

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

May 2017



www.firstdefenderscwr.us

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I write this message, news reports from New Orleans are announcing the first of four Civil War monuments has been removed. Known as the Liberty (or Liberty Place) Monument, it actually commemorates the "Battle of Liberty Place," a Reconstruction-era civil disturbance focusing on white supremacy in 1874 between the Crescent City White League and the New Orleans Metropolitan Police. The White League prevailed in the affair, although some of its members died during the violence; the 35-foot shaft was erected to their memory 18 years later.

While such a monument is on the very fringe of Civil War iconography (and, arguably, is well-deserving of a place in history's dustbin), the next ones slated for removal honor Jefferson Davis, Louisiana native son P.G.T. Beauregard and Robert E. Lee, each of whom has a clear nexus to the events of 1861-1865. Lee, especially, has enjoyed a century-and-a-half reputation bordering on sainthood, but has more recently fallen into politically-correct disrepute.

Arguments on both sides of the question have relevance. Remembering a time of revolution and treason with the undercurrents of human bondage is odious to some, while the noble, earnestly-held beliefs supported by the science and theology of the time are inspiring to others. Once focused almost exclusively on the Confederate battle flag, the fight is now carried to bronze and granite and bricks and mortar.

Philosopher, essayist, poet and novelist George Santayana noted more than a century ago that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." We presently live in a time where we are divided as a nation in a manner unseen since 1860. It does not matter who is "right;" rather a failure to remember and understand our mid-nineteenth century cataclysm could lead us to repeat it (with far greater consequences than those experienced by our ancestors!).

It is telling of the times that the Liberty Monument removal was accomplished in the dead of night reportedly by crews wearing flak jackets and helmets, driving trucks with no license plates and under heavy police security. Davis, Beauregard and Lee appear likely to suffer similar ignominy in the coming days. Whether we should honor or disparage these men is a matter of perspective; however, is it not preferable to gaze upon their likenesses, as patriots or traitors, and reflect on the terrible cost and legacy of the Civil War while resolving to ensure "never again" in America? If so, Robert E. Lee and his bronzed and marbled peers still articulate a warning to us that should not be silenced.

For the Glory!

Craig

Round Table Business

President Craig Breneiser called the April meeting to order at 6:17 p.m. at the Inn at Reading on April 11, 2017. Greg Stull offered a prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance for the 69 members and guests present. Following dinner and a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday" for our honored friend, guest and speaker, Ed Bearss. Craig led a brief business meeting. Introduction of guests was next on the agenda along with a sad note of the death of member Ron Emge's wife.

Craig reminded everyone of the election of officers to be held at the May meeting. Everyone is encouraged to consider taking an office and participate in the election. We were informed that President Trump donated his first paycheck to the National Park Service for battlefield preservation. This is great news for all of us since we pride ourselves in preserving battlefield lands.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Tim Antosy reported a balance of \$3,531.60 as of March 29, 2017. Last month there was \$679.00 available for preservation. Our membership still stands at 88. The unencumbered balance as of April's meeting stands at \$2852.60.

Preservation

Mark Quattroch reported that Ed Bearss was declining his speaker's fee and asked that the \$250.00 be donated to land preservation at Brandy Station where there is currently at matching grant leverage of 6:1. Mark shared the news that buildings at Antietam where the 12th Corps under Mansfield fought have been razed. He also explained that the GBPA is still in negotiations with a German grocery store chain attempting to save 17 acres of Camp Letterman. The store chain has already purchased 100 acres that had been the site of the hospital following the battle at Gettysburg.

It also seems that a new attempt at building a casino in Gettysburg is on the forefront again. The issue is currently in the hands of the zoning board and has been put on hold.

Mark will collect money for polo shirts at the May meeting as well as any money still owed for name tags.

Joe's Jaunts

Joe Schaeffer shared information about George Durrell and his battery which is familiar to many Berks countians. Judith Simon donated a large collection of artifacts belonging to Durrell to the Berks County History Center recently. Judith and her husband both belonged to the round table before retiring to Elizabethtown, Lancaster County.

Joe also reviewed the details of the April 22nd 'jaunt' to Gettysburg where Wally Heimbach is leading a tour of the Lost Avenue formerly known as Neill Avenue. It is located on property owned by Dean Schultz at 1621 Baltimore Pike.

Programs

Dave Unger reported that most of next year's speakers are now in place. The membership is currently 88 which is a somewhat under our usual strength. Speakers' fees are paid through memberships so we hope to increase our numbers in the new campaign this September.

AAP

Barbara Shafer reminds everyone for the final time that Adopt-A-Position volunteers will be meeting on Thursday, May 5, 2017, at the parking lot at Lowe's on Route 724 at 9 a.m. to travel to Gettysburg to maintenance "our" adopted monuments. If you would like to join the group and have never done so, contact Don Stripling or Barbara for additional details. The day always involves more fun than work; it's Gettysburg after all!

Preservation Corner

It is great to see everyone at the April Roundtable Meeting. It was great to see Ed Bears and have him talk about the First Defenders. I would like to thank all of you who bought raffle tickets or made a donation for Preservation. Because of you, we managed to raise \$183 for the Preservation Fund.

In appreciation for Ed coming to present and in keeping with tradition we are donating \$250 to the Civil War Trust in Ed's name. In addition, we are putting this towards the \$6.30 to \$1 Matching Grant for Brandy Station. With the Matching Grant, this makes our total donation at \$1575.

Until next time! See you in May!!

Mark Quattrock

A Final Word for the Final Newsletter

--from Mike Straus (Where does he find this stuff?!)

Methodist Cemetery St. Louis, Missouri

Here lize a stranger braiv,
Who died while fightin' the Suthern Confederacy to save
Piece to his dust.
Braive Suthern friend
From iland 10
You reached a Glory us end.
We plase these flowrs above the stranger's hed,
In honor of the shiverlus ded.
Sweet spirit rest in Heven
Ther'l be know Yankis there.

Midshipman in Gray
Page #47
James Morris Morgan

Newsletter contact: Linda Zeiber, zeibers@comcast.net



May Program

"Myths of the Lost Cause"

In the spring of 1865, most Confederates accepted the loss of the "Second War for American Independence." Within a decade, however, the "Lost Cause" was born in an effort to enoble the sacrifices made and the defeat of the South. There are seven essential components to the Lost Cause dogma: that slavery was a benevolent, dying institution; states' rights, not slavery, led to the conflict; the overwhelming odds against the Confederacy ensured its defeat; Robert E. Lee was one of the greatest military leaders in history; James Longstreet was personally responsible for the Confederate loss at Gettysburg, and, by extension, the war itself; Ulysses S. Grant was an incompetent butcher who could only win with brutality and superior numbers; and, the North won by waging an unprecedented "total war" against the South.



Not so fast says Edward Bonekemper. He has written a balanced, well-researched and compelling refutation of the Confederate Lost Cause catechism, and he will present his arguments to the First Defenders at the May program. Bonekemper's conclusions will have original Lost Cause warriors Jubal Early and William Nelson Pendleton spinning in their graves, and 20th Century apologists like Douglas Southall Freeman and Shelby Foote would have been very uncomfortable under this spotlight!

Edward Bonekemper is a lecturer in military history at Muhlenberg College. He earned a B.A. cum laude in American history from Muhlenberg College, an M.A. in American history from Old Dominion University, and a J.D. from Yale Law School. His prior Civil War books include Lincoln and Grant, Grant and Lee, McClellan and Failure, Incompetence and Worse, A Victor, Not a Butcher, and How Robert E. Lee Lost the Civil War. His latest book is titled The Myth of the Lost Cause.

Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, May 9, 2017 Meeting:

If possible, please make your meal choices/reservation on the website. Our meal choices for May include: Hawaiian Chicken; Stuffed boneless Pork Chop with pan gravy; Teriyaki Shrimp Skewers over rice; OR Rigatoni with zesty vegetable marinara sauce. Salad, 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, May 5, 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.**