

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

December 2016



www.firstdefenderscwr.us

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

LONDON- With the recent presidential election in the United States, it seems the American colonies are seriously divided into opposing factions. The impact upon the continent, including the Her Majesty's Empire, has provoked unprecedented concerns within all the leading citizens because of important commercial and political ties now existing between the nations. The future is something of a muddle.

It is November, but is the year 1860 or 2016? What is old is once again new, so the answer is unequivocally "both." Follow...

Opting to join the threatened mass exodus from the U.S. following the recent election (but regardless who won!), Lisa and I spent the post-election week in London. British electronic and print media devote more time reporting and analyzing the rise of Donald Trump and the fall of Hillary Clinton than almost any other domestic or international matter. It is difficult to find any mention of Prime Minister Theresa May or the ongoing Brexit saga, and coverage of protests outside the American embassy mirroring those on the "other side of the pond" are detailed and poignant. European nations are meeting in a hastily-convened session in Brussels to discuss the unanticipated phenomena of a Donald Trump presidency more than two months prior to it becoming reality.

Possibly not since the election of Abraham Lincoln has Europe been as anxious about domestic affairs in America as it is today. Between Lincoln's election and inauguration four months later, seven southern states seceded from the union and created a crisis in the nascent New World republic that would ripple thousands of miles across the Atlantic Ocean and lap up on the shores of the Old World. Sides were quickly chosen, and European governments generally tilted toward the new Confederacy (even if they were unwilling to do so publicly). The Lincoln government had an international crisis on its hands even before it took office, and the threat of a trans-Atlantic conflict seemed inevitable. Wisely pursuing a course of "one war at a time," Lincoln was able to appease (or, at least, not alienate) European powers even while the South depended on its "King Cotton Diplomacy" to court or cajole support for its cause from over the waters.

It seems somewhat odd that in today's more global worldview the election of an American president should be of such great import on other nations, especially those whose existence pre-dates our own by several thousand years. But, as some commentators and even the locals noted to Lisa and me, the power and reach of the United States is enormous. While President-Elect Trump campaigned on a promise to "make America great again," it is abundantly clear Europeans already stand in awe of what we have become in just 240 years (a blink of an eye by their historical standards!), and look to the future with the same hope and trepidation as we do in the United States. The view from London presents a different perspective of things back home, and one can only hope the sagacity and pragmatism exhibited by Lincoln and his people 150 years ago will again appeal to the better angels of our nature.

For the Glory,

Craig

Round Table Business

President Craig Breneiser called the November 9, 2016, meeting to order at 6:25 p.m. at the Inn at Reading. It is noted that this meeting was held the second Wednesday of November since Tuesday was Election Day. Greg Stull offered a prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance for the 54 members in attendance. Craig informed those in attendance that Ed Ewing continues to recover as well as Ev Binns who also recently had knee replacement surgery. We hope to see both gentlemen soon.

Vice President Mark Quattroch gave a report on battlefield lands and leverages available for preservation at the present time. He made a motion which was seconded and approved by the membership to donate \$300 to preservation efforts at Gettysburg for 35 acres between Barlow's Knoll and the almshouse. There is a 2:1 leverage for this land. The donation is to be sent in memory of Dennis Yerger who died in May.

Mark will collect money for name tags at the December meeting. He will also have order forms on hand for ordering polo shirts with the First Defenders logo.

Programs

Dave Unger reported that all programs are in place for the current campaign. He announced that Scott Mingus will be the December speaker. Scott will speak about the second battle of Winchester. See details on the website or at the end of the newsletter for information about Scott's program.

Dave is looking for our own round table members to make a presentation next January or February of the 2018 campaign. The program committee will be meeting in January of 2017 so please contact Dave as soon as possible if you are interested in doing this.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Tim Antosy reported a balance in the treasury of \$3886.52 as of November 2, 2016, with \$674.00 ear-marked for preservation which included a special \$300.00 donation for our deceased member Dennis Yerger.

Membership

Dave Swigert reported that membership currently stands at 83. An email has been sent to those who were members last season and have not rejoined this current campaign. He encourages all members to invite friends and acquaintances who may be interested in being a part of our fine organization.

Adopt-a-Position

Barbara Shafer announced that the plans to work on the maintenance of monuments had to be canceled this past October because of inclement weather. After postponing the original date for a week, we were met with rain a second time. It was decided to wait until spring to try again. Announcements will be made in early spring for those interested in helping this worthy and fun adventure.

Meal Captain

Kathy Little reminded everyone to be sure that a meal confirmation is sent if meals are ordered online. If you do not receive one, your order did not go through. Always give Kathy a call if you have an issue with your reservations. Her number is listed at the end of the newsletter with ordering information and menu choices.

Trips

Joe Schaeffer discussed a possible trip to Gettysburg in April to visit the Lost Avenue. This topic had been proposed as a destination for a field trip last June, but not enough members signed up for it. The nature of future trips will be less formal. Transportation will be decided based on numbers who choose to go. Stay tuned for more details.

Preservation Corner

Our November meeting has come and gone and I am pleased to announce we raised \$190 from our Book Raffle. As always I would like to thank all those who bought tickets and special thanks to those members who gave money as a donation. All of this is truly appreciated.

In addition, the membership approved donating \$500 to the Civil War Trust for the \$2-\$1 matching grant they are running to purchase approx. 35 acres of land in Gettysburg at Barlow's Knoll. Included in the \$500 is \$300 that was donated to the Roundtable by Dennis Yerger. Originally, the intent of the \$300 was to go towards a speaker who would give a presentation on Gettysburg but after talking to Dennis' family, they have graciously agreed to put this money towards this project. Thank You for allowing us to do this. With the \$2-\$1 matching grant, this puts our Total Contribution at \$1000.

We will continue to keep you posted on the latest news and happenings with Preservation. Until next time!

Mark Quattroch

The Seasons of Christmas **By Linda Zeiber**

Christmas has come round again...Christmas... the time of ribbons and gifts, lights and sounds, parties and mirth, brotherhood and peace on Earth. Conversely, it also often brings work and worry, shopping and traffic, exhaustion and frustrations. The season of Christmas often causes conflicting emotions for us all. I bought a memo pad

not long ago that lists, in pale ink, twenty-five major battles of the Civil War on the lines intended for groceries, gifts, and various other must-do's. My intention was that, no matter how tired or aggravated I was, my chores were laughable by comparison to what had been required of others in other times.

Our modern Christmas practices were already firmly entrenched during the days of the Civil War. Eleanor Custis Lee wrote in her journal in 1853 of the family's tabletop Christmas tree at West Point while her father was superintendent of that military academy. President Franklin Pierce set up the first Presidential Christmas tree in the White House in 1856. While tree ornaments would not be mass-produced for a decade after the Civil War, Americans had read the many Christmas descriptions of decorations and holiday festivities written in the widely popular works of Charles Dickens. By the middle of the Civil War, the postal service was offering free delivery to both manufactured and handmade Christmas cards during the holidays. The financial status of the Victorians determined the quality and quantity of gifts presented, but most all homes were decorated with greenery. Traditional holiday foods were found on dining tables, and children anticipated the presents left on and under the tree by Santa, whose unique Americanization was a gift from Clement Clark Moore in 1844. Of course, political cartoonist Thomas Nast drew Santa for publication in 1862, and the rest is history!

It is difficult to imagine the Christmas season of 1860 for Americans on both sides of the growing conflict with the specter of war on the horizon. Festivities surely were tempered when South Carolina's Governor Pickens announced that his state was to be 'separate, independent, free, and sovereign.' It seemed synonymous to a declaration of war. And, as anticipated, citizen soldiers spent the following Christmas of 1861 away from home and family.

Perhaps the adventure and novelty of the war made that first Christmas more tolerable for the soldiers despite their circumstances. Many diaries and letters home—both North and South—describe good food (either foraged or mailed from home), inordinate amounts of alcohol particularly enjoyed in egg nog, and games and competitions. The most common complaint centered around guard duty. But, by the Christmas of 1862, which was sandwiched between Fredericksburg and Murfreesboro, the tenor of written words had dramatically changed. A soldier from a Wisconsin unit that had fought at Murfreesboro wrote:

"Last night was Christmas Eve. It brought to my mind a thousand recollections of the past. The contrast is great. I sat up late in the evening at the fire...for we were under marching orders for this morning at five o'clock. A grand movement seems to be at hand. About eleven o'clock at night I heard heavy firing in the front. Where will the next Christmas Eve find me?"

The Christmases during the Civil War found the soldiers in winter camp for the most part. It is nearly impossible to imagine the drudgery and boredom and bleak living conditions and how this must have tempered any hope of celebrating the joys of the season. Loneliness and separation only worsened each succeeding year of war. Soldiers over the history of civilization have suffered the distance from loved ones made acutely painful by the memories of other Christmases. As we find ourselves in the midst of this holiday season, may we take time to remember those of the past and the present who have been called to serve our country and find themselves in distant places dreaming of nothing more than "home." It magnifies our blessings and enhances the true nature of Christmas.

December Program:

"Second Battle of Winchester" featuring author Scott Mingus



In the summer of 1863, as Robert E. Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia began its inexorable push northward toward Pennsylvania, one significant force stood in the way -- Union Maj. Gen. Milroy's division of the Eighth Army Corps in the vicinity of Berryville. Believing that the enemy was merely a cautious force, the veteran Indiana politician-turned-general chose to stand his ground. This controversial decision put his outnumbered and largely inexperienced division on a path to what most observers considered to be a military disaster. Milroy lost half his force and routed ingloriously from the field. Many of the Northern soldiers who fought at Second Winchester believed their three-day, ultimately unwinnable resistance had bought time for the Rebels from entering Pennsylvania long enough for the Army of the Potomac to arrive and defeat Lee at Gettysburg. Mingus tells the story of these men and the first act of the Gettysburg Campaign.

Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, December 13, 2016 Meeting:

If possible, please make your meal choices/reservation on the website. Our meal choices for December include: Chicken Mediterranean; Pulled Pork with Fuji grilled apples and cornbread; Stuffed Flounder; or Cheese Manicotti with marinara sauce. Soup, starch, vegetables, dessert, rolls, coffee, tea, and water are included. The price is \$25.00 inclusive for meals.

If you make your reservation online and you do not receive a thank-you and/or a confirmation email, your reservation did not go through. If you must call in reservations, please call your menu selection to Kathy Little at 610-367-8082 no later than noon Friday, December 9, 2016, which is also the deadline for online reservations.

IMPORTANT NOTE Once you have made your reservation, there are no cancellations for any reasons after noon on the Friday preceding the meeting. **This is the policy of the Inn at Reading, and the Round Table will be billed for your meal whether you attend or not.** Please understand that you will be asked to reimburse the RT should you not attend after having made a reservation and not cancelled prior to the aforementioned time period.

****PLEASE NOTE: IT IS MUCH APPRECIATED IF YOU PAY IN THE APPROPRIATE DOLLAR AMOUNT. WE DO NOT HAVE A CHANGE DRAWER. WE WILL NOT ACCEPT \$50 OR \$100 BILLS IN PAYMENT. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.**

Speakers and Program Topics for 2016-2017

12/13/2016	Scott Mingus	Second Battle of Winchester
1/10/2017	Bob Shuman	The Burning of Chambersburg
2/14/2017	Paul Kahan	Simon Cameron: Amiable Scoundrel
3/14/2017	Steve French	McNeill's Rangers
4/11/2017	Ed Bearss	To Be Determined
5/9/2017	Ed Bonekamper	Myth of the Lost Cause

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