

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

March 2017



www.firstdefenderscwrts.us

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Gettysburg- How to reverse the apparent trend of flagging interest in the Civil War and history in general? Such was the conversation recently had with a group of history buffs and tour providers. While there exists no shortage of interesting, vibrant and timely topics in the American history genre, there does seem to be a dearth of people seeking out such opportunities.

In our own little orbit, we've seen a decrease in Round Table membership this year; 88 members, down from 101 during the 19th Campaign. Attendance at our monthly programs is down, too, with an average well under 60 that we need to maintain our standing with the Inn at Reading. (Without desecrating the intent of a poem submitted by Mike Straus for this newsletter, it appears appropriately symbolic.)

More importantly, though, our decreasing strength will impact future programs. As you know, current year dues support next year's speakers. A decrease of 13 members from last year means we will have \$325 less to cover program costs, and that is a just a little more than we need for each program. It was just a few years ago when we chartered a large tour bus for a field trip, but the interest fell to the point where tours had to be cancelled when we could not even fill a mini-bus. It's small comfort to realize it is not just us as professional history tour companies are also having tough times attracting sufficient attendees to hold a program without losing money.

We know our membership is changing, aging and relocating. Time passes and things change. In some instances, even history is often lost to development because people do not know what is in their midst or from just plain apathy because they do not care.

Noted author and historian William C. "Jack" Davis once noted the difficulty in keeping up with history. Just since most of us were in school, another generation or two of history has occurred. What was current events for us is now history for our children and grandchildren, and many consider "Civil War" to be either a rock band or, more likely, a recent superheroes movie.

The future of the First Defenders is in our hands. We will be celebrating our 20th anniversary during the April program with our old friend Ed Bearss, and we have already begun planning our 21st Campaign. But, whether there is a 22nd, 23rd, 24th or 25th... well, the crystal ball is a bit cloudy right now.

Lincoln said "the world will little note or long remember what we say here," and that might be true for us in our own little universe. However, it is up to ALL of us, as an organization and as individuals, to help make certain our friends and families, all generations, take hold of the torch of history and pass it along to others to remember and celebrate "what they did here."

For the Glory,

Craig

Round Table Business

President Craig Breneiser called the February 14, 2017, meeting to order at 6:25 p.m. at the Inn at Reading. Ev Binns, happily returned from knee surgery, offered a prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance for the 48 members in attendance. Craig asked that we keep Jim Struble in our thoughts since he had hip replacement surgery recently. He also welcomed Mike Straus back from knee surgery.

Vice President Mark Quattroch gave a report on battlefield lands and leverages available for preservation at the present time. Also, polo shirt orders will be finalized at the March meeting. Email Mark if you are interested and find the order form on our website. He reminded those who ordered name tags that they are on order. Further details are following in the newsletter.

Treasurer's Report

There has been no change in the treasury because of the cancellation of the January meeting. Tim Antosy reports a total of \$3,563 currently. There is \$551.00 in the preservation account as of this newsletter. We currently have 88 members. This is well below full-strength. Please invite friends and acquaintances to join us.

Programs

Dave Unger reported that we still need a speaker for October 2018 from our membership. Please contact Dave if you can make a presentation. Member Bob Shuman has been rescheduled for December 2017 since bad weather forced the cancellation of the January meeting.

Joe's Jaunts

Joe Schaeffer reported the details of an informal field trip for April 22, 2017, to tour the Lost Avenue at Gettysburg. Dean Schultz owns the property that provides access to this seldom-visited spot. If you are interested, be at Dean's farm on April 22 at 9 a.m. You are responsible for your own transportation to Gettysburg. Expect a 3.5-4 hour walk. Joe will provide any details that you may need.

Website

Webmaster Lisa Breneiser explained a change in the "reCAPTCHA" portion of the web page which we use to order meals. Internet "robots" were getting through the previous method which was to make sure that only members were placing meal orders. Anyone who needs an explanation of "reCAPTCHA" or "robot", please talk to Lisa who is fluent in computerese.

From Mark Quattro--
Order Your Polo Shirts Now

The order form is on the web site, and anyone wishing to order can print the order form off the web site and give it to me at the next round table meeting or they can e-mail me at mquattro@outlook.com with the size and # of shirts they want to order. We will be taking orders up to the March meeting after which we will submit everything to Weikel Sportswear to start the process. We will be collecting money at the April meeting. Don't delay! Place you order now!!

Important Announcement: The CWRT of Eastern PA is presenting **Americans at War**, a conference for the benefit of historic preservation.

This conference is scheduled for Saturday, May 6, 2017, at the Center at Holiday Inn Lehigh Valley. This is located at 7736 Adrienne Drive, Breinigsville, PA 18031. You may speak to someone regarding this conference at 610-391-1000. Registration and breakfast begin at 7:45 a.m.. One of the many speakers throughout the day is D. Scott Hartwig. The cost is \$50.00 per person which includes breakfast and lunch.

Send your check made out to "CWRT of Eastern PA, Inc." to Edwin Root 2332 Fox Meadow Drive, Allentown, PA 18104. Include your phone number and email address so that you will receive a confirmation.

For the full schedule of events, see Linda Zeiber for a copy of speakers and topics.

Adopt-A-Position

The Spring date to work at our sites at Gettysburg National Park will be announced at our March meeting.

We will meet at Lowes around 9 and carpool to Gettysburg or you may meet us at the first work site. We work on two of the sites have lunch and then work on the remaining sites.

First Defenders has adopted two sites, Gregg's monument located at East Cavalry Field and 18th PA Cavalry located at Big Round Top.

The paperwork on two additional sites, WV 1st Cav (Farnsworth) and Benning's Brigade (TX) on South Confederate, should be completed.

We also work on the 6th PA Cavalry and 8th PA Cavalry sites adopted by Barbara Shafer.

The 6th PA Cavalry fence will need to be painted. Roger Cotterill is the fashionista on dressing for the occasion, but clothing suitable for painting might be your best choice.

We will have six sites to work on. To accomplish this we need YOU to volunteer, please let Don Stripling or Barbara Shafer know of your interest. We may also be able to have a Ranger give a talk about a site or the Park.

The purpose of the Adopt-A-Position (AAP) program is for volunteers to maintain the historic setting of the battlefield.

Volunteers (VIPs) help by doing field maintenance and labor that otherwise would not be completed due to budget and/or staffing restraints.

VIPs donate time and labor in preserving regimental positions, battery locations, or brigade lines. The Park provides equipment and supplies that are needed for the sites. There isn't any monetary involvement by the volunteer. Individuals and/or groups can volunteer to participate. The criteria is a two-year commitment to work a minimum of one day each during the spring and fall program. The individual or contact representative for a group will arrange a date two weeks before the time that a work party will be at the adopted site. All work at the project site must be pre-arranged with the AAP Coordinator. The coordinator at Gettysburg Park is: Randy Hill at (717) 338-4479.

I have been doing Adopt A Position for about 10 years and the list of available sites has been cut in half. This means that sites have been adopted but there are still sites available both Union and Confederate.

If you would like a current list of sites to adopt, contact Randy Hill at Gettysburg National Military Park.

March Program--Steve French

"McNeill's Rangers"

John Hanson "Hanse" McNeill led a small but pesky band of guerillas that operated primarily in the upper West Virginia region from 1862 to 1864. McNeill's Rangers were actually Company E of the 18th Virginia Cavalry, and would raid Union supply lines, disrupt the B&O Railroad and outshine their more illustrious comrades, Mosby's Rangers, by capturing nearly the entire 1st West Virginia Infantry, 60 6th West Virginia Cavalry troopers while bathing nude and TWO Union generals in a midnight raid.



Hanse McNeill would only rise to the rank of captain before being wounded and subsequently captured in the Shenandoah Valley during the autumn of 1864. He would be rescued by his comrades and taken to safety, but his wound proved to be mortal.

McNeill's Rangers were a small command in an area that was something of a backwater, but they made the war real enough for the Union troops stationed in the region during more than two years of active service.

*Steve French, a middle school history teacher in Martinsburg, West Virginia, is the author of several Civil War books including *Imboden's Brigade in the Gettysburg Campaign*, for which he received the 2008 Bachelder-Coddington Literary Award and the 2009 Civil War Round Table of Gettysburg Book Award. His most recent book is *Rebel Chronicles: Raiders, Scouts, and Train Robbers of the Potomac*. French has written over 70 Civil War articles and numerous book reviews that have appeared in such publications as *The Washington Times*, *Gettysburg Magazine* and *North & South Magazine*.*

Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, March 14, 2017 Meeting:

If possible, please make your meal choices/reservation on the website. Our meal choices for March include: Teriyaki Grilled Chicken; Veal Parmesan with pasta; Broiled Tilapia with lemon butter sauce; or Basil Pesto Cheese Tortellini with spinach. 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, March 10, 2017, 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 2017

3/14/2017	Steve French	McNeill's Rangers
4/11/2017	Ed Bearss	The First Defenders
5/9/2017	Ed Bonekemper	Myth of the Lost Cause

Mike Straus responded to my request for one of his contributions to the newsletter. He forwarded the following poem. Thanks, Mike! This poem touches our hearts and reminds us of the personal price paid by so many.

Roll Call

by Nathaniel Graham Shepherd {1834-1888}

"Corporal Green!" the Orderly cried;
"Here" was the answer loud and clear,
From the lips of a soldier who stood near-
And "Here" was the word the next implied.

"Cyrus Drew"- then a silence fell;
This time no answer followed the call;
Only his ear-man had seen him fall:
Killed or wounded- he could not tell.

There they stood in the failing light,
These men of battle, with grave, dark looks,
As plain to read as open books,
While slowly gathered the shades of night.

The fern on the hillsides was splashed with blood,
And down in the corn, where the poppies grew,
Were redder stains than the poppies knew,
And crimson-dyed was the river's flood.

For the foe had crossed from the other side,
That day, in the face of a murderous fire
That swept them down in terrible ire;
And their life- blood went to color the tide.

"Herbert Cline"- At the call there came
Two stalwart soldiers into the line,
Bearing between them this Herbert Cline,
Wounded and bleeding, to answer his name.

"Ezra Kerr"- and a voice answered "Here!"
"Hiram Kerr!"- but no man replied.
They were brothers, those two; the sad wind sighed,
And a shudder crept through the cornfield near.

"Ephraim Deane!"- then a soldier spoke:
"Deane carried our regiment's colors," he said.
"When our ensign was shot; I left him dead,
Just after the enemy wavered and broke.

"Close to the roadside there his body lies;
I paused a moment and gave him drink;
He murmured his mother's name, I think,
And Death came with it and closed his eyes.

'Twas a victory, yes; but it cost us dear;
For that company's roll, when called at night,
Of a hundred men who went into the fight,
Numbered but twenty that answered "Here!"

Civil War Quotations/ In the Words of the Commanders by Peter G. Tsouras

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