchase of polo shirts. A new logo was suggested and members will select one of the three designs. A fourth was presented, but a shirt design store reported that it was too intricate to reproduce on a badge. Mark Pflum and Richard and Cathie Kennedy volunteered to oversee the purchasing of

the First Defender polo shirts. Next year's schedule is largely complete but some flexibility exists. Any members who want to give a talk or who have suggestions for speakers, topics, etc. should contact Mike Gabriel. Any member wishing to run for the board of directors for next year should also contact Mike by the end of March.

The Friends of the 151st Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment are looking for help in restoring the unit's monument at Gettysburg. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Barry Adams. The First Defenders also discussed the possibility of printing a directory which would list all members, their e-mail addresses, and areas of interest. This would allow members to interact even more and find others who share similar interests. The directory would be done next year after the annual membership renewal drive. Finally, Ron Rhein gave a treasure's report. The First Defenders currently have \$2329.26 of which \$488 is sequestered for preservation, leaving a discretionary budget of \$1,841.26. The round table has already donated \$75 to the Friends of Kernstown Battlefield.

Book Raffle

The members bought exactly 100 raffle tickets at our March meeting and put our goal of raising \$500.00 for battlefield preservation over the top. Our fund is now at \$638.00.

White Mane Publishing Company of Shippensburg, Pa. has agreed to sell us raffle books at a discount since we are donating the proceeds to battlefield preservation. They also gave us a number of \$5.00 discount coupons that we can give to our members for "Atta Boy" or "Atta Girl" awards. If those of you who have donated books for our raffle will see me I'll give you a discount coupon. I will have several White Mane catalogs at my ticket booth next month. I don't have enough to give one to everybody who may like one, but I'll have them available for you to browse. You may secure a catalog by writing to:

White Mane Publishing

Company, Inc.

P.O. Box 152

Shippensburg, PA 17257

Dave Valuska suggested I contact them and ask if they could sell us books at a discount. They were very agreeable and even gave us a free book for a starter. It is Rough and Regular by Larry Maier and is an account of the 119th PA Volunteer Infantry. The 119th was from Philadelphia and fought every battle with the Army of the Potomac from Fredericksburg to Appomattox.

Thanks again to Mary Lou Rhein for donating two more books to us and to Neal Swarmer for running the raffle last month. Tom Tate

April Meeting

The First Defenders will hold their next meeting on Tuesday, April 14 at 6:00 PM at the Moselem Springs Inn. The meeting will mark our one-year anniversary. **Dr. Allida S. McKinley**, the Chairperson of the Department of History at Kutztown University, will speak about Civil War widows. Members wishing to attend the dinner

should make their reservations and meal selection by **Wednesday, April 8**, by calling 683-1533. If no one answers, please leave a message on the machine and speak clearly. The selections include **catch of the day**, vegetable lasagna, and chicken stuffed with broccoli. The price is \$15. If you make reservations, we must ask that you pay even if you are unable to attend because we have to pay for all dinners that we order. We also request that members **make their reservations by the deadline**. Moselem Springs Inn needs a lead time of several days to order enough dinners. Late reservations also greatly complicates seating arrangements and can lead to overcrowding.

Polo Shirt Ballot

A ballot for the polo shirt is included in this newsletter. In addition to selecting the logo and color, **please indicate how many you might want to purchase; THIS IS NOT A DEFINITE ORDER, just a survey to see approximately how many we'll need to order.** The cost will probably be approximately \$25/shirt, with extra-large sizes costing several dollars more. Definite prices will be given once a logo is chosen.

Please return the polo shirt ballots to Dr. Michael P. Gabriel, Department of History, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA. 19530 by **April 13.**

THE FIRST DEFENDERS

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University April 1998

Department Head Presents Lecture

Dr. Allida S. McKinley, Chairperson of the Department of History at Kutztown University, presented the program for the April 14 meeting of the First Defenders. Fifty-six members heard Dr. McKinley speak about Pennsylvania Civil War widows. Historians have almost completely ignored this aspect of the war, and Dr. McKinley's research has helped fill this void. To complement her lecture, she provided a handout listing sample sources for researching this topic. Dr. McKinley's research centered on the widows from Lehigh, Chester, and Erie counties plus those from the Third National Colored Regiment. The Civil War brought widowhood to 300,000 women who then became eligible for an \$8/month pension supplemented by \$2/month per child. This pension helped give these widows the "courage and fortitude" to continue on with their lives.

Dr. McKinley's research revealed many interesting facts. Half of the widows in her sample lived in towns while the other half lived outside of them. Most widows were between the ages of 20 and 30, and 30% of them were pregnant at the time of their marriages. Most widows were married 5 to 10 years before the death of their husbands. Eighty-five percent of the

women had children, but the child mortality rate was 15%. Most of the women were Protestants, and only 50% could sign their names. Twenty percent of the widows remarried within three years. Eighty percent of those who did not lived to at least the age of sixty, with the oldest reaching the age of 93.

Dave Valuska gave a short report on his March trip to Germany during which he presented a paper on the 1848 German immigrants' participation in the Civil War. Dave also announced that he and two other First Defender members, Mark Pflum and Gary Weaver, would appear on "View from the Valley," a locally produced program on PBS station Channel 39, WLVT. The program, which aired on April 16, featured a discussion on the original 1861 First Defenders.

A short business meeting preceded Dr. McKinley's presentation. The white keystone on a blue shirt was the leading vote-getter for the logo. The shirt committee had samples of the shirts that can be purchased by First Defender members. Shirt costs will be \$12.50 for sizes S through XL and \$14.00 for sizes XXL plus embroidery and set up charges. The shirt committee will decide upon the logo edging - scarlet or gold. If all goes as planned, the polo shirts will be distributed at the May meeting.

Members should bring a blank check to the May meeting to pay the balance of their shirt orders. This amount has not been determined yet. The board

would again like to thank the members of the shirt committee, Mark Pflum and Richard and Cathie Kennedy, for all their time in organizing the shirt sales.

Fifteen seats are still available for the June 27 Gettysburg field trip. The May 12 meeting will be the deadline for member reservations, after which date non-member guests may register. Any members wishing to attend should return the registration form from the last newsletter to Don Stripling. Ron Rhein reported that the treasury has a balance of \$2472.26 with \$638 of that earmarked for the preservation fund. Finally, **Tom Tate** was chosen to serve on the board effective immediately.

Book Raffle

Once again the members bought one hundred tickets for our April book raffle; once again, thanks to the numerous book donations, we had no expenses. Over the months we bought \$763 worth of tickets and there have also been a number of donations to our preservation fund. After making a \$75.00 donation to the Kernstown (VA) Battlefield Association, our preservation fund stands at \$748.00, well in access of our \$500.00 goal for the year. We can all be proud.

Again this month I want to thank our donor who wishes to be anonymous for a \$10 contribution and also the book, The Civil War, by Clark G. Reynolds. Look for it among the offerings at our May meeting.

We have nine books in our offering inventory. That means we will end the year with no expenses to the raffle fund account. I am very proud of

everyone's efforts that have made the book raffle such a successful fund raiser for our fledgling organization. Tom Tate.

May Meeting

The First Defenders will hold their last meeting of the season on Tuesday, May 12 at 6:00 PM at the Moselem Springs Inn. **Jeff Driscoll**, a representative from the **Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites (APCWS)**, will speak about preservation and the Civil War. At the meeting, the First Defenders will donate \$500 to this organization in recognition and support of its very good work. **As this is the season's last meeting and a special event because of the donation, we hope to see an especially large turnout.** Members wishing to attend the dinner should make their reservations and meal selection by **Wednesday, May 6**, by calling 683-1533. If no one answers, please leave a message on the machine and speak clearly. The selections include catch of the day, vegetable lasagna, and pot roast. The price is \$15. If you make reservations, we must ask that you pay even if you are unable to attend because we have to pay for all dinners that we order. We also request that members **make their reservations by the deadline.** Moselem Springs Inn needs a lead time of several days to order enough dinners. Late reservations also greatly complicates seating arrangements and can lead to overcrowding.

**REMEMER TO BRING A
CHECK FOR THE SHIRT
ORDERS TO THE MAY
MEETING!!!!!!**

THE FIRST DEFENDERS

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table at Kutztown University Summer 1998

APCWS Rep Addresses May Meeting

Jeff Driscoll, Director of Education for the Association For the Preservation of Civil War Sites (APCWS), made a presentation at the May First Defenders Meeting held at Moselem Springs Inn. Sixty-nine members heard and saw Jeff's slide presentation on the history of APCWS, which was founded in 1987. The organization's primary goal is to preserve as many Civil War sites as possible. To date, APCWS has been involved at forty battlefields in twelve different states. Its most significant accomplishment, thus far, was saving 1,600 acres at Brandy Station, Virginia, an effort that took nine years to complete. At the conclusion of Jeff's talk, Tom Tate presented him a check for \$500 on behalf of all the First Defenders to be used in APCWS' preservation efforts.

Mike Gabriel, the First Defenders vice-president, conducted a short business meeting prior to Driscoll's presentation. Rich and Cathie Kennedy and Mark Pflum were thanked for their work on the polo shirts, which were available at the meeting. Mike announced the tentative 1998-1999 schedule, which is highlighted by the April 1999 appearance of **James McPherson**, Princeton University professor and Pulitzer Prize winning author, at the Kutztown University History Department Biennial Conference. Ron Rhein gave the treasurer's report: total balance of \$3,115.26, with \$520 earmarked for the Gettysburg trip and \$748 for preservation. Ed Honicker briefly spoke about a First Defender article in the April 17 Pottsville paper. Finally, Tom Tate, the book raffle chairperson, was invited to join the board and accepted the offer.

Gettysburg Field Trip

Forty members and guests traveled to the Gettysburg National Military Park on June 27 for the Second Annual First Defenders Field Trip. After pickups in Kutztown and Shillington, we headed south of Route 222 and then west on Route 30. As we crossed the Susquehanna River just north of Wrightsville, Dave Valuska, serving as tour guide, indicated that Confederate troops has reached this far east. Local militia units burned the bridge to prevent southerners from using it.

Upon arriving at GNMP, we stopped for battlefield maps at the Visitors Center and then headed for the field. We visited Barlow's Knoll, the Railroad Cut, and the roads that Confederate General James Longstreet's corps used for its march and countermarch to the Union left.

Following lunch at Shoney's Restaurant, we resumed our tour. One of our first stops was at the Wheat Field, where we walked the grounds to get an idea of what the troops experienced. From there we traversed the Triangular Field, visited Devil's Den, and walked to the top of Little Round Top. As we traveled, several members contributed their knowledge to supplement our understanding of the events on the second day of the battle. We concluded our trip by visiting Culp's Hill.

I want to thank all those who participated in the trip for their cooperation. Also, our thanks to all those who added their insights on the battle for the benefit of the others. I was impressed with the whole experience.

It's not too early to start thinking about 1999's trip. If you have any ideas, please let me hear them. Don Stripling, 678-3502.

Book Raffle Update

We will begin our 1998-99 year with a collection of eighteen books. I was able to add to our inventory over the summer with Civil War books of general appeal and at good prices to us. We will be able to raffle multiple books each meeting night with a good selection from which to choose.

The raffle will be conducted as it was last year but please make any suggestions you believe will improve it. With caution, I will try to have available some works on wars other than the Civil War, which was requested by some of our Roundtable members. I look forward to seeing you all at our September meeting. Tom Tate.

Other News

This newsletter contains a financial summary for last years transactions. Any questions about this should report should be directed to Ron Rhein. There is also a membership renewal form which also asks for additional information, such as areas of interest in the Civil War and email address, so we can begin to put together a membership directory. If you are planning to renew your membership, please complete the entire form and return it to **Don Stripling, 33 Bucks Street, Wernersville, PA 19565** along with a \$15 check made payable to **First Defenders CWRT**. If you are not renewing your membership, we still ask that you return the form with your name on it so we can invite new members to join.

ANYONE WHO HAS NOT RETURNED THEIR FORM BY NOV. 10 WILL BE DROPPED FROM THE ROLL.

1998-1999 Tentative Schedule

Sept.

Oct. Jeffrey Wert

Nov. Eric Wittenberger

Dec. Christmas Party

Jan. Bob Grim

Feb. Ron Rhein and Mike Gabriel

Mar. Undetermined

April KU History Dept. Biennial
Conference

May Undetermined

September Meeting Planned

The First Defenders will kick off their third season on Tuesday, September 8 at 6:00 P.M. at Moselem Springs Inn. A speaker will give a presentation on the 151 Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment. As with last year's first meeting, club business will also be an important issue. The most important item on the agenda is the 1999 field trip. We will vote on whether we want to have a one or two-day trip. If the latter, the choices will be Fredericksburg/Chancellorsville, First and Second Manassas, or the Lower Shenandoah Valley. The estimated cost would be \$200 for an individual and \$350 for a couple. We need to make this decision early because an overnight trip requires much more planning. If the members vote for a one day trip, we will open the floor to suggestions on where to go. Other possible agenda items are suggestions for a Civil War site to which to donate preservation money, and charging an extra fee for the December meeting.

Members wishing to attend the dinner should make their reservations and meal selection by **Wednesday, September 9**, by calling 683-1533. If no one answers, please leave a message on the machine and speak clearly. The selections include catch of the day, vegetable lasagna, and pot roast. The price is \$15. If you make reservations, we must ask that you pay even if you are unable to attend because we have to pay for all dinners that we order. We also request that members **make their reservations by the deadline**. Moselem Springs Inn needs a lead time of several days to order enough dinners.