

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

April 2018



www.firstdefenderscwrts.us

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Stealth. Subterfuge. Secrecy. All critical elements when attempting to carry off a covert operation when the goal is to ensure the focus of your initiative is kept unaware. And, it is often difficult to carry it out with complete success.

It's amazing what goes into a surprise birthday party. Beyond the secrecy, there are the preparations of ensuring there is enough food. There are logistics involved with ensuring the supplies are delivered to the front lines at the right time. Then comes the task of maneuvering the guests "into position" unseen. And, of course, there is the need to confuse and misdirect the intended guest of honor.

While helping my daughter execute this surprise operation for her boyfriend's 30th birthday, I gave consideration to our upcoming "Evening with Ed" and the program topic of "Shiloh." If we had so much difficulty pulling off an extended family get-together in secrecy, what ever was Albert Sidney Johnston thinking when he sought to maneuver his 45,000 man Army of the Mississippi some 20 miles north from Corinth to surprise Ulysses S. Grant on the banks of the Tennessee River at Pittsburg Landing 156 years ago? An even better question: how did Johnston actually manage to pull it off (even though Grant and William T. Sherman would swear to their dying days they were *not* surprised. Yeah, right.)?

The collision between more than 100,000 men on April 6-7, 1862 would be the first large-scale battle of the Civil War, and any innocence that still existed following Bull Run and Wilson's Creek the previous would flow away with the lifeblood of more than 23,000 men, including Albert Sidney Johnston. His sloppy and very un-stealthy march to Pittsburg Landing came within an ace of resounding success largely because his Union counterparts were so dull and inattentive to what was going on around them that breakfast was literally on the table for their Confederate foes when they appeared as uninvited surprise guests.

We'll learn much more about the "Shiloh Surprise" from Ed Bearss on April 10th. In the meantime, I will savor being an integral part of my daughter's "victory" with her own secret operation that ended in total surprise.

For the Glory,

Craig

Round Table Business

President Craig Breneiser called the March meeting of the First Defenders Civil War Round Table to order at 6:15 p.m. at the Inn at Reading on March 13, 2018, for 63 members in attendance. Following a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance led by Greg Stull, Craig welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The first item of business included VP Mark Quattroco thanking everyone for cards and contributions in tribute to his father who had passed away after last month's meeting. Next, Linda Zeiber informed everyone regarding Gerry Zeiber's recent hospitalization and surgery. He was wished a speedy recovery and a swift return to the round table. Chair reports then were given as follows:

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Tim Antosy reported a balance in the treasury of \$3746.19 as of March 15, 2018. Last month we took in a total of \$256.00 for preservation giving us a present total of \$726.00 for preservation. Our membership stands at 91 after picking up two new members. The unencumbered balance as of April's meeting stands at \$3020.19.

Preservation

The March meeting was a huge success as we raised \$256 toward preservation. The money raised came from the book raffle, donations, and from members who purchased books from the book list that we have on our web site. Thanks to all of you who continue to support our preservation efforts.

As of now we have raised a total of \$1606 this season. In addition we have donated \$1200, and, with all of the matching grants we have taken advantage of this season, our total contribution for season 21 is \$26,656.

Looking at all of the seasons-to-date, we have donated \$31,579. Our total contribution with matching grants for all of the seasons puts us at \$255,822.

Until next time!
Mark Quattroco

Meal Captain

Kathy Little reminded everyone that the deadline for ordering meals is always Friday at noon before the next meeting. If you have any problems ordering, please call Kathy. Her number is available in the section for "Dinner Reservations" each month. You should receive two replies by email after making reservations online. If you do not, be sure to let Kathy know by telephone.

Book Raffle

Gary Hertzog reported that there is a list of book titles on our website where books can be purchased outright for \$5.00 each. Simply notify Gary before the meeting of any titles that you are interested in purchasing so that he can bring your purchases along. All money raised will be put into our preservation fund. Thanks to all buyers of tickets and donations for this worthy cause.

Web Master

Lisa Breneiser reiterated that Civil War books are for sale as listed on the website. She and Gary Hertzog have been working diligently to offer this benefit for our members.

Membership

Membership Chair Dave Sweigert reported that we currently have 90 members. He introduced new member Mark Fegley. Since we have been meeting at the Inn at Reading, we can accommodate many more members/attendees. Please invite others to join the round table. Membership dues are our only source of income to pay speaker fees.

Programs

Dave Unger explained the absence of one of the evening's speakers, Wayne Motts. Wayne is the CEO of the National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg which experienced a plumbing problem on the day of the meeting. Wayne was needed to address this issue at the museum so his partner, Jim Hessler, stepped up and made the entire presentation.

Additionally, Dave reported that Chris Mackowski will be the speaker for the September 2018 meeting. Other speakers for the first half of our next campaign are listed later in the newsletter. Be sure to check them.

Joe's Jaunts-Montgomery Cemetery

The next Joe's Jaunt field trip will be held on Saturday, April 28, 2018. We will be given a tour of Montgomery Cemetery in Norristown, Pennsylvania, through the Montgomery County Historical Society. The tour will begin at 10:00 a.m. and will last about one and a half hours with another half/full hour to stroll at leisure through the grounds.

The total cost of the tour, **which will be divided among those in attendance**, is \$150.00 plus a tip for the guide. Thus, the more who attend, the smaller the fee per person. Attendees must provide their own transportation so carpooling is suggested. If anyone is interesting in bringing along guests, they will be welcomed.

Joe is working on reserving a room in a nearby tavern for lunch. He will give those final details at the April meeting.

Six Union General officers, including Winfield Scott Hancock and Samuel Zook, are interred in the Montgomery Cemetery along with a large number of other Union veterans. We will also hear about the Exeter Train Wreck and visit the graves of veterans killed in that disaster.

Adopt-A-Position

The Spring date to work at our sites at Gettysburg National Park is Thursday, May 31. Please refer to the March newsletter for the details of this endeavor.

We will have eight sites to work on. To accomplish this we need YOU to volunteer, please let Don Stripling (610-750-3998) or Barbara Shafer (484-336-8995) know if you are able to participate.

Park Day at Gettysburg

Park Day sponsored by Civil War Trust is April 7, 2018.

There are several sites available in Pennsylvania. To see a list of parks, search **Park Day 2018, the Civil War Trust's annual hands-on event to help battlefields and historic sites take on maintenance projects large and small.**

This year the CWT Day Project for Gettysburg NMP will be at Codori/Trostle Thicket. Parking will be along Hancock Ave. - north of the Pennsylvania Memorial. Norma Lohman (717.338.4404 or norma_lohman@nps.gov) will take reservations for up to 60 participants. Volunteers should arrive no later than 9:00 a.m. to complete registration. The volunteer work day will begin shortly after 9:00 and end at 1:00. Please bring a lunch and or snacks. Work will include removal of shrubs and woody debris. Tools and drinking water will be provided. Wear sturdy shoes and appropriate outdoor clothing for the weather. Some gloves will be provided however - bring your own if you have them! An interpretive talk will be delivered at noon.

If you have questions, please contact Barbara Shafer. See above.

Remembrance Event July 6, 2018

The Battle of Williamsport and the Battle of Falling Waters, MD, 155th Anniversary

On Friday evening July 6 at 7 p.m., The Springfield Barn, 12 Springfield Lane, Williamsport, MD, will be the site of a free event commemorating the 155th anniversary of the July 6, 1863 Battle of Williamsport and the July 14, 1863 Battle of Falling Waters, MD.

Speakers include Ted Alexander, George Franks III, and Steve French. There will also be music, relics from the battles, book sales, period re-enactors, and more.

Doors open at 6. For more information, contact Steve French at sfrench52@yahoo.com.

From Able Correspondent Mike Straus--

Coffin That Passes Slowly

Back In Washington D.C., the federal government shut down the day of the funeral, May 4, 1865. Offices were closed, flags flew at half- staff, public buildings remained draped in black, and military officers wore black crepe ribbons around the coat sleeves of their uniforms. John Wilkes Booth lay in a secret, unmarked grave on the grounds of the U.S.Army penitentiary at the Old Arsenal along the river, and at that walled, fortress prison eight of his accused conspirators languished in shackles and hoods awaiting their trial by military tribunal. Those proceedings would begin in a few days.

Ford's Theater remained closed and under guard. Secretary of State William Seward recovered from his wounds. At the White House, Lincoln's office had been sealed like a ship bottle, preserved just as the president left it on the afternoon of April 14. His widow continued her refusal to vacate the Executive Mansion, thus denying its proper use by the new President, Andrew Johnson. She had become the subject of much talk.

AT THE PETERSON HOUSE, PRIVATE WILLIAM CLARK WENT TO SLEEP EACH NIGHT COVERED BY THE SAME QUILT THAT HAD WARMED THE DYING PRESIDENT.

Soldiers back from the war once again got drunk in saloons, and people dining out in public houses gorged themselves on the delicacy of the day, fresh oysters.

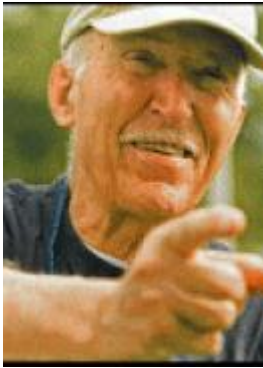
from *Bloody Crimes*, p. 287

by James Swanson.

...and life goes on...thanks, Mike!

April Program

April 6th, 1862, was the day any remaining vestiges of the Civil War being a short and painless war were dashed on the banks of the Tennessee River in northern Mississippi. Although he would deny it to his dying day, Ulysses S. Grant's Union army was surprised by a brazen attack led by Albert Sidney Johnston. By the time the sun went down,



Grant's troops had been pressed back nearly to the river and Johnston lay dead. The Battle of Shiloh would ultimately prove to be a Northern victory, but the luster Grant had achieved at Forts Henry and Donelson would become a bit tarnished, and the general would spend the next several months playing second-string to Henry Halleck.

Our April program...our annual "Evening with Ed"...will feature the Battle of Shiloh as only the incomparable Ed Bearss can tell it. And, with his "devil-may-care" swagger, Ed is sure to have some surprises for us. Don't miss it!

Ed Bearss is the retired chief historian of the National Park Service. The author of numerous books, discoverer of the wreck of the U.S.S. Cairo and prolific tour guide and lecturer, Ed is the most frequent guest lecturer of the First Defenders and one of our greatest friends. Still on the lecture circuit and battlefields as he approaches his 95th birthday, Ed continues to make it appear that the Energizer Bunny is standing still!

Speakers and Programs for 2018

May 6 Jim Hessler Sickles at Gettysburg

22nd Campaign

September 11 Chris Mackowski TBA

October 9 Ryan Quint Battle of Monocacy

November 13 Kevin Pawlek Battle of Shepardstown

December 11 Craig Breneiser Battle of Franklin

Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, April 10, 2018
Meeting:

If possible please make your meal choices/reservations on the website. Our meal choices for April include: Cornbread Stuffed Chicken with supreme sauce; Beef Stroganoff over egg noodles; Haddock with butter crumb top; or Vegetarian Lasagna. 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 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, April 6, 2018, 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.**
