

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

February 2018



www.firstdefenderscwr.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

(Sarasota, FL) Fake news. A term much in vogue these days, and we recently noted President Trump's "Fake News Awards." Even the Pope has used the term, suggesting, "The Serpent hissed the first fake news in the Garden of Eden."

"Fake news" is really nothing more than a modern term for what is essentially a claim that challenges what one believes and where such contrariness simply cannot be right. The left refers to this as "political correctness" while the right considers it to be "fake news."

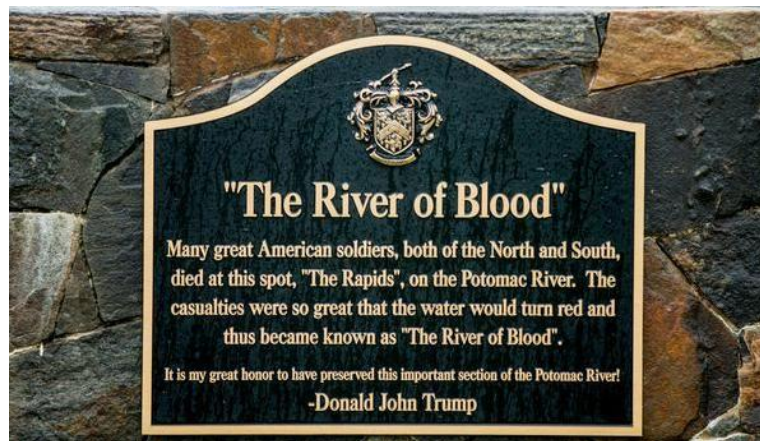
Of greater consequence, however, to folks like us is "fake history." Whereas fake news is more-or-less a matter of opinion or perspective, fake history is an outright attempt to deceive and where these attempts are accepted as historical fact.

For example, take the case of Augustus Buell who wrote extensively about his Civil War career, virtually all of it purloined from the memoirs of others. "The Cannoneer" is still widely read and has been used as primary source material for generations, but is all fake. Most of Buell's writings, and they are extensive, are plagiarized or woven from whole cloth.

Many of us may remember the 1970's film *The Lincoln Conspiracy* (which followed the historical blockbuster *In Search of Noah's Ark*) which posed a number of theories including Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton's complicity in Abraham Lincoln's assassination and that John Wilkes Booth escaped and lived out his life in any number of places. Where evidence was missing it was created, and where exculpatory documents and testimony existed, new documents and testimony appeared to refute them. Though it piqued the interest of many in the post-Watergate era, it was coldly received by historians and has found a rightful, ignominious place with discarded "B List" videotapes.

It is important for future generations that history be articulated as clearly and accurately as possible and without invention, personal aggrandizement or deception. Perhaps a good place to start would be along the banks of the Potomac River at a Loudoun County, Virginia, golf course where a flagpole rises over a bronze plaque with the inscription, "Many great American soldiers, both of the North and South, died at this spot, "The Rapids," on the Potomac River. The casualties were so great

that the water would turn red and thus became known as "The River of Blood." Never mind that the closest battle was eleven miles away (Ball's Bluff), there is no historical reference to the Potomac ever being called "the river of blood" and a credible historian is yet to be found to even remotely support the claim.



The plaque, I suppose, says it all, and fake history is now memorialized in bronze. At least a portion of the Potomac River has been nicely preserved.

For the Glory,

Craig

Round Table Business

President Craig Breneiser called the January meeting of the First Defenders Civil War Round Table to order at 6:15 p.m. at the Inn at Reading on January 9, 2018, for 59 members and guests in attendance. He announced that Dale Kratzer would be speaking about naval schemes for the evening's program.

At 7:05 following dinner, Greg Stull offered a prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Vicky Heffner, a guest from the Berks History Center, was introduced. Dave Fox gave an update on Programs Director Dave Unger and Wally Heimbach both of whom recently underwent knee replacements. We look forward to their returns following recuperation.

Treasurer's Report

Tim Antosy presented his report at the January meeting. Our balance as of January 11, 2018, stood at \$4180.00 with \$694.00 ear-marked for preservation. The unencumbered balance as of January 11, 2018, is \$3,486.00 with 89 members paid. The book auction brought in \$260.00 all of it for preservation.

Preservation

Mark Quattroch reported sending a check to the Civil War Trust following last month's meeting. He told us that \$18,000 has been donated so far this campaign for battlefield preservation. This total is a combination of actual dollars sent as well as leverages available which match our donation. Members of our round table are to be congratulated on their generosity through direct donations and purchases of tickets for the monthly book raffle.

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.

Book Raffle

Gary Hertzog reported an abundance of books in his possession and has listed titles on our website where books can be purchased outright for \$5.00 each. Gary discussed the future sale of the Time/Life series, *Collectors Library of the Civil War*. He estimates having 25-50 volumes. All money raised will be put into our preservation fund. Ten books were raffled at the January meeting. Thanks to all buyers of tickets.

Membership

Chairperson Dave Sweigert reported that we currently have 88 members. 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.

Web Master

Lisa Breneiser announced that meals for the February meeting would be posted early because of her and Craig's trip to Florida. See the website for ordering meals.

Winter During the War

The winter of 1863 was a quiet season for the war, as severe cold set in. Even so, battles continued at sea and from coast to coast. Hospitals were full of wounded soldiers.

You believe yourselves very generous and think because you have voted this petty sum (to the Ladies' Aid Society) you are doing all that is required of you. But I have in my hospital a hundred poor soldiers who have done more than any of you. Who of you would contribute a leg, an arm or an eye, instead of what you have done? How many hundred or thousand dollars would you consider an equivalent for either? Don't deceive yourselves gentlemen. The poor soldier who has given an arm, a leg or an eye to his country (and many of them have given much more than one) has given more than you have or can. How much more, then, he who has given his life? No! gentlemen, you must set your standard higher yet or you will not come up to the full measure of liberality in giving.

--Mary Ann "Mother" Bickerdyke, address to the Milwaukee Chamber of Commerce

From *The Civil War, A Book of Quotations*, edited by Bob Blaisdell

February Program

Schuylkill County's Coal Heavers: The 96th Pennsylvania Volunteers

Originally commanded by Colonel Henry L. Cake, formerly of the National Light Infantry, the 96th Penna Volunteers served for three years in the Second Brigade, First Division of the Sixth Corps of the Army of the Potomac. Principally comprised of War Democrats, the regiment fought with determination at Gaines' Mill, Crampton's Gap, Salem Church and at Spotsylvania on May 10 and again on May 12, 1864. The regiment lost 6 officers and 126 enlisted men -- killed or mortally wounded -- in its three years of service.

This talk will highlight the regiment's military engagements, offer a few quotes regarding the direction of the war and reactions to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. In addition, the program features quotes from the soldiers of the 96th to describe the generals they served under -- Slocum, Bartlett, Franklin, Brooks, Sedgwick and Upton.



David Ward was born in Pottsville, and graduated from Franklin & Marshall College in 1980 with BA in history. Dave subsequently attended Southern Connecticut State University and graduated with master's degree in history and library science. He has been a professional librarian at New Academy, Livingston, New Jersey, and the assistant library director at The Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, Connecticut. Dave founded the Connecticut Civil War Round Table in spring 1989 serving as the program chairman from 1989-1995. He also hosted the New England Civil War Conference June 1990-1992, and was the owner/operator of the popular battlefield tour company Civil War Tours 2000-2015.

Speakers and Programs for 2018

March 13	Wayne Motts	Pickett's Charge
	Jim Hessler	
April 10	Ed Bearss	Shiloh
May 6	Jim Hessler	Sickles at Gettysburg

Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, February 13, 2018 Meeting:

If possible please make your meal choices/reservations on the website. Our meal choices for February include: Grilled Breast of Chicken, asparagus, mushroom, four-cheese sauce; Sliced Top Round of Beef; Seafood Alfredo; or Basil Pesto Cheese Tortellini with spinach. Soup, starch, vegetables, dessert, rolls, coffee, tea, and water are included. The price is \$25.00 inclusive for meals.

If you make your reservation online and you do not receive a thank-you and/or 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, February 9, 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.**

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