

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

April 2026, the 30th Campaign



www.firstdefenderscwrts.us

President's Message

Last year and for the past few years, those of us who enjoy the winter season have wished for a real winter. My mother used to say, "be careful what you wish for because you just might get it." Well, my friends, we did get it this year! Old Man Winter gave us a reminder. For those of you uneducated in the true science of long-range weather predicting, one source was correct again. The woolly bear caterpillars predicted a cold, hard winter and they nailed it. They usually do and skeptics who fail to heed the warnings do so at their own peril.

Now that we have that out of the way, let me extend a sincere welcome back and a hope that everyone came through the winter in good health.

This is a special year for our Civil War Roundtable as we embark on our 30th Campaign. My thanks to all. Indeed, it is also a milestone for our nation as we celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the founding of our Republic. May the Lord bless our country with another 250 years.

Last year we took on several challenges. First, we achieved IRS status as a non-profit corporation, allowing donors to claim donations when filing their Federal tax return. We received donations from many of you, and your generosity has put us on solid footing to begin the new year. Thank you! Next, we changed our campaign schedule from meeting from September through May to a new schedule of April through December. You seemed to embrace the change. Again, my thanks. The third major change was to expand the themes of our topics beyond the Civil War to include other important periods of American history. This variety will continue, but as promised, we are first and foremost a Civil War Roundtable. Our speakers and topics will reflect that promise.

I also want to extend my thanks to all of the returning board members; Lisa, Vicki, Clark, Craig, Chuck and Gary and to Ev who has retired as membership chairman and Bill Burns who has assumed that role. They have all spent the winter preparing for the new campaign.

Clark has confirmed the speakers for the entire campaign. Thanks Clark.

I will see everyone in April. God Bless America!

Joe

Round Table Business

Joe called the meeting to order at 7:25 pm.

Guests: Bary Flicker, Principal at Kutztown High School

New Members: none

Member update:

Ev Binns had cataract surgery. Tim Antosy continues to recover and Roger Cotterill is having some medical issues. We wish them all a speedy recovery and hope to see them back with us soon.

Joe reminded us that our next meeting will be with the new schedule and will start in April 2026.

Membership forms will be available on the website as well as attached to this newsletter. Please bring your membership form along to our first meeting of the 30th campaign in April. Membership dues will remain the same as last year.

Joe noted that he will only be serving as president until December 2026.

Treasurers Report

The account has a balance of \$ 2,220.41, with the General fund having a balance of \$2,134.41 and Preservation having a balance of \$ 86.00.

Chuck will be preparing and filing our 501c3 paperwork with the IRS.

Membership

Ev Binns will not be returning as Membership chair. A motion was made by Wally Heimbach, seconded by Iris Ringler, to install Bill Burns as Membership Chair. AIF.

Preservation and Book Raffle

In December our Preservation total was \$86. Thanks to a generous donation (\$100) by one of our members, our Preservation Fund increased to \$186.

The First Defenders, for the first time, made a donation to historic preservation other than a Civil War site for two Revolutionary War sites and a War of 1812 battle site. The three sites were:

1. Brandywine BF, PA (Revolutionary War) 9/11/1777 15 acres
2. Newton BF, NY (Revolutionary War) 8/1779 55 acres
3. Sacketts Harbor BF, NY (War of 1812) 5/29/1813 88 acres

A total of 158 acres is to be saved when the ABT reaches their goal of \$201,500. The campaign has a matching grant of \$23.80 to \$1.

A motion was made by Wally Heimbach, seconded by Clark Zimmerman, to make a donation of \$100 in gratitude for our speaker, Michael Harris, for his presentation "Brandywine: The Battle that Lost Philadelphia but Saved America." AIF. The presentation was well received.

The Book Raffle took in \$105. Our preservation total for the 30th Campaign will begin with a balance of \$191.

Once again, thank you for all the ways you support the book raffle and our preservation efforts. Hope to see everyone in April for the start of our 30th Campaign,

First Defenders Preservation Scoreboard

29th Campaign	Total for all Seasons
Total amount raised-\$ 681	
Total amount donated-\$ 575	Total amount donated - \$ 40,696
Total contribution with matching grants-\$ 12,455	Total contributed with Matching Grants – \$ 575,552

First Defenders Bookshelf

Savis Beatie Publishing books available as of March include:

Civil War Titles:

- The 14th New York State Militia in the Civil War Volume 1: Baptized by Fire from Bull Run to Bull Run, April 1861-August 1862; James L. McLean Jr.
- Confederate General D. H. Hill: A Military Life; Chris J. Hartley
- A Little Piece of Hell at Gettysburg: The Attack and Defense of the Rose Farm, July 2-3, 1863; Scott T Fink
- Point Lookout, Maryland: The Largest Civil War Prison; Robert E. Crickenberger Jr.
- Desert Empire: The 1862 New Mexico Campaign; Patricia Kelly-Frischer & Phillip S. Greenwalt
- Little Round Top at Gettysburg: A Reassessment of July 2, 1863; Joseph Michael Boslet
- The Atlanta Campaign: Volume 2: From the Etowah River to Kennesaw Mountain, May 20 to June 27, 1864 ; David A. Powell

American Revolution Titles:

- Atlas of Independence: John Adams and the American Revolution; Chris Mackowski

Here is the link to Savis Beatie website to order any of the above books or the many others they have available.

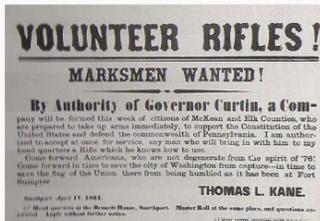
<https://www.savisbeatie.com/sb-titles-by-year/2026/>

April Program

The 13th PA Reserves - The "Bucktails"

Presented by Greg Mertz

Even before President Lincoln's April 1861



call for volunteers to put down the rebellion, Thomas Kane began to recruit a group of red flannel-shirted lumbermen from northwest Pennsylvania as a sharpshooter organization. Sporting the tail of a buck's tail on their hats as evidence of their marksmanship, the 42nd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment...the 13th Reserves, would ever after be known as the "Bucktails." During its three years of service, the regiment would see action along the Potomac River, in the Shenandoah Valley, the Peninsula, Second Bull Run, Antietam and Fredericksburg. One of their finest days would come on July 2nd 1863 when they helped stop the Confederate assault in front of Little Round Top at Gettysburg, and the regiment would close out its service following the Overland Campaign in June 1864. The "Bucktails" were arguably one of the most famous of the Pennsylvania regiments, and they wrote their legacy on the front lines of the war in the east and on the honor role of history.

Greg Mertz retired as supervisory historian at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park in 2021, after a nearly 40-year career in the National Park Service. A frequent contributor to many history publications, he is the founding president of the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, former vice president of the Brandy Station Foundation and an active and in-demand tour guide.



Clark announced that he has scheduled a dynamic lineup of speakers for the 30th Campaign, which will highlight the 250th Anniversary of the Constitution.

30 th Campaign Programs		
Date	Speaker	Program
May 12, 2026	Larry Alexander	<i>Shadows in the Jungle: The Alamo Scouts behind the Japanese Lines in WW2</i>
June 9, 2026	Brad Gottfried	<i>The Meade and Grant Relationship</i>
July 14, 2026	Tom McMillan	<i>The Year that Made America: From Rebellion to Independence 1775-1776</i>
August 11, 2026	Mike Rupert	TBA
September 8, 2026	Michelle Krowl	<i>Lincoln Treasures at the Library of Congress</i>
October 13, 2026	Michael Jesberger	<i>1913 Gettysburg Reunion</i>
November 10, 2026	Joe Schaeffer	TBA
December 8, 2026	Michael Harris	<i>Battle of Paoli</i>

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

Dinner Reservations for our First Meeting of the 30th Campaign

Next Meeting & Program (4/14/2026: Deadline to order is Friday, April 10th, NOON.

31 people attended the December meeting.

Our meal choices for April with a salad are:

Broiled Haddock
Chopped Sirloin
Manicotti

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, April 10th 2026, 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 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.

National Museum of Civil War Medicine

Hooves, Paws, and Claws for the Cause: Animals in the U.S. Civil War

March 28 @ 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm EDT

Join us for a special Saturday Speaker Event with NMCWM author and volunteer Brad Stone who will be discussing his new book *Hooves, Paws, and Claws for the Cause: Animals in the U.S. Civil War*.

Dogs, cats, horses, pigs, camels, bears, badgers, bald eagles, silk worms, and many other creatures played important roles during the American Civil War. *Hooves, Paws, and Claws for the Cause: Animals in the U.S. Civil War* tells the stories of these remarkable animals and the many ways they helped the soldiers and sailors they served with during the war. Stone will share some of his favorite stories from the book. A book signing will follow.

<https://www.civilwarmed.org/event/hooves-paws-and-claws-for-the-cause-animals-in-the-u-s-civil-war/>

Emerging Civil War Symposium

August 7-9 2026

Stevenson's Ridge

**** There will be a Free Pre-Conference on Friday August 7th hosted by the Civil War Roundtable Congress!**

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/



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>

**** streaming will be available for this event****

Gettysburg National Military Park Museum – Spring Muster

**Gettysburg National Military Park
Museum & Visitor Center**

Friday & Saturday, April 17 & 18, 2026

Join us for our annual Spring Muster! Friday evening kicks things off with registration in the main lobby at the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum & Visitor from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m., followed by a presentation titled *Lincoln at the Sanitary Fairs: The Addresses after Gettysburg* with Codie Eash, Director of Education and Interpretation at the Seminary Ridge Museum & Education Center.

On Saturday, eight different programs will be offered. Attendees will choose one program for the morning session from 8:30 – 11:30 a.m., and one for the afternoon session from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. Lunch will be included at the Museum & Visitor Center from 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

[Friends of Gettysburg](#) members receive a special member rate.

Gettysburg Lincoln Railroad Station

Gettysburg Lincoln Railroad Station™

35 Carlisle Street

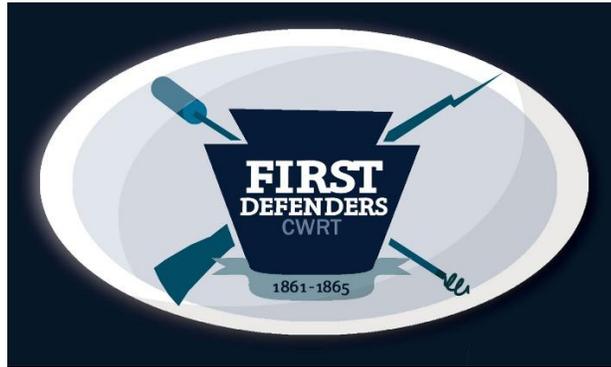
May 1 - Labor Day

Thursday - Monday

10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Free and open to the public

More than a train station, this historic site witnessed President Lincoln's arrival, wartime recovery, generations of travelers and memorable stories.



**FIRST DEFENDERS CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE of Berks County
MEMBERSHIP FORM**

April - December 2026

Our 30th Campaign!

(Please Print Clearly)

Name: _____

Address _____

City: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

The Annual Membership Fee is _____ \$ 35.00

Additional Contribution _____ \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Date Due May 12, 2026

Please make the check payable to The First Defenders CWRT and mail it with the completed membership form to:

**Chuck Bezler
116 Spring Crest Blvd.
Sinking Spring, PA. 19608**

You may pay the membership fee in person at the April 14th meeting.

(Additional contributions are now deductible for Federal Income Tax purposes and provide additional revenue to support First Defenders Civil War Roundtable Programming)