

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

March 2018



www.firstdefenderscwrts.us

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

If "pro" is the opposite of "con," what is the opposite of "progress?" If you happen to be the President of the United States, your answer will surely be "Congress." It seems almost everything you do is questioned, and your chief assistants are hauled before a committee that is intensely partisan and very much self-important.

What some may think modern is, in fact, many decades old. Just ask Abraham Lincoln about the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. Considered by some to have been the harshest investigating committee in the nation's history, it was unquestionably partisan, repeatedly challenged Lincoln's authority as commander-in-chief, eschewed conventional military tactics and strategy, promoted the careers of generals of the "right" political persuasion and ruined those who either met defeat or seemed "soft" on the South in any fashion. The latter was especially true of those West Point graduates who also happened to be Democrats.

Chaired by Senator Benjamin Franklin "Bluff Ben" Wade of Ohio, the Joint Committee championed aggressive generals who sought to wreak vengeance on the South. For the most part, Lincoln managed to steer around the Committee while often incurring its somewhat impotent wrath (Lincoln, after all, did control the military). In one instance, Wade went on a screed at the White House telling Lincoln, "You are on the road to Hell with this government, and you are not a mile off this minute." This rather amused Lincoln who replied, "A mile from Hell, Senator? That is just about the distance from here to the Capitol, is it not?"

As a particularly interesting example, the Committee accepted testimony from Dan Sickles excoriating George Meade for his battle management at Gettysburg. It promoted Sickles' rather dubious claim that HE had actually won the battle while Meade had equivocated and sought to retreat rather than face Lee's legions.

While in 2018 we are presently besieged with partisan snipings over a half-dozen memo pages that may or may not have all of the important information included, the Joint Committee would eventually crank out eight volumes of reports gleaned from 272 meetings and that were intended to report only what it considered to be "correct." Those volumes would be released to friendly editors, and did *not* require (or seek) the permission of the occupant of the White House in advance.

It is difficult to say with any certainty whether Lincoln would have had continued success navigating the congressional shoal waters with the Joint Committee or its successor, the Joint Committee on Reconstruction. But, in the fifteen decades since the Civil War and Reconstruction eras have passed, it seems presidents still consider "progress" and "congress" to be contradictory terminology.

For the Glory,

Craig

Round Table Business

President Craig Breneiser called the February meeting of the First Defenders Civil War Round Table to order at 6:15 p.m. at the Inn at Reading on February 13, 2018, for 55 members and guests in attendance. Following a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance, Craig welcomed guests and members Dave Unger and Wally Heimbach both returning following knee replacement surgeries.

The first item of business following dinner was entertained by VP Mark Quattrock who made a motion to donate \$400 to the Civil War Trust. The motion was seconded by Wally Heimbach and overwhelmingly approved by the membership. A leverage of \$21.17:\$1 had been offered to purchase battlefield land in Tennessee yielding a total of \$8,468. This donation was made in honor of Ed Bearss, our April speaker. The donation was made at this time to take advantage of the leverage. We are certain that Ed will approve of the action.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Tim Antosy reported that our balance as of February 16, 2018, stood at \$3,560.59 with \$470.00 earmarked for preservation. The unencumbered balance on February 16, 2018, was \$3,090.59. Membership currently stands at 89 members. The book auction brought in \$176.00 at the February meeting.

Preservation

Another successful round table meeting is in the books as we raised \$176 for preservation. As always, thanks to all of you who support the Book Raffle or made a donation. It is truly appreciated.

We also donated another \$400 to the Civil War Trust for a \$21.17-\$1 matching grant that covers three battlefields in Tennessee. They are Fort Donelson, Browns Ferry which is part of the Chattanooga Battlefield, and Franklin. This makes our total contribution \$8468. In addition, we are making this donation in the name of Ed Bearss in appreciation for his upcoming visit to the round table in April.

That's it for now. See all of you next month!

Mark Quattrock

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 brought nine books to be auctioned. He reminded us of the list of titles on our website where books can be purchased outright for \$5.00 each. Simply notify Gary before the meeting 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.

Membership

Chairperson Dave Sweigert reported that we currently have 89 members. He introduced new member Bob Houck. 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 reminded everyone of the books for sale listed on the website. She and Gary Hertzog have been working diligently to offer this benefit for our members.

Programs

Dave Unger announced the speakers for the March meeting, Wayne Motts and Jim Hessler. Those of us who frequent the Gettysburg Battlefield are quite familiar with both of these gentlemen. They will be speaking about Pickett's Charge, and it's guaranteed to be an exciting program.

Additionally, he reported that programs for next season are in the works at this time.

Joe's Jaunts

The next Joe's Jaunt field trip will be Saturday, April 28, 2018. We will be given a tour of Montgomery Cemetery, which is in Norristown, Pennsylvania. Six Union General officers are interred there 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. Details on the time will follow next month. Thanks. Joe

Adopt-A-Position

The Spring date to work at our sites at Gettysburg National Park is Thursday, May 31.

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

First Defenders has adopted six sites, Gregg's monument located at East Cavalry Field , 18th PA Cavalry located at Big Round Top, WV 1st Cav (Farnsworth) and Benning's Brigade (TX) on South Confederate. The two new sites are Buford's Statue and Reynold's Equestrian Statue both on Chambersburg Pike.

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

The fence at Gregg's will need to be painted. Roger Cotterill is the fashionista on dressing for the occasion, but clothing suitable for painting might be your best choice.

We will have 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.

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

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

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

For Your Consideration....from Mike Straus

Battle of Stone's River

In the clearing north of the woods, his face blackened by gun smoke, Sheridan ran into his commanding general. "Here we are," he told Rosecrans, "all that are left of us." He spoke the truth; in four hours of furious combat, culminating in one of the bravest fighting retreats of the war, he lost more than 1,600 men including three brigade commanders. Sill, Roberts, and Harrington were dead; soon Schaefer would join the terrible list. Sheridan was cursing, not so much from despair as from frustration. "Watch your language," Rosecrans ordered. "Remember, the first bullet may send you to eternity." With a third of his division heaped among the rocks and cedars behind him, Sheridan scarcely needed a lecture on the destructive capabilities of bullets. He shrugged. "Unless I swear like hell the men won't take me seriously," he said.

Gen. Phillip H. Sheridan
Dec 31, 1863

March Program

Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg

More than 150 years after the event, the fateful attack by 12,000 Confederate infantrymen against the Union position on Cemetery Ridge still emotionally resonates with Gettysburg enthusiasts like no other aspect of the battle. On the afternoon of July 3rd, Robert E. Lee would order perhaps the most legendary charge in American military history that would ever after be known (perhaps inaccurately) as "Pickett's Charge."

Often considered the turning point of the battle of Gettysburg and, by extension, the Civil War itself, much has been written about the battle itself and Pickett's Charge in particular. A participant observed the charge "has been more criticized, and is still less understood, than any other act of the Gettysburg drama." This program will bring the events of that sultry July afternoon in south-central Pennsylvania into crystal clear reality that will provoke a new understanding of this critical event by seasoned Gettysburg trampers and greenhorns alike.

Wayne Motts is the Chief Executive Officer of The National Civil War Museum, one of the largest museums in the country dedicated to the study,



interpretation, preservation and exhibition of the American Civil War. His professional resume is an impressive list of nationally recognized organizations. Wayne has served as the Chief Executive Officer of the Adams County Historical Society, the Curator of the Cumberland County Historical Society, and Senior Research Historian for the TravelBrains Corporation. Wayne has been a Licensed Battlefield Guide at the Gettysburg National Military Park since 1988. In 2013, Wayne received the Emeritus Guide designation for more than twenty-five years of service, and as such was one of the youngest guides to be so recognized with that honor. Wayne received his Bachelor of Arts with a Major in Military History from The Ohio State University. He received his Masters of Arts in American History from Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania.



James Hessler has been a Licensed Battlefield Guide at Gettysburg National Military Park since 2003. His book Sickles at Gettysburg (Savas Beatie, 2009) was awarded the R.E. Lee Civil War Round Table's "Bachelder Coddington Award" and the Gettysburg Civil War Round Table's "Distinguished Book Award" as the most outstanding work on the Gettysburg Campaign. Jim's latest book (co-authored with Wayne) Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg, was released in July 2015 and has been received very favorably by both readers and critics alike as the first battlefield guide ever published on the famous July 3 assault. . Jim has written several articles for Gettysburg Magazine and other national publications He is a frequent speaker at Civil War Round Tables and

has taught courses for the Gettysburg Foundation and Harrisburg (PA) Area Community College. James Hessler has been a Licensed Battlefield Guide at Gettysburg National Military Park since 2003.

Speakers and Programs for 2018

April 10
May 6

Ed Bearss
Jim Hessler

"Shiloh"
"Sickles at Gettysburg"

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

If possible please make your meal choices/reservations on the website. Our meal choices for March include: Orange Ginger Glazed Chicken; Veal Parmesan with pasta; Shrimp and Flounder Amaretto; or Cheese Manicotti with marinara sauce. 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, March 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.**

I received the following note from Pauline Shuman in early February. L. Z.

February 2, 2018

Dear Friends,

How thoughtful to remember Bob by donating to the Civil War Trust in his honor. He would have been humbled and pleased since he had such an avid interest in Civil War history and efforts to preserve battlegrounds.

Bob was always eager to share his knowledge of the Civil War with friends and strangers, adults and children in an effort to have them become interested in the history of our nation.

Attending the CWRT meetings and going on trips was a highlight of his retirement. He enjoyed them so much.

Thank you for remembering Bob by your donation. I too feel honored and blessed.

Sincerely,
Pauline Shuman