

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

June 2025, the 28th Campaign



www.firstdefendersecwrt.us

President's Message

WHAT IF HE WAS NOT DRUNK?

Ulysses S. Grant had a drinking problem. So it was reported during the Civil War, and many writers echo that sentiment to this day. Some said he had a weakness for alcohol, some said he drank from loneliness or boredom and some said he simply could not tolerate liquor. Most reports were related to the reporter by those who observed Grant to be inebriated. He was said to be found in a drunken state. Sometimes he disappeared in his tent or went off alone for hours to recover. Curiously, there are few, if any, eyewitness accounts to his drinking.

While serving at Fort Humboldt in Eureka, California, prior to the Civil War, Grant was accused by his senior officer of being so much under the influence as to be unable to perform his duties. There were no witnesses to this drinking, but he was given the choice to resign or face court martial. He left the army.

Grant was alleged to have been drunk and caught off guard at Shiloh. When the Confederate army in Vicksburg surrendered, he was seen with a case of champagne, intending to celebrate with his staff. In neither case was there a witness to his drinking. The allegations continued throughout the war. Henry Halleck sent James McPherson to spy on Grant. McPherson reported him to be disciplined and orderly. Later, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton sent Charles Dana on the same mission. Dana reported Grant's behavior in the most positive terms finding no evidence of drinking.

Most of the accusations against Grant appear to have come from jealous fellow officers, news hungry reporters and political enemies. Fortunately for the Union, President Lincoln stood by Grant and was rewarded with victories. Lincoln may have even said that he wished he knew what Grant drank as he would like to buy the same for his other generals. Yet even this support by Lincoln may be lending credence to unfair allegations. What if drinking was not the source of Grant's problems?

Grant suffered from migraine attacks enduring them his entire life. In the nineteenth century, that term was unknown was simply referred to in everyday terms as a "sick headache." Headache sufferers were deemed to be weak of mind and

body. In reality, a migraine attack is a whole-body experience, not simply a headache. Symptoms include headache, yawning, blurred vision, poor concentration, sensitivity to light, sounds and smells, emotional disturbance and, worst of all, nausea (vomiting). I can attest, as can many others, that if you entered a room and found one person to be a hung over drunk and the another to be a person suffering a migraine attack, you would be hard-pressed to tell the difference.

In the last four decades, medical science has begun to take migraine episodes seriously, and effective drugs have been developed for treatment. Only recently have some targeted, preventative drugs been released. None of this was available in Grant's time. Pills containing opium, cocaine or wild concoctions were tried, and many people used alcohol to cover the symptoms (but only so long as the person drank).

My point is not to convince you that Grant was not a drinker. Maybe he drank a little and maybe he went on binges. Maybe if he drank, it was to hide the pain. Maybe he was not drinking, but simply suffering the symptoms of migraine attacks. Possibly even all of these could be true. I simply bring it to your attention to stimulate your thoughts.

Joe

Round Table Business

Joe called the meeting to order at 6:20 pm.

There were two guests in attendance this evening, Bill Crites and Bobby Hanson.

Joe noted that there are many changes to the Round Table, and he thanked everyone for their input.

Joe reported the by-laws are completed, and, with some minor corrections, will be posted on the website. As written, officers will serve a two-year term. We will vote on them next month. Also, we continue to progress with the 501-c-3 non-profit status.

Our new meeting schedule will start in April and end with the December meeting. Our 29th Campaign will start in April of 2026. For the purpose of filing taxes required for non-profit organizations, we will follow the fiscal year, January-December.

Election of Officers

These officers elected this evening will have their term ending December of 2026.

President: Joe Schaeffer

Secretary: Lisa Breneiser

Vice President: Clark Zimmerman

Treasurer: Chuck Bezler

The following will serve in supporting positions:

Preservation: Gary Hertzog

Technology: Craig Breneiser

Meal Captain: Vicky Heffner

Membership: Ev Binns

A motion to accept the nomination of officers was made by Wally Heimbach, seconded by Rodney LaPearl. All voted in favor.

Treasurers Report

Lori Border reported the balance as of March 11th was \$1,162.07, as well as \$94 in preservation. Lori thanked the roundtable for the opportunity to serve saying it was her pleasure to do so.

Membership

Our membership now stands at 57 members. We received a total of \$ 570.00 in donations in addition to membership fees in this campaign. Ev brought pens advertising our Round Table.

Preservation and Book Raffle

At our May meeting, the membership voted to donate \$125 to American Battlefield Trust for "Preserve 1099 Acres of Hallowed Ground." The Trust has saved over 58 million acres, and is approaching the 60-million-acre milestone.

The 1099 acres protect 3 different sites:

- 1006 acres at Chickasaw Bayou, Vicksburg Campaign, MS
- 84 acres at South Cavalry Battlefield, Gettysburg Campaign, PA
- 9 acres at Brandy Station Battlefield, VA, Gettysburg Campaign

\$4 million has already been raised by federal, state and private funds, and the Trust is seeking to raise \$162,500. The program has a \$26 to \$1 matching grant which raises our contribution to \$3,250!

The May Book Raffle took in \$116. Our Preservation Fund is currently at \$85.

Our Bonus Raffle concluded in May.

- 1st Prize- The Last Meeting Print (Lee & Jackson) -- Tim Antosy
- 2nd Prize-Lee's Lieutenant's (3 Volumes) -- Tim Antosy
- 3rd Prize- The Official Military Atlas of the Civil War -- John Hartner
- 4th Prize-6" Busts of Lee & Jackson -- Rodney LaPearl

Congratulations to the winners & thanks to everyone for your support!

28 th Season Preservation	Total for all Seasons
Total amount raised-\$810	
Total amount donated-\$1,125	Total amount donated - \$ 39,546
Total contribution with matching grants-\$41,244	Total contributed with Matching Grants - \$ 563,097

Website

Craig reported the website is having some issues with online reservations that he is working to troubleshoot and correct. The rest of the site is working properly, and he called everyone's attention to the series of postings appearing weekly about the presentations at the Central Virginia Battlefield Trust's spring conference and the Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall seminar.

June Program

A Wonderful Career in Crime: Charles Cowlam's Masquerades in the Civil War Era and Gilded Age

presented by Frank Garmon, Jr.

Charles Cowlam's career as a convict, spy, detective, congressional candidate, adventurer, and con artist spanned the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Gilded Age. His swindles touched many of the era's most prominent figures, including Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, and Ulysses S. Grant. Indeed, he would receive presidential pardons from both Lincoln and Davis! One contemporary newspaper reported that Cowlam "has as many aliases as there are letters in the alphabet." He was a chameleon in a world of strangers, and scholars have often overlooked him due to his elusive nature. His intrigues reveal how Americans built trust amid the transience and anonymity of the nineteenth century.



Frank W. Garmon Jr. studied history and economics at Christopher Newport University, before completing his M.A. and Ph.D. in history at the University of Virginia. His first book, A Wonderful Career in Crime:

Charles Cowlam's Masquerades in the Civil War Era and Gilded Age, was published by Louisiana State University Press in September. Garmon received the Provost's Award for Faculty Excellence

in Teaching Student Writing in 2023. At CNU, he regularly offers a course on American Entrepreneurship, and a senior seminar on Alexander Hamilton structured around the award-winning musical.



(Extended!) 28th Campaign Programs		
Date	Speaker	Program
7/8/2025	Scott Mingus	<i>Targeted Tracks: The Cumberland Valley Railroad in the Civil War</i>
8/12/2025	Wally Heimbach	<i>Colonel Edward Cross and the Fighting 5th New Hampshire</i>
9/9/2025	Jason Elmeron	<i>Robert Todd Lincoln</i>
10/14/2025	Daminish Miller	<i>Five Women in the Civil War</i>
November 2025 *	Craig Symonds	<i>David Farragut & Chester Nimitz</i>
12/9/2025	Michael Harris	<i>The Philadelphia Campaign (Revolutionary War)</i>

* The date of Dr. Symonds' presentation will not be the usual day/time, and will be announced shortly.

Events / Tours/ and Other Happenings

Please feel free to share anything that you are aware of and would like added to the monthly newsletter. Please send them to my email me at Lisa.breneiser@gmail.com.

Summer is upon us and there are a variety of opportunities to take part in! Our Battlefields, Battlefield Trusts, and other historical outlets, including our local Berks History Center, have a variety of tours, seminars and events to fulfill your summer!

Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, June 10, 2025
Meeting & Program: Deadline to order is June 6th, noon.

We had 38 members attend the May meeting. Kathy thanked everyone for their cooperation over the years. She appreciated everyone getting their meal orders in a timely fashion, happy to serve in this role and knows that Vicky will do a great job!

If possible, please make your meal choices/reservations on the website. When doing so, you should receive:

- An immediate “thank you” for making your reservation,
- A follow-up email that includes a copy of your meal selection, and
- A second email confirmation that everything has worked properly (this may be delayed by up to 24-hours).

If all of the above does not occur, please call Vicky Heffner to order your meal.

Our meal choices for June are:

Salad
Broiled Haddock
Chopped Sirloin
Lasagna

If you must call in reservations, please, call your menu selection to Vicky Heffner at 610.413.5543 no later than noon, June 6, 2025, which is also the deadline for online reservations. The price is \$32.00 inclusive for meals

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 Giannotti’s, 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 Round Table 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.**

Checks may be made payable to “First Defenders Civil War Roundtable”.

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

July 2025, the 29th Campaign



www.firstdefenderscwrt.us

RAILROADS AND AMERICA'S CIVIL WAR

One might argue that America was built by the railroads. Long before concrete interstate highways, airplanes, telephones, televisions, internet and cell phones existed, there were the railroads. For two centuries, pioneers and settlers had slowly ventured westward, expanding the territory of the United States. Roads were few, primitive and poorly maintained. Travel by water was risky and limited by weather conditions. Geography prevented travel to many regions.

Then came the railroads. Beginning in the second quarter of the 19th century, railroads were built at a dizzying pace, crisscrossing the continent. Passenger travel from New York to San Francisco, which took weeks by ship or months by wagon, now took days by train. American agricultural products could travel by rail from farm to city in a day. Manufacturing plants sprouted overnight in every town and city. American industry came to dominate the world, made possible by the railroads. The largest, most powerful companies in the world were the railroads. Most of us had ancestors who worked for the railroads or a related industry. My great-grandfather worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad in the Altoona shops, and his son drove trains for the same company.

In 1861 America was torn in two by the Civil War. Young men volunteering for service walked or took a carriage to the nearest train station for a journey to meet their destiny. The First Defenders traveled by train to Harrisburg, then to Baltimore and from there to Washington in defense of the capital.

The Civil War became the first war in history where the railroads played an integral part in the success or failure of the armies. Books about the impact of railroads on logistics lack the flair of glorious attacks and repulses. Countless publications cover the struggles of soldiers and civilians during the Gettysburg campaign, but few have covered the importance of the railroads.

This month, Scott Mingus will speak to us on the Cumberland Valley Railroad, a vital supply line between Hagerstown, Maryland and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Robert E. Lee wanted it destroyed while the Union depended on its survival. Please attend and listen to the tale of this vital railroad. Scott has joined us several times, and we welcome him back.

Joe

Round Table Business

Joe called the meeting to order at 6:22 pm.

There was one guest in attendance this evening, Bobby Hampson.

Joe noted there are many changes to the Round Table, and he thanked everyone for their input.

Joe reported the by-laws are completed, approved by the board and will be posted on the website. Please take a look at them. Any structural changes can be brought before the membership.

Joe thanked Lori and Chuck for their assistance in moving the organization's finances to Diamond Credit Union.

Dues will be collected and due at the July meeting to cover the remainder of the year through December as our 29th Campaign.

Moving forward, starting with our 29th Campaign which began in June, we have raised the dues to \$35. Dues have not been raised since 2013, and with the continuing rising costs associated with speakers and hotel accommodations, we are no longer able to sustain the quality of speakers without additional funding. The survey that was sent out indicated the majority would be in favor of the \$35 rate, and that was used to set the new dues. This increase will allow us to continue to bring in the quality speakers we have enjoyed. If any member would like to do a presentation, please reach out to Clark with your topic. The more participation we get from the membership, the further our membership fees go.

The membership applications for the 29th Campaign starting in June and ending in December 2025, can be found on the website's main page under "VOLUNTEERS NEEDED" by simply clicking on the graphic.

The 30th Campaign will run from April – December 2026.

Once again, Joe thanked Lori and Kathy for their service to the Round Table.

Finally, the not-for-profit 501 (c) (3) application is almost complete.

Treasurers Report

Chuck Bezler reported the balance as of June 10th in the general fund is \$ 758.00, as well as \$85.00 in preservation.

Membership

Our membership now stands at 55 members. We received an additional \$570 in donations for the 28th Campaign. Ev suggested that we reach out in other mediums, such as YouTube, podcasts, Zoom, and talk to friends and family to help increase the membership. He also noted that people will join, but don't necessarily want to come to a dinner meeting. We should also consider a student membership to draw a younger audience, such as college students.

Preservation and Book Raffle

The 29th Campaign is off and running. At our first meeting in June, the book raffle raised \$72. With our remaining balance from the 28th Campaign (\$85), our Preservation balance stands at \$157. The membership declined to donate any money for battlefield preservation this month. We will be searching for new matching grants for our July meeting.

We are removing the Book Shelf list from the website. If anyone is interested in our inventory, Gary can provide you with a list of our books. In the past, only a few members have purchased books from the list, and we have not always been able to update the list in an adequate time.

While our Civil War book inventory is good, Gary would be interested in receiving books on other historical subjects. Our focus is still on the Civil War, but we will be entertaining other conflicts and issues throughout our history. These books may be added to the raffle selections or offered for sale in addition to the book raffle. Thank you to all for your support!

First Defenders CWRT Preservation History	
29th Season	Total for all Seasons
Total amount raised-\$72	
Total amount donated-\$ 0	Total amount donated - \$ 39,546
Total contribution w/ matching grants-\$ 0	Total contributed w/ matching grants – \$ 563,097

June Program

Targeted Tracks: the Cumberland Valley Railroad in the Civil War

presented by Scott Mingus

The 19th Century witnessed the birth of railroads around the world, but nowhere more than in the United States. Bands of iron began to extend for miles and miles, bringing once distant communities into easy reach. People and products were connected by rail, and Pennsylvania's bountiful Cumberland Valley was no exception. By the time the Civil War broke out, the line linked Harrisburg with Hagerstown playing an important logistical role immediately following the Battle of Antietam. But, the CVRR tracks would be a target for Confederate raiders in 1862 and 1864, and for the Army of Northern Virginia itself during the Gettysburg Campaign in 1863. The railroad would pick itself up, repair the extensive damage to its infrastructure and resume serving the Cumberland Valley until well into the next century. This program tells the story of the CVRR in the Civil War.



Scott Mingus is a retired scientist and executive in the global specialty paper industry and an award-winning author. The Ohio native graduated from Miami University, and was part of the research team that developed the first commercially successful self-adhesive U.S. postage stamps. Scott has written more than 30 Civil War and Underground Railroad books and numerous articles for Gettysburg Magazine and other historical journals. He writes a blog on the Civil War history of York County, PA, where he and his wife Debi live. Scott has received lifetime achievement awards from the York County History Center and the Camp Curtin Historical Society for his many contributions to local history.

29th Campaign Programs		
Date	Speaker	Program
8/12/2025	Wally Heimbach	<i>Colonel Edward Cross and the Fighting 5th New Hampshire</i>
9/9/2025	Jason Elmeron	<i>Robert Todd Lincoln</i>
10/14/2025	Daminish Miller	<i>Five Women in the Civil War</i>
November 2025 **	Craig Symonds	<i>Nimitz and Farragut</i>
12/9/2025	Michael Harris	<i>The Philadelphia Campaign (Revolutionary War)</i>

**** The November 2025 meeting will be held on an alternate date to accommodate Craig Symond's presentation. Stay tuned! ****

Clark noted that we are fully booked for the remainder of this year and the 30th Campaign, which starts in April 2026, is booked through October.

If you would be interested in presenting to our membership, please reach out to Clark.

Website

Craig reported the website online reservations has been fixed. Both he and Vicky received the emails. As a reminder, if you order online for your meal and you do not get an email confirmation, please contact Vicky.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! – Craig noted that the 29th Campaign renewal form is located on the main page of the website under the “Volunteers Needed” icon.

Watch for new content to be uploaded onto the website. There have been recent posts on the spring seminar of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust and the Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall conference.

Events / Tours/ and Other Happenings

Please feel free to share anything that you are aware of and would like added to the monthly newsletter. Please send them to my email me at Lisa.breneiser@gmail.com.

Summer is upon us and there are a variety of opportunities to take part in! Our Battlefields, Battlefield Trusts, and other historical outlets, including our local Berks History Center, have a variety of tours, seminars and events to fulfill your summer!

Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, July 8, 2025 Meeting & Program: Deadline to order is July 3rd, NOON.

We had 25 members, 1 Guest, the Speaker Frank Garmon, Jr., and his Wife and Kiddo (total 29) attending the June meeting.

Many thanks to Kathy Little for her years and years of service as our Meal Captain.
HIP! HIP HOORAY!

Our meal choices for July are:

Broiled Salmon	Veal Marsala	Manicotti
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If possible, please make your reservation on the website. If you must call in reservations, please **CALL** or **TEXT** your menu selection to Vicky Heffner at 610.413.5543 no later than **NOON, July 3, 2025**, which is also the deadline for online reservations. The price is \$32.00 inclusive for meals.

IMPORTANT NOTE Once you have made your reservation, there are no cancellations for any reason after the **FRIDAY** preceding the meeting. This is the policy of Giannotti's, and the Round Table will be billed for your meal whether you attend or not. Please understand you will be asked to reimburse the Round Table should you not attend after having made a reservation and not cancelled prior to the aforementioned time period.

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The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

August 2025, the 29th Campaign



www.firstdefenderscwrts.us

SOMETIMES EXPECTATIONS DO NOT MATCH RESULTS

Sunday, February 9, 2025, was Super Bowl Sunday, and the long NFL season was drawing to a close. Many fans spent the day doing anything to be distracted from their nervousness. Some other anxious fans spent the day watching an endless stream of experts analyze and dissect exactly how the game would play out. Sixty more minutes of football and a championship team would celebrate. To many, the outcome was a forgone conclusion. The Chiefs were riding high having won three of the last five Super Bowl games. Surely this night they would win another ring. The Eagles stood in their way, but didn't the Chiefs always find a way to win? They were confident to the point of arrogance and they would pay dearly. By halftime the game was out of reach, and the Eagles had won a decisive victory.

Similar thoughts come to mind when we consider the Confederate invasion of Pennsylvania in June/July 1863. Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia were on a roll. Time after time in battles against the Army of the Potomac they found a way to win. The Rebel soldiers felt themselves to be invincible. Lee had outwitted a succession of Union commanders. "Fighting Joe" Hooker still commanded the Union army, and Lee had just embarrassed him at Chancellorsville. Now he had designs to do so again. He planned to steal a march on the Yankees and be in Pennsylvania before Hooker could react. A decisive battle might be fought on ground of Lee's choosing, and if the Army of the Potomac suffered a serious defeat north of the Mason-Dixon line, Lincoln would lose face and Northerners might sue for peace. Beyond that, this invasion would keep the Union army from devastating Virginia farms while on the flip side the Rebels might return home fat with captured Yankee livestock and supplies.

Sadly, for Lee and his army, the Yankees did not cooperate. George Gordon Meade assumed command of the Army of the Potomac on June 28th and led them to victory at Gettysburg. The Rebels fought well but made mistakes. The Yankees fought better and made fewer mistakes. When my son, Andrew, was in college at Penn State, he took a class taught by Carol Reardon. She graciously signed for me a copy of her book, "Pickett's Charge in History and Memory," and I have just finished reading it for the second time. She does not attempt to tell the definitive truth of the details of the attack, instead focusing on how the telling of the story evolved over time. Few, if any, authors have approached the story in this way, and I highly recommend the book.

Those Rebel and Yankee soldiers who survived the battle to tell their stories had each seen only that which took place in their tiny universe. Many told a different tale as years passed, sometimes remembering others tales as their own. Some attacked the reputations of others while defending their own actions. Many soldiers, particularly officers who may have added valuable pieces to the puzzle, did not survive while others remained silent.

One of the most interesting chapters in Reardon's book deals with the expectations of the Southern people waiting nervously for news of the outcome. Newspapers for days printed stories of a glorious victory for Lee. As a whole, they refused to consider the possibility of a defeat. Only when hard news filtered through and the casualty lists were published, were their hopes dashed.

The Battle of Gettysburg did not spell the end of the Civil War or Lee's army. It was, however, the beginning of the end: expectations did not match results.

Joe

Round Table Business

Joe called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

There are two new members that have joined us, Bobby Hampson and Bill Clyde. No guests joined us this evening.

Joe noted that a few of our members are having some health issues, but hope to return.

The membership applications for the 29th Campaign starting in June and ending in December 2025 can be found on the website's main page under "VOLUNTEERS NEEDED."

The 30th Campaign will be from April through December 2026.

Treasurers Report

Chuck Bezler reported the balance as of July 8th in the general fund is \$ 652.03, as well as \$157.00 in Preservation.

Membership

Our membership now stands at 27 members for the 29th Campaign, which includes 3 new members.

We received an additional \$ 241 for the 29th Campaign, to support the speaker programs.

Preservation and Book Raffle

At our July meeting the Book Raffle took in \$85. We did not make any donations. Our current Preservation balance is \$242.

The American Battlefield Trust (ABT) is currently seeking to raise money for a Gettysburg Restoration project. The project is divided into 3 phases:

The 1st phase is to remove the Gettysburg Battlefield Military Museum along the Baltimore Pike near the entrance to the GNMP Visitor Center. The land will be restored to its 1863 appearance. Trails, signs and interpretive waysides will be put in place. The total cost of the project is \$700 thousand. The ABT has already raised \$212 thousand, and is attempting to raise the remaining \$488 thousand. This is a \$1 for \$1 match.

Phase 2 concerns the restoration of ground around General Pickett's Buffet off Emmitsburg Road.

Phase 3 is the restoration of the area encompassed by the Gettysburg Country Club off the Chambersburg Pike.

The ABT also has a campaign "Help Save 64 Acres at 4 Virginia Battlefields." The land targeted is 18 acres at Chancellorsville, 40 acres at Kernstown (1st & 2nd Battles) and six acres at Ware Bottom Church Battlefield. Total cost of the acquisition is \$2.2 million. The ABT has already raised 97% of the money needed with only \$60 thousand remaining to complete the purchase. There is a \$37 to \$1 matching grant.

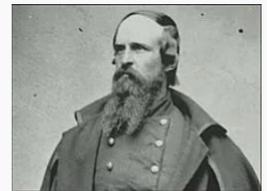
First Defenders CWRT Preservation Score			
29 th Campaign:		Total for all Campaigns:	
Total amount raised-	\$ 157		
Total amount donated-	\$ 0	Total amount donated -	\$ 39,546
Total with matching grants-	\$ 0	Total with matching grants -	\$ 563,097

August Program

Colonel Edward Cross & the "Fighting 5th"

presented by Wally Heimbach

Edward Cross did not aspire to be a soldier, but at the outset of the Civil War he would receive a commission as colonel of the Fifth New Hampshire volunteers which, under two years of his leadership, would see action on the Peninsula, at Antietam, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. The "Fighting 5th" was considered one of the best regiments in the Army of the Potomac, and Cross would become one of the best colonels who never wore a general's star. Twice wounded, Cross was known to wear a red bandana on his head when going into battle so his men could recognize him. With a premonition of his own death, he would sport a black bandana on July 2, 1863 while on his way to the Wheatfield at Gettysburg where he would be mortally wounded early in the fight and die the next day in a field hospital. This program traces the recruitment and reputation of the 5th New Hampshire and the leadership of Edward Cross.



Wally Heimbach is a long-time Round Table member who seems to know almost everyone who is anyone in modern-day Civil War touring, research and writing. Once the youngest Gettysburg Licensed Battlefield Guide, Wally has previously presented to the First Defenders on Generals Winfield Scott Hancock and Philip Kearny.

29 th Campaign Programs		
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10/14/2025	Daminish Miller	<i>Five Women in the Civil War</i>
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**** The November 2025 meeting will be held on an alternate date to accommodate Craig Symonds presentation. Stay tuned! ****

If you would be interested in presenting to our membership, please reach out to Clark Zimmerman.

Website

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! – The 29th Campaign renewal form is located on the main page of the website under the “Volunteers Needed” icon.

Frank Garmon’s June presentation on “Charles Cowlam; A Wonderful Career in Crime” has been uploaded to the website for members-only viewing.

Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, August 12, 2025 Meeting & Program Deadline to order is August 8th, NOON.

We had 34 in attendance at the July meeting including our Speaker, Scott Mings.

Our meal choices for August are:

Shrimp Scampi w/ Linguine
½ Black Diamond Steak
Rigatoni w/ Tomato Sauce

If possible, please make your reservation on the website. When doing so, you should receive:

- An immediate email “thank you” for making the reservation.
- A follow-up email that includes a copy of your meal selection, and
- A second email confirmation that everything has worked properly (this may be delayed by up to 24-hours).

If you must call in reservations, please, CALL or TEXT your menu selection to Vicky Heffner at 610.413.5543 no later than **NOON, August 8, 2025**, which is also the deadline for online reservations. The price is \$32.00 inclusive for meals.

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National Museum of Civil War Medicine Upcoming Events:

Clara Barton Missing Soldiers Office Museum 10th Birthday Party

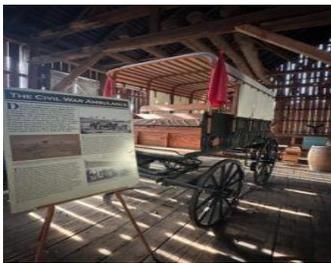
July 26 @ 11:00 am - 5:00 pm EDT

Join us on Saturday, July 26th, as we celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the Clara Barton Missing Soldiers Office Museum opening!

We will be celebrating the Museum's 10th birthday with **free admission**, guided tours from Clara Barton's perspective, and a very special lecture from Clara Barton interpreter and historian Carolyn Ivanoff on the Missing Soldiers Office.

<https://www.civilwarmed.org/event/clara-barton-missing-soldiers-office-museum-10th-birthday-party/>

Visit the Pry House Field Hospital Barn



The Pry House Field Hospital Museum tells the story of a home that became a hospital during the Battle of Antietam. Visit the Pry Barn (Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.) to see our replica Civil War ambulances and discover how emergency medicine evolved during the Civil War. Special docent talks every Saturday at 1 p.m.

<https://www.civilwarmed.org/event/visit-the-pry-house-field-hospital-barn/2025-05-24/>

Emerging Civil War Symposium “Cities of War”

August 1-3rd

Stevenson's Ridge, Virginia

Sign up here: https://emergingcivilwar.com/ecw_event/2025-symposium/



In Person Sign up: <https://68664.blackbaudhosting.com/68664/Summer-Symposium-2025---History-Meets-Healthcare>

Virtual Sign up: <https://68664.blackbaudhosting.com/68664/Summer-Symposium-2025---History-Meets-Healthcare---Virtual-Attendance>

**A Tour in Pictures: “The New and Improved Little Round Top”
Pictures Courtesy of Vicky Heffner’s Father, Richard Barrell**



Little Round Top



Little Round Top



Looking down at Devils Den



Looking at the Confederate Right Flank



Looking towards the Wheatfield



Looking up at Little Round Top



Looking up at Little Round Top

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

September 2025, the 29th Campaign



www.firstdefenderscwr.us

President's Message

CHANGES

My father, who grew up in a Pennsylvania Dutch farm family, had a wonderful book entitled *The Round of the Year*. The book reads like a journal, the author creating in one's mind subtle images of the changes to be observed in the landscape of our lives if we pause and observe. My wife and I try to spend a little time each day discussing simple signs like the different birds, insects and other critters coming and going as the seasons change. Today we are getting a taste of autumn which for me is just around the corner. You see, for some time I have adopted the meteorological calendar. Autumn, therefore, is September, October and November. Winter is December, January and February. Spring is March, April and May. Summer is June, July and August. I find these groupings more closely match the weather patterns. Anyway, it works for me.

I will not be joining you for the September meeting as I will be traveling. Normally in the September newsletter, I would be welcoming members back to another campaign. Not so this year, as the campaign never ended. I decided to use my space this month to thank everyone for sticking with the Round Table.

We adopted quite a few changes this year. First, we filed a Certificate of Organization with the Commonwealth, formally becoming the First Defenders Civil War Round Table of Berks County. After all these years, we are official! We wrote and adopted by-laws, and applied to the IRS for non-profit organization status (pending approval). After tabulating the results of a survey, the membership approved widening the scope of our topics to include other phases of American history. As if that was not enough angst, I then threw at the group an idea that had been germinating with many members for years: why not try to avoid weather cancellations by running our season from April through December and skipping January, February and March. So far attendance has been good during the summer, and you have my sincere gratitude.

Each year as I review Ev's list of membership renewals, I cannot fail to notice that some members are reaching a point where age and illnesses may prevent them from continuing to join us. Let us all appreciate the fellowship we enjoy and reach out wherever possible to recruit new members while remembering those who can no longer join us.

Have a wonderful meeting in September, and I will see you in October.

Joe

Round Table Business

Joe called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

Guests this evening included Ray Camp and Barry Flicker. Barry has joined the ranks as a new member.

Joe announced the sudden passing of Dave Unger's wife. A card was sent from the Round Table.

John Scheneman is dealing with some medical issues. Please keep him in your thoughts and prayers. We hope to see him back with us soon.

The membership applications for the 29th Campaign that started in June and ends in December 2025 can be found on the website's main page under "VOLUNTEERS NEEDED."

The 30th Campaign will be from April 2026 through December 2026

Joe is looking for his copy of "Washington's Crossing." If you may have borrowed it, Joe's stamp is in it, and he would love to have it back.

Bylaws: A motion to accept the new Bylaws retroactive to the date the checking account was opened was made by Ev and 2nd by Clark. All in favor.

501c3: Still in progress

Treasurers Report

No report was presented this evening.

Membership

Our membership now stands at 39 for the 29th Campaign, which includes seven (7) new members.

We have received an additional \$401 to support the speaker programs.

Preservation and Book Raffle

At our August meeting the book raffle took in \$86. The membership voted to donate \$100 to the American Battlefield Trust for "Help Save 64 Acres at 4 Virginia Battlefields" preservation campaign. The four battlefields are:

1. Chancellorsville, 18 acres
- 2 & 3. 1st & 2nd Kernstown, 40 acres
4. Ware Bottom Church, 6 acres.

The Trust is seeking to raise the final \$60 thousand dollars of the \$2.2 million price. Our one-hundred-dollar donation is worth \$3700 due to a \$37-to-\$1 matching grant.

Our beginning preservation balance for September is \$243.

If anyone has books on subjects other than the Civil War, please bring them to the meetings. We are looking for other historical subject matter. Thank you for your support of battlefield preservation.

29th Campaign	Total for all Campaigns
Total amount raised-\$ 243	
Total amount donated-\$ 100	Total amount donated - \$ 39,646
Total contribution w/ matching grants-\$ 3,700	Total contributed w/ matching grants - \$ 566,797

August Program

Robert Todd Lincoln

presented by Jason Emerson



Robert Todd Lincoln was Abraham and Mary Lincoln's oldest and last surviving son who led a fascinating life often obscured by his father's long shadow. A lawyer, businessman, and statesman who left his own mark on one of the most progressive and dynamic eras in United States history, "Bob" would bear witness to some of the most dramatic American moments, including Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse; his father's final moments; the advent of the railroad, telephone, electrical, and automobile industries; the circumstances surrounding the assassinations of three presidents of the United States; and much, much more. His service to the country is longer and more varied than that of his father, and is hugely significant and interesting in its own right.

Jason Emerson is an award-winning Lincoln scholar and general historian, the author or editor of eight books and nearly fifty articles. He has appeared as a historical expert on multiple television and radio shows and podcasts, and has lectured around the country. He found Mary Lincoln's "lost insanity letters," which historians had been seeking for 80 years (and which were the basis for his first

book), and is the only scholar in the entire Lincoln field to have studied and written about Robert T. Lincoln, Abraham and Mary's oldest son.



29th Campaign Programs		
Date	Speaker	Program
10/14/2025	Daminish Miller	<i>Women at War: the Female Soldiers of the American Civil War & Those that Wished They Were</i>
November 2025 **	Craig Symonds	<i>David Farragut & Chester Nimitz</i>
12/9/2025	Michael Harris	<i>The Philadelphia Campaign of the Revolutionary War</i>

**** The November 2025 meeting will be held on an alternate date to accommodate Craig Symonds presentation. Stay tuned! ****

The Round Table is always looking for a member to present a program. Anyone interested should reach out to Clark.

Website

Craig sent out a new meeting notice that shows the newsletter without having to go to the website. He noted that 74% opened the email which the new program tracks. You can also just click on the link in the email to take you to the website to order your meal. 29 people clicked the link to make their reservations.

If you did not receive the email, please check your spam folder.

**Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, September 9, 2025
Meeting & Program: Deadline to order is September 5th, NOON.**

We had 36 in attendance at the August meeting.

Our meal choices for September are:

Broiled Orange Roughy
Marinated Chicken Breast
Cheese Ravioli

If possible, please make your reservation on the website. When doing so, you should receive:

- An immediate email “thank you” for making the reservation.
- A follow-up email that includes a copy of your meal selection, and
- A second email confirmation that everything has worked properly (this may be delayed by up to 24-hours).

If you must call in reservations, please, CALL or TEXT your menu selection to Vicky Heffner at 610.413.5543 no later than **NOON, September 5, 2025**, which is also the deadline for online reservations. The price is \$32.00 inclusive for meals.

IMPORTANT NOTE Once you have made your reservation, there are no cancellations for any reasons afternoon on the **FRIDAY** preceding the meeting. This is the policy of Giannotti’s, 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!

Checks may be made payable to “First Defenders Civil War Roundtable”.

Events / Tours/ and Other Happenings

Please feel free to share anything that you are aware of and would like added to the monthly newsletter. Please send them to my email me at Lisa.breneider@gmail.com.

Venue

[National Museum of Civil War Medicine](#)
48 East Patrick Street
Frederick, MD 21705 [+](#)

**Disguised and Determined: Women Who Fought in the Civil War
September 6 @ 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm EDT**

Saturday Speaker Series: Tracey McIntire and Audrey Scanlan-Teller

There are hundreds of documented cases of women who fought disguised as men during the Civil War. Tracey McIntire and Audrey Scanlan-Teller, PhD will discuss and share documentation of some of the more fascinating women and what motivated them to fight alongside men.

<https://www.civilwarmed.org/event/disguised-and-determined-women-who-fought-in-the-civil-war/>

New Excursion in Gettysburg! Gettysburg Railway

Gettysburg Excursions Train Ride

All Ages! · 1 Hour Round-trip

- **Stories Along the Rails**

- As the train winds through the countryside, enjoy captivating storytelling about the leaders of the Battle of Gettysburg and historical landmarks along the route.

<https://fareharbor.com/embeds/book/gettysburgrailway/items/?language=en-us&full-items=yes&back=https://gettysburgrailway.com/>



The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

October 2025, the 29th Campaign



www.firstdefenderscwrt.us

President's Message

THE SLEEPING LION

September 11, 2025 and Bus #12 winds its way through the streets of Lucerne. The afternoon sun feels warm on my face, and my thoughts are already focused on the next stop. My wife and I are on our way to visit one of Switzerland's historic treasures, the Lion of Lucerne. The tour guide leads us up a short, cobblestone path to a small pond. Behind the pond is the sheer vertical face of a 200' high wall of sandstone. Carved in relief on the face of the wall is the figure of a lion. He lies with one paw resting on a shield bearing the Swiss cross. The head of the lion rests against another shield decorated with the fleur-de-lis, symbol of the French monarchy. A broken spear pierces the lion's back. He is mortally wounded and near death. The magnitude of the sculpture and the tragic circumstance which inspired it makes one pause in silent reverence to the sacrifice given.

On August 10, 1792, revolutionaries stormed the Tuileries Palace in Paris. The Swiss Guards, true to their sworn duty, stood firm while King Louis XVI and the French royal family escaped. Overwhelmed by numbers, more than 600 Guards were slaughtered and another 200 would die later, massacred or guillotined in prison. One officer, Karl Pfyffer von Altshofen, was on leave in Lucerne. Grief stricken and feeling survivor's guilt, he began a fundraising campaign to honor his fallen comrades. He eventually hired Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen to design the lion monument and stonemason Lukas Ahorn to carve it. The monument was unveiled in 1821. It is visited by millions every year.

Knowing the story, we stand motionless, transfixed by the contrast between the serenity of the park and the heart-rending saga of the Guards. Suddenly, chaos erupts. A group of stylish teens, mobile devices in hand, push us aside and force their way to the edge of the pond. Blocking the view for several minutes, they giggle and pose, taking dozens of selfies. As they walk away, I hear one ask another, why they sculpted a sleeping lion. I heard the same question from many others in the crowd. Another sad commentary on history not taught.

Mark Twain visited Lucerne and, returning to America, brought the story and photos of the monument to his fellow citizens. In 1894, a replica sculpture was unveiled in Oakland Cemetery, Atlanta, Georgia. The monument rested peacefully among the graves of 3,000 unknown Confederates who died defending Atlanta in 1864. In this case, the lion's head rested on a Confederate flag, not shields of France and Switzerland. The cancel culture of the current century, has led to repression of

anything Confederate. The sculpture was repeatedly vandalized. City workers desperately worked to remove red paint and vulgar graffiti, to no avail. In 2021, the mayor ordered the monument removed “for safekeeping.” City officials have consistently declined to say where the lion is today. Many locals believe it has been destroyed.

I bring these two stories to you as more examples of history lost or repressed. In an era where patriotic and religious holidays have become nothing more than an excuse for a three-day party, should we be surprised? Let each of us do our small part to teach our children and grandchildren the lessons of history so no more is lost.

Joe

Round Table Business

Clark called the meeting to order at 6:15 pm. There were no guests or new members, this evening.

Treasurers Report

Chuck reported that the 501C3 has been approved. If you make a donation to support our round table, you may now claim it on your tax return.

The account has a balance of \$ 1,781.53, with the General fund having a balance of \$1,553.53 and Preservation having a balance of \$ 228.00.

Membership

Ev was not in attendance at the meeting, but he provided a written membership update. We now stand at 47 members for the 29th Campaign, which includes 7 new members. We received an additional \$ 446 to support the speaker programs.

Preservation and Book Raffle

Gary noted that our speaker, Jason Emerson, donated 3 books to add to this evening’s raffle.

At our September meeting, the membership voted to make a \$ 175 donation to the ABT for their “Save 417 Acres at the Breakthrough.” The acquisition of the 417 acres will create an 857-acre unified park along with acreage already located at the Pamplin Historical Park, VA.

The park commemorates the ending of the 292-day siege at Petersburg where on April 2, 1865 Union troops assaulted and finally broke the Confederate lines south of Richmond. On April 3rd, Lee’s army abandoned Richmond along with the CSA government and Union troops occupied the city. Within a week, Lee would surrender at Appomattox. On this ground, 31 Union soldiers would be awarded the Medal-of-Honor.

The ABT is seeking to finalize the acquisition of the 417 acres not yet protected with a campaign to raise \$660 thousand with a matching grant of \$17 to \$1. That brings out contribution to \$2,975.

Our September Book Raffle took in \$ 80 and our Preservation balance for the beginning of October is \$133.

At the October meeting we will conduct a Book Bonanza Sale in addition to the monthly raffle. The books displayed will be available for a donation—any amount you wish to make. So, bring a few extra dollars and perhaps you may find a bargain for your library.

Correction---In our September Newsletter, I entered an incorrect amount for our Preservation balance (\$243). The correct balance should have been \$228. The \$243 was the total cash raised so far in the 29th Campaign.

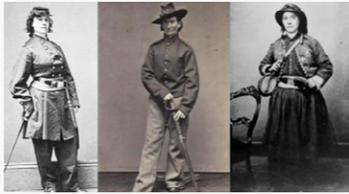
29 th Campaign	Total for all Seasons
Total amount raised-\$ 323	
Total amount donated-\$ 275	Total amount donated - \$ 39,921
Total contribution with matching grants-\$ 6,675	Total contributed with Matching Grants – \$ 569,772

October Program

Women at War: the Female Soldiers of the American Civil War and Those that Wished They Were

presented by D0minish Miller

Contrary to popular belief, women did, in fact, fight in the American Civil War. They also infiltrated the United States Army in earlier wars. Deborah Sampson served for 17 months in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War as Robert Shurtliff, and Lucy Brewer served with the Marines aboard "Old Ironsides" as George Baker during the War of 1812. Once a taboo topic, modern historians are finally shedding light on the role that female soldiers played in the Civil War and the women who made a living off of lying about their military service.



Dominish Marie Miller is the Third Circuit Court of Appeals Librarian for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, the founder of Preserving the History of Newberrytown, runs the Lewisberry Area History Lovers group and is a founding board member of the Newberrytown Special Events Committee. She serves as Librarian and VIS Chair for the Harrisburg Chapter, NSDAR. Dominish is also a living historian with the 87th Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, Company C, where she portrays a private. She is the author of two cookbooks and a local history book.



29 th Campaign Programs		
Date	Speaker	Program
November 2025 **	Craig Symonds	<i>David Farragut & Chester Nimitz</i>
12/9/2025	Michael Harris	<i>The Philadelphia Campaign of the Revolutionary War</i>

**** The November 2025 meeting will be held on an alternate date to accommodate Craig Symonds presentation. Stay tuned! ****

If you would be interested in presenting to our membership, please reach out to Clark.

Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, October 14, 2025

Meeting & Program: Deadline to order is October 10th, NOON.

We had 33 in attendance at the September meeting this evening. Just wanted to express my sincere “thanks” to all of you for getting your reservations in to me on time. It is very much appreciated!

Our meal choices for October are:

Soup

Breaded Haddock

Pork Chops

Pasta with Grilled Vegetables

If possible, please make your reservation on the website. When doing so, you should receive:

- An immediate email “thank you” for making the reservation.
- A follow-up email that includes a copy of your meal selection, and
- A second email confirmation that everything has worked properly (this may be delayed by up to 24-hours).

If you must call in reservations, please, CALL or TEXT your menu selection to Vicky Heffner at 610.413.5543 no later than NOON, October 10, 2025, which is also the deadline for online reservations. The price is \$32.00 inclusive for meals.

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 Giannotti's, 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.**

Checks may be made payable to “First Defenders Civil War Roundtable”

Events / Tours/ and Other Happenings

Please feel free to send anything that you are aware of that you would like to share with our Company. I will gladly add it to the monthly newsletter. Please send your items of interest to my email at Lisa.breneiser@gmail.com.

New Excursion in Gettysburg! Gettysburg Railway

Gettysburg Excursions Train Ride

All Ages! · 1 Hour Round-trip

- As the train winds through the countryside, enjoy captivating storytelling about the leaders of the Battle of Gettysburg and historical landmarks along the route.

<https://fareharbor.com/embeds/book/gettysburgrailway/items/?language=enus&full-items=yes&back=https://gettysburgrailway.com/>

Blue and Grey Education Society (BGES) Winter 2025 / Spring 2026 Schedule of Events

Even though we've still got a few good months left in 2025—along with some incredible BGES tours- we're already looking ahead to 2026. Here's a first look at next year's tour lineup as it currently stands.

We're still working on the registration forms, and online registration isn't open yet. For more information or to join a tour, please reach out to BGES Executive Director Wade Sokolosky at BgesExDir@gmail.com. We'll be posting registration forms in the coming months, so stay tuned.

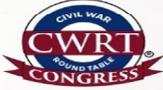
Winter 2025 Tours starting in 2026

- **Revolutionary Williamsburg and Yorktown**, with Bert Dunkerly, from Williamsburg, VA: Feb. 7, 2026
- **The Wilmington Campaign**, with Chris Fonvielle, from Wilmington, NC: Feb. 12–15, 2026
- **Forrest and the Straight Raid**, with Norman Dasinger, from Gadsden, AL: Feb. 20–22, 2026
- **Monmouth Campaign**, with Gary Ecelbarger and Scott Patchan, from Princeton, NJ: Feb. 26–March 1, 2026

Spring 2026

- **The War of 1812 on the Gulf Coast: Pensacola, Mobile, Fort Mims, Fort Sinquefield, and New Orleans**, with Mike Bunn, from Mobile, AL & New Orleans, LA: March 10–15, 2026
- **Spring 1865 North Carolina Campaign Wyse Fork, Monroe's Crossroads, Averagesboro, and Bentonville**, with Wade Sokolosky: March 26–29, 2026
- **The Atlanta Campaign—New Hope to Kennesaw, Part II**, with Dave Powell, from Marietta/Kennesaw, GA: April 15–19, 2026.
- **The Siege of Suffolk, April 11–May 4, 1863**, with Brian Wills, from Suffolk, VA: April 23–26, 2026.
- **George Washington's Alexandria and Mt. Vernon Tour, including the Carlyle House**, with John Maass, from Alexandria, VA: May 1–3, 2026.
- **From Petersburg to Appomattox, The Final Chapter in Virginia & Five Forks, Amelia Courthouse, Dinwiddie, High Bridge, and Sailor's Creek**, with Phil Greenwalt, from Richmond, VA: May 6–10, 2026.
- **The Wilderness Campaign**, with Greg Mertz, from Fredericksburg, VA: May 13–17, 2026.

Civil War Roundtable Congress (CWRT) Special Events to Support our "Giving Tuesday" Campaign



Announcing 3 Very Special Events in Support of Our Giving Tuesday Campaign

The 2025 CWRTC **Giving Tuesday** campaign continues our partnership sharing 50% of all proceeds with the **American Battlefield Trust**.

To achieve our \$5,000 goal and provide value for your donation, we are hosting three special events featuring **Dr. Curt Fields** as General Grant in conversation with Confederate generals: Beauregard, Pemberton, and Lee.

			
Dr. Curt Fields As General Grant	DONATE - \$20 LIVING HISTORIAN CONVERSATION BATTLE OF SHILOH Curt Fields as Grant & Larry McCluney as Beauregard Tues, Sept. 23 @ 7:00 PM Eastern	DONATE - \$20 LIVING HISTORIAN CONVERSATION THE VICKSBURG CAMPAIGN Curt Fields as Grant & Morgan Gates as Pemberton Tues, Oct 14 @ 7:00 PM Eastern	DONATE - \$20 LIVING HISTORIAN CONVERSATION THE APPOMATTOX CAMPAIGN Curt Fields as Grant & Thomas Jesse as Lee Tues, Nov. 4 @ 7:00 PM Eastern

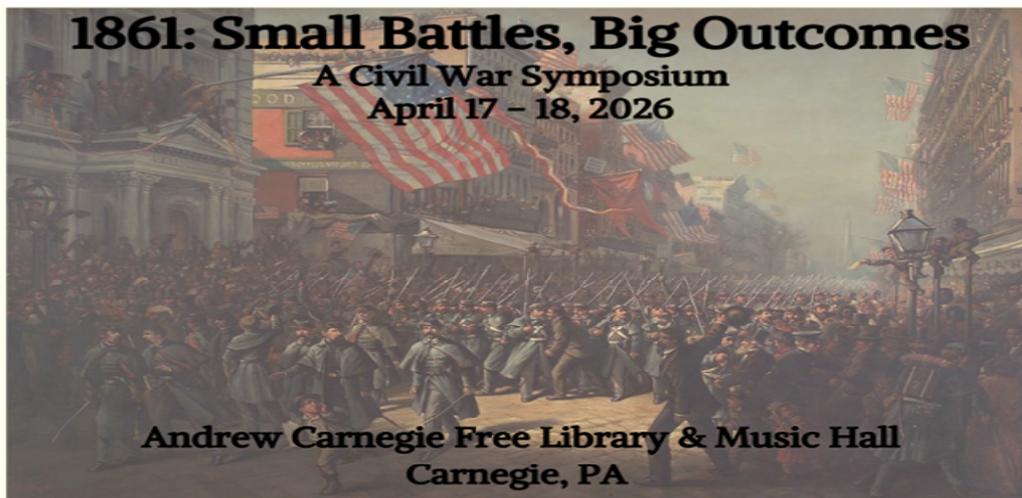
All donations are tax deductible

Click on the link below to donate and save your place for one or all of these compelling sessions.

Sign up here: <https://www.cwrtcongress.org/giving-tuesday.html>

The Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall

is pleased to announce our eighth annual Civil War Symposium, slated for April 17 – 18, 2026. Though overlooked in favor of later years and larger battles, the first year of the Civil War witnessed many advances and setbacks, trials and tribulations, personalities and decisions that affected how the remainder of the war came to be fought. In 1861: Small Battles, Big Outcomes, seven dynamic historians will unpack the military, political, and social threads of this pivotal year in our nation's history.



1861: Small Battles, Big Outcomes
A Civil War Symposium
April 17 - 18, 2026

Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall
Carnegie, PA

<https://www.showelix.com/event/andrew-carnegie-free-library-music-hall-civil-war-symposium-1861>



National Museum of Civil War Medicine

Join us at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine on Saturday, October 11 at 3 p.m., for our America 250 Speaker Series!

Author John Rees will examine the role of Black Americans, free and enslaved, in the regiments of the Continental Army. Black troops served in nearly every Continental regiment, and even relatively large numbers served in southern regiments. The greatest number served alongside their White comrades in integrated units. Rees will discuss Black soldiers' acceptance, service, and experiences during and after the war for American independence. African American women with the army will also be discussed, including a rare Connecticut soldier's letter sent home to his wife who also spent time in camp.

John U. Rees, is a lifelong resident of Bucks County, Pa., and has been writing for almost 40 years on the experiences of common soldiers and women in the armies of the American Revolution. He has authored more than 200 articles, most available free online. His first book, *'They Were Good Soldiers': African Americans Serving in the Continental Army, 1775-1783* was published in 2019; his second, titled *Don Troiani's Black Soldiers in America's Wars, 1754-1865*, was published in January 2025.

This event is included with admission to the Museum, and it is FREE for members of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine.

The event will be streamed LIVE on our [Facebook page](#) if you cannot attend in person.

<https://www.civilwarmed.org/event/black-soldiers-in-the-continental-army/>

Haunted History Tours at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine

Haunted History tours are back at the **National Museum of Civil War Medicine!** This year, the Museum is offering **two special Halloween night tours** with extra time to tour the galleries.

During the month of October, Museum staff and volunteers will share stories of Civil War embalmers, the building's most infamous tenants, and their first-hand accounts of paranormal activity that have given the building its spooky reputation. In addition to a trip through the Museum galleries, the tour provides exclusive access to the third floor where numerous sightings have occurred.

Visitors are encouraged to bring their own cameras and ghost-finding apps to capture possible paranormal activities. Flash photography and LIVE streaming are prohibited.

Tours will be given on October 11, 18, 25, and 26 from 5:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m. There will be two special Halloween night tours on **Friday, October 31 from 5:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.-10:00 p.m.** During these Halloween tours, guests will have additional time to tour the galleries without a guide.

Tickets are \$30 for the general public and \$20 for Museum members. Tickets for the Halloween Night tours are \$50 for the general public and \$40 for Museum members.

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

November 2025, the 29th Campaign



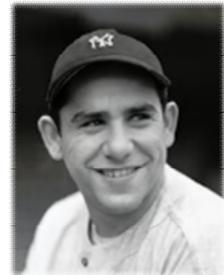
www.firstdefenderscwr.us

President's Message

CHANGES

“Oh, the more it changes, the more it stays the same.” So sings Al Stewart on the song, *Nostradamus*, from his 1973 album entitled *Past, Present and Future*. I have always been a fan of Stewart's work because he writes history into his poetry. Stewart in this song and others portrays history not as a series of disconnected fits and starts, but as a continuous stream of evolution and revolution. Everything changes and yet somehow feels the same. Mark Twain famously noted that history does not repeat itself, but it rhymes.

We in this Roundtable cannot physically return to walk in the freezing rain beside Washington's soldiers as they march to Trenton or stand in Wilmer McLean's parlor as a witness while R. E. Lee surrenders to U.S. Grant at Appomattox. That said, part of our love of history is being able to visually go to these places and moments. We know that all change is inevitable and yet we cling to the past. Some might question why, but we know the answer. You cannot know the way ahead unless you know where you have been. A great man once said; “When you come to the fork in the road, take it.” God bless Yogi Berra.



Well fellow members, we have come to that fork in the road. We could go one way and stay just as we are, or we can take the other and add some change. The First Defenders, as we are known, came to life in 1997 as strictly a Civil War Roundtable. Members have come and gone with only a small handful of charter members remaining active. Officers have changed. A generation of authors and speakers have presented to us and retired or passed away. Sum it all up though and we have had a wonderful past and a bright future. We are taking the fork in the road as Yogi suggested. We are still the First Defenders Civil War Roundtable, and the majority of our presentations will still be of that period in history. At the same time, we are broadening our perspective to include other historical times.

November 19, 2025, will mark our first venture out of the Civil War, but not entirely. Craig Symonds, one of the great authors and lecturers of our time, will present a talk on Admirals David Farragut and Chester Nimitz. Though born decades apart, their lives and their personalities showed common traits of courage and selfless determination. You will see how each played a pivotal role in leading the U.S. Navy and America to victory.

REMEMBER: MEETING DATE IS WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025.

Joe

Round Table Business

Joe called the meeting to order at 6:25 pm.

There was one guest this evening. Gus Person joined us from Masonic Village.

New Members: none

Member update:

Gary Hertzog had a knee replacement and is doing well

Ev Binns had an operation and is on the mend

Ray Kempf had shoulder surgery

Linda Zeiber will be having a knee replacement in January

We wish them all a speedy recovery and hope to see them back with us soon.

Craig thanked Joe for completing the 501c3. This was no easy task. All agreed.

Treasurers Report

Chuck reported the 501c3 has been approved. If you make a donation to support our Roundtable, you may now claim it on your tax return.

The account has a balance of \$ 1,900.00, with the General Fund having a balance of \$1,867.00 and Preservation having a balance of \$ 133.00.

Membership

Ev was not in attendance at the meeting, but he provided a written membership update. We now stand at 49 members for the 29th Campaign, which includes 7 new members. We received an additional \$ 456 to support the speaker programs.

Preservation and Book Raffle

At our October meeting, the book raffle took in \$83. A motion was made to hold preservation funding until next month by Chuck and 2nd by Rodney, AIF. We will put forth some suggestions at our meeting in November. Our current Preservation balance is \$216.

Gary expressed his thanks to Wally Heimbach for taking care of the raffle in his absence as well as his appreciation for all the thoughts and concerns of the members for his health and well-being. Gary's rehab is going well so he should be able to join the group for our November meeting. Thanks to everyone!

Preservation Scoreboard	
29 th Campaign	Total for all Seasons
Total amount raised-\$ 406	
Total amount donated-\$ 275	Total amount donated - \$ 39,921
Total contribution with matching grants-\$ 6,675	Total contributed with Matching Grants - \$ 569,772

First Defenders Bookshelf

Rodney recommended “Somewhere Towards Freedom” The black perspective of Shermans March to the Sea.

“Destiny of a Republic” by Candace Millard, covers the Garfield assassination.

November Program

Clark announced that November’s speaker will be Dr. Craig Symonds.

****Please note the date for this meeting is November 19, 2025. This is a special date for this presentation only!****

David Farragut & Chester Nimitz

presented by Dr. Craig Symonds



David Farragut and Chester Nimitz served their country in the United States Navy nearly a century apart. The former would become the very first U.S. admiral while the latter would be one of only five who would achieve five-star rank. Farragut would win the Civil War on the water from the deck of a ship while Nimitz would direct his armada from shore to defeat Japan in World War II. Different men who approached their duties from different perspectives, both facing leadership challenges that had commonalities and disparities. Possibly no historian is better versed or positioned to provide an in-depth analysis of these two naval legends than Craig Symonds.



Dr. Craig Symonds is a professor emeritus of history at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis. Upon his retirement from the academy, he accepted a professorship at the Naval War College from where he has also retired. A prolific author, Dr. Symonds has specialized in both the Civil War and World War II, and has hosted The Great Courses+ video series on both the War in the Pacific and the United States Navy.



29 th Campaign Programs		
Date	Speaker	Program
12/9/2025	Michael Harris	<i>The Philadelphia Campaign (Revolutionary War)</i>

If you would be interested in presenting a future program to our membership, please reach out to Clark.

Website

In response to a question from the membership, Craig explained the by-laws can be found under the “Newsletters” tab on the website.

Dinner Reservations for the Wednesday, November 19, 2025

Meeting & Program: Deadline to order is Friday, November 14th, NOON.

We had 29 in attendance at the October meeting, and Vicky wanted to express her sincere “thanks” to all of you for getting your reservations in on time. It is very much appreciated!

Our meal choices for November are:

Soup

Steamed Shrimp

NY Strip Steak

Eggplant

If possible, please make your reservation on the website. When doing so, you should receive:

- An immediate email “thank you” for making the reservation.
- A follow-up email that includes a copy of your meal selection, and
- A second email confirmation that everything has worked properly (this may be delayed by up to 24-hours).

If you must call in reservations, please, CALL or TEXT your menu selection to Vicky Heffner at 610.413.5543 no later than NOON, November 14, 2025, which is also the deadline for online reservations. The price is \$32.00 inclusive for meals.

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 Giannotti’s, 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.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

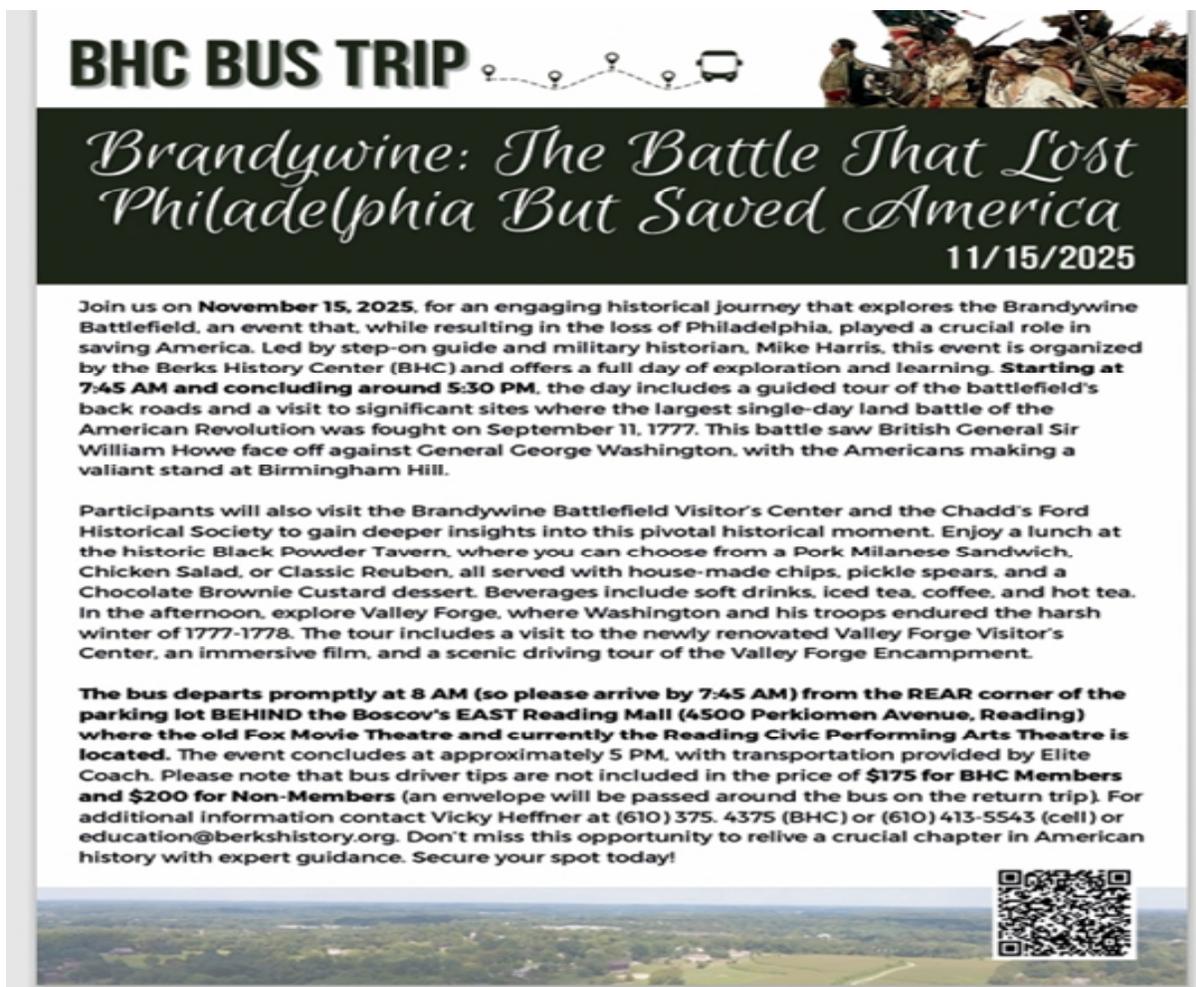
Checks may be made payable to “First Defenders Civil War Roundtable.”

Events / Tours/ and Other Happenings

Please feel free to send anything that you are aware of that you would like to share with our Company. I will gladly add it to the monthly newsletter. Please send your items of interest to my email at Lisa.breneiser@gmail.com.

Berks History Center Bus Trip **“Brandywine: The Battle That Lost Philadelphia, But Saved America”**

To sign up: Contact Vicky Heffner at 610-375-4275 or Cell at 610-413-5543 or email to: education@berkshistory.org



BHC BUS TRIP

Brandywine: The Battle That Lost Philadelphia But Saved America

11/15/2025

Join us on **November 15, 2025**, for an engaging historical journey that explores the Brandywine Battlefield, an event that, while resulting in the loss of Philadelphia, played a crucial role in saving America. Led by step-on guide and military historian, Mike Harris, this event is organized by the Berks History Center (BHC) and offers a full day of exploration and learning. **Starting at 7:45 AM and concluding around 5:30 PM**, the day includes a guided tour of the battlefield's back roads and a visit to significant sites where the largest single-day land battle of the American Revolution was fought on September 11, 1777. This battle saw British General Sir William Howe face off against General George Washington, with the Americans making a valiant stand at Birmingham Hill.

Participants will also visit the Brandywine Battlefield Visitor's Center and the Chadd's Ford Historical Society to gain deeper insights into this pivotal historical moment. Enjoy a lunch at the historic Black Powder Tavern, where you can choose from a Pork Milanese Sandwich, Chicken Salad, or Classic Reuben, all served with house-made chips, pickle spears, and a Chocolate Brownie Custard dessert. Beverages include soft drinks, iced tea, coffee, and hot tea. In the afternoon, explore Valley Forge, where Washington and his troops endured the harsh winter of 1777-1778. The tour includes a visit to the newly renovated Valley Forge Visitor's Center, an immersive film, and a scenic driving tour of the Valley Forge Encampment.

The bus departs promptly at 8 AM (so please arrive by 7:45 AM) from the REAR corner of the parking lot BEHIND the Boscov's EAST Reading Mall (4500 Perkiomen Avenue, Reading) where the old Fox Movie Theatre and currently the Reading Civic Performing Arts Theatre is located. The event concludes at approximately 5 PM, with transportation provided by Elite Coach. Please note that bus driver tips are not included in the price of **\$175 for BHC Members and \$200 for Non-Members** (an envelope will be passed around the bus on the return trip). For additional information contact Vicky Heffner at (610) 375. 4375 (BHC) or (610) 413-5543 (cell) or education@berkshistory.org. Don't miss this opportunity to relive a crucial chapter in American history with expert guidance. Secure your spot today!



New Excursion in Gettysburg! **Gettysburg Railway**

Gettysburg Excursions Train Ride

All Ages! · 1 Hour Round-trip

- As the train winds through the countryside, enjoy captivating storytelling about the leaders of the Battle of Gettysburg and historical landmarks along the route.

<https://fareharbor.com/embeds/book/gettysburgrailway/items/?language=en-us&full-items=yes&back=https://gettysburgrailway.com/>

Blue and Gray Education Society (BGES) Winter 2025 / Spring 2026 Schedule of Events

Even though we've still got a few good months left in 2025—along with some incredible BGES tours- we're already looking ahead to 2026. Here's a first look at next year's tour lineup as it currently stands.

We're still working on the registration forms, and online registration isn't open yet. For more information or to join a tour, please reach out to BGES Executive Director Wade Sokolosky at BgesExDir@gmail.com. We'll be posting registration forms in the coming months, so stay tuned.

Winter 2025 Tours starting in 2026

- **Revolutionary Williamsburg and Yorktown**, with Bert Dunkerly, from Williamsburg, VA: Feb. 7. 2026
- **The Wilmington Campaign**, with Chris Fonvielle, from Wilmington, NC: Feb. 12–15, 2026
- **Forrest and the Streight Raid**, with Norman Dasinger, from Gadsden, AL: Feb. 20–22, 2026
- **Monmouth Campaign**, with Gary Ecelbarger and Scott Patchan, from Princeton, NJ: Feb. 26–March 1, 2026

Spring 2026

- **The War of 1812 on the Gulf Coast: Pensacola, Mobile, Fort Mims, Fort Sinquefield, and New Orleans**, with Mike Bunn, from Mobile, AL & New Orleans, LA: March 10–15, 2026
- **Spring 1865 North Carolina Campaign Wyse Fork, Monroe's Crossroads, Averagesboro, and Bentonville**, with Wade Sokolosky: March 26–29, 2026
- **The Atlanta Campaign—New Hope to Kennesaw, Part II**, with Dave Powell, from Marietta/Kennesaw, GA: April 15–19, 2026.
- **The Siege of Suffolk, April 11–May 4, 1863**, with Brian Wills, from Suffolk, VA: April 23–26, 2026.
- **George Washington's Alexandria and Mt. Vernon Tour, including the Carlyle House**, with John Maass, from Alexandria, VA: May 1–3, 2026.
- **From Petersburg to Appomattox, The Final Chapter in Virginia & Five Forks, Amelia Courthouse, Dinwiddie, High Bridge, and Sailor's Creek**, with Phil Greenwalt, from Richmond, VA: May 6–10, 2026.
- **The Wilderness Campaign**, with Greg Mertz, from Fredericksburg, VA: May 13–17, 2026.

The Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall

is pleased to announce our eighth annual Civil War Symposium, slated for April 17 – 18, 2026. Though overlooked in favor of later years and larger battles, the first year of the Civil War witnessed many advances and setbacks, trials and tribulations, personalities and decisions that affected how the remainder of the war came to be fought. In 1861: Small Battles, Big Outcomes, seven dynamic historians will unpack the military, political, and social threads of this pivotal year in our nation's history.



<https://www.showelix.com/event/andrew-carnegie-free-library-music-hall-civil-war-symposium-1861>

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

December 2025, the 29th Campaign



www.firstdefendersecwrt.us

President's Message

CHRISTMAS 1776

One morning a few decades past, I was watching an interview with David Hackett Fisher highlighting his recently (2004) published book, *Washington's Crossing*. Intrigued, I bought the book immediately. Now, I pull it out every year in December and re-read portions. In my mind if one could possess a single history book, this would be the one, and it should be required reading for every American student. The triumph of courage over hardship could never be matched by any fictional novelist. We point to Saratoga, Cowpens and Yorktown as battles which won the war, but the victory in those few days at Trenton and Princeton saved the new republic in its darkest hour. Had Washington's gamble failed, the War for Independence likely would have ended then and there.

Picture in your mind the early December scene. The Continental Army was nearly destroyed in the battles around New York City having been reduced from 25,000 to a mere handful. Fleeing South through New Jersey, Washington and his officers kept the remnants together and crossed the Delaware River using it as a barrier between themselves and the King's soldiers. They commandeered every boat for their own use, denying the same to the British. The British and Hessian troops under General William Howe pursued slowly and without concern. They dispersed for the winter to outposts around New Jersey from where they could cover more territory and still support each other. Howe was not in a hurry for he would bag the "Old Fox" (Washington) at his leisure either when the Delaware River froze over or in the spring.

Washington could count fewer than 5,000 men when they gathered on the farms around McConkey's Ferry a few miles north of Philadelphia. The Continental Congress fled the city seeking haven in Baltimore, and was followed closely by General Horatio Gates who lobbied to have Washington relieved and himself put in command. To make matters worse, supplies were nearly exhausted, soldiers had not been paid and many enlistments were due to expire in January. More men walked away every day.

-more-

In the midst of this gloom, Washington and a handful of others found the will to go on. Thomas Paine, traveling with the army, sat down and wrote a pamphlet entitled, *"The American Crisis"* leaving to us these immortal words, "These are the times that try men's souls...The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman." The pamphlet was printed in Philadelphia and passed to the army. Most of Washington's men could read it for themselves and those who could not heard it read around the campfires. A new fire warmed their hearts.

A daring plan was conceived to cross the river on Christmas night and attack the Hessian outpost at Trenton before daylight. Washington handed slips of paper to his officers, which read, "Victory or Death." Every soldier and officer understood his duty and the risk. Enduring sleet, snow and frigid temperatures they crossed the ice choked Delaware River, and then marched all night reaching Trenton hours later than expected. Nevertheless, the Hessians, having been forewarned to a possible attack were exhausted from days on alert. Not believing the rebels would attack in the storm, they were surprised and utterly defeated. They were not drunk and hungover. Washington beat the British and Hessians again a few days later at the Second Battle of Trenton and at Princeton. The British spent a frightful winter defending every outpost in New Jersey from rebel raids while Washington reformed his army in Morristown. The army was saved, and the fight for liberty continued.

Please read the book if you have not. We will resume our meetings in April. And, thanks for a good year.

Merry Christmas and may the Lord bless you and your family.

Joe

Round Table Business

Joe called the meeting to order at 6:20 pm.

There was 1 guest this evening. Dave Hartranft joined us from Schuylkill County. Dave attended the Berks County Historical Society lecture presented by Craig Breneiser on the Great Exeter Train Wreck and Dave, being a direct descendent of General Hartranft found it most interesting. He was extended an invitation to attend our meeting and expressed an interest in returning.

New Members: none

Member update:

Gary Hertzog is back with us this month after having a knee replacement, and Tim Antosy is hoping to return to the Round Table for the next campaign.

We wish them all a speedy recovery and hope to see them back with us soon.

Joe sent his apologies for the scheduling mishap, but was grateful that Gianotti's was able to accommodate our group in the main dining area.

Joe welcomed Dr. Craig Symonds and his lovely wife and thanked him for speaking to us this evening on their way back home. Craig's lecture was our first in the blending of Civil War history and WW2.

Reminder, that we will be transitioning to our new schedule and there will be no meetings from January through March. We will resume our meetings in April. Our new schedule will run from April through December. We hope to see you then!

We received a nice anonymous donation which will go a long way in helping us secure our speakers.

Treasurers Report

The account has a balance of \$ 1751.40, with the general fund having \$1,535.40 and Preservation having \$ 216.00.

Membership

We stand at 50 members for the 29th Campaign.

Preservation and Book Raffle

At our November meeting, we took in \$70 from our book raffle. That brought our total Preservation Fund to \$286 (Oct. \$216).

The membership voted to make 2 donations:

1. \$100 to Kernstown Battlefield Association for a new roof on the Stephen Pritchard House. The repair project was to begin on 11/17/2025 and be completed by 12/19/2025. Total cost for repairs was \$35 thousand. There was no matching grant with this contribution.
2. \$100 to American Battlefield Trust -Chance to Protect 27.5 Acres of Hallowed Ground. This is an ABT campaign for 3 VA battlefields: Bull Run, 2nd Manassas and Williamsburg. The Trust is seeking to raise \$155,295. The matching grant is \$34 to \$1.

There was also a suggestion proposed to the members that they could make a voluntary contribution online at the ABT website. This was to save 2 acres at Antietam. The land targeted is where CSA troops (AP Hill’s Division) arrived to halt Burnside’s attack on the CSA southern flank. The goal is \$515 thousand. There is a matching grant of \$3 to \$1. Donations need to be made by 12/2/2025.

Our Preservation balance for the beginning of our December meeting is \$86. Thanks to everyone for your support of our preservation efforts!!! Happy Holidays to All!

29th Campaign	Total for all Seasons
Total amount raised-\$ 476	
Total amount donated-\$ 475	Total amount donated - \$ 40,121
Total contribution with matching grants-\$ 10,075	Total contributed with Matching Grants - \$ 573,172

December Program

Brandywine: the Battle that Lost Philadelphia but Saved America

presented by Michael Harris

The Philadelphia Campaign of 1777 was a major British offensive during the American Revolutionary War aimed at capturing Philadelphia, the government seat of the rebellious colonies. Along the meandering Brandywine Creek, a mere 25 miles from the colonial capital, British General Sir William Howe sought to deliver a coup de main against the ragtag Americans. The bitter fighting on Birmingham Hill would eventually drive Washington’s army from the field, but its heroic defensive stand saved it from destruction and proved that the nascent Continental foot soldiers could stand toe-to-toe with their foe. Despite capturing and occupying Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Campaign highlighted the resilience of the Continental Army, the limitations of British military strategy and set the stage for a more global conflict with France joining the war in 1778.



Michael C. Harris is a military historian with degrees from the University of Mary Washington and American Military University. He’s known for his accessible yet deeply researched works on Revolutionary War battles, and is the author of , a richly illustrated and detailed account of the British military campaign to capture Philadelphia during the American Revolutionary War.

First Defenders Bookshelf

Joe noted Craig Symonds most recent book, “*Nimitz at War*,” which covers Admiral Nimitz’ war career.

Dinner Reservations for our final meeting of the 29th Campaign

Next Meeting & Program (12/9/25: Deadline to order is Friday, December 5th, NOON.

We had 34 people attending the November meeting.

Our meal choices for December are:

Broiled Crab Cake
Grilled Chicken w/ Rice
Linguine w/Mushroom Sauce

If possible, please make your reservation on the website. When doing so, you should receive:

- An immediate email “thank you” for making the reservation.
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Emerging Civil War Symposium

August 7-9 2026

Stevenson’s Ridge

2026 ECW Early Bird Registration Tickets – \$275.00 if you sign up before the end of this year

This year’s theme: Partnerships and Rivalries

https://emergingcivilwar.com/ecw_event/2026-symposium/

National Museum of Civil War Medicine

Christmas and the Civil War

December 14 @ 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm EST

Brad Stone, portraying a Civil War Santa, discusses the history behind the celebration of Christmas during the Civil War.

The Civil War shaped the way we celebrate the holiday season in the United States in surprising ways. One of the most surprising is the depiction of Santa Claus, as Civil War era illustrator Thomas Nast toyed with images of the jolly elf during the conflict that evolved into the Santa we know today in the United States.



Brad Stone as Civil War Santa at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine. (Photo by Melissa A. Winn)

<https://www.civilwarmed.org/event/christmas-and-the-civil-war-2/>

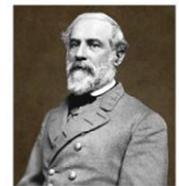
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DECEMBER 2nd



Civil War Round Table Congress
Presents:

<https://www.cwrtcongress.org/>

JUST BETWEEN GENERALS

We are re-airing the conversations between living historians portraying General Beauregard, General Pemberton, and General Lee with General Grant in marathon fashion on **Tuesday, DECEMBER 2nd** beginning at 7pm Eastern (4pm Pacific).

This marathon event is presented without charge.

We recommend a modest donation.

Jump in or out at any point.