

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

February 2021



www.firstdefenderscwrt.us

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Insurrection. Sedition. Treason. Disconcerting words. Frightening words. Serious words. Like "faith," "hope" and "love," words that should not be bandied about carelessly, without due consideration of how they are to be construed or in ignorance of knowing that words do matter.

Was Jefferson Davis guilty of insurrection? Did Robert Barnwell Rhett promotion sedition in the pages of the *Charleston Mercury*? When Robert E. Lee resigned his army commission to go "home" to Virginia, did he commit treason? The simple answer to all three questions is "no" since none of these men were even so much as charged with a crime let alone found guilty of one.

We know from our study of history that 2021 was not the first time in our nation's history that enflamed passions have resulted in disconcerting, frightening and serious words, and we know those raw emotions 150 years ago would lead to the death of more than three-quarters of a million people and property damages untold.

For all of our political posturing, the United States has a remarkable forbearance when it comes to treason. Of the thirty individuals who have been charged with that crime since the nation's founding, only one-third ever saw the inside of a cell. Just four were executed (all during the Civil War era), and two of them met their fates for treason *against a state!* (By contrast, the British are not nearly so squeamish as the Empire has routinely executed traitors, suggesting Benjamin Franklin may not have been far off the mark in July 1776 when he opined, "We must all hang together, Mr. Hancock, or we most assuredly will all hang separately.")

Davis, Rhett and Lee all believed in and defended their actions. While there remains a spirited debate over the propriety of their acts, they, along with many others, have passed into history without conviction and remain admired (and despised) fifteen decades later for having taken a stand on what they believed was right and how they viewed their duty. It remains for the historian to debate the past when everyone else has moved on. As it was then, so it shall be today.

Craig

Round Table Business

The First Defenders CWRT met on January 12, 2021, at Giannotti's Country Manor. Twenty members were present with nine other members and one guest joining the meeting virtually when past president Joe Schaeffer began his program entitled "Help Yourself and God Will Help You"—the Birth, Life & Death of the C.S.S. Alabama.

The meeting was begun at 6:28 p.m. with a prayer, originally prayed by a Confederate soldier during the war, offered by Ev Binns followed by President Craig Breneiser leading the Pledge of Allegiance. Dinner was then served.

The business portion of the meeting began at 7:30 p.m. Craig announced that Don Stripling has given up his role in the Adopt-A-Position initiative at Gettysburg National Military Park. Barbara Shafer, who has been instrumental in the program, will now be solely responsible for AAP. (See additional information following below.)

President Breneiser advised all in attendance to be prepared for the possibility of another restaurant shutdown for our February meeting. Nothing official is known at this point, but we are all aware of the tenuous nature of the Covid world that we are living in.

Membership

If you have not renewed your membership for the 2020-2021 campaign, please fill out the membership form found on the website, and return it with your check as soon as possible. The deadline for payment has passed, but all who have not renewed membership are encouraged to rejoin with no penalty. Funding programs is not possible without membership dues. If you plan to pay your dues in person at the February meeting, please be sure to fill out **the renewal form** and **bring it along** with your payment. There are currently 55 paid members reported by Lori Border, membership chair.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Tim Antosy presented his report for the December 2020 meeting. Our balance as of January 12, 2021, stood at \$3874.83 with \$238.00 ear-marked for preservation. The unencumbered balance as of January 12, 2021, is \$3536.83. There is a total of 55 paid members.

Preservation

While Vice President Mark Quattrock does not have a formal preservation report for this newsletter, he did explain to us that The Spangler Fam and the Gettysburg Foundation will be working together from now on. Both organizations are formalizing an agreement.

Book Raffle News

Eight books were raffled off at the January meeting to the delight of the ticket purchasers. Plans are still being worked on for an efficient way to enable those attending meetings virtually to participate. Our round table has always been proud of the generous donations to battlefield preservation. Thank you to everybody for continuing to support the book raffle and our preservation efforts.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 situation, I will absent myself for a few meetings until the number of cases return to a lower level. Hopefully, this will be for a short duration. Mark Quattrock will run the raffle until I return. Thank you, Mark! I will be attending the meetings by our virtual presentation. Once again, THANK YOU for your support. Gary

Website

Webmaster Lisa Breneiser explained directions for logging in to the “Members Only” section of our website, firstdefenderscwrt.us. Lisa is in the process of uploading presentations from the current campaign. Members will be able to access these to view at leisure, but that access will require the use of a password.

AAP Update

Barbara Shafer received the following information from Gettysburg National Military Park regarding Adopt-A-Position:

Due to the continuing COVID restrictions and cautions, the 2021 Adopt-A-Position (AAP) has been cancelled. The park had to make a decision on the year as a whole because there are staff brought in specifically to handle this program, which without this program would not otherwise be needed. Thank you for your continued interest and dedication to the AAP program, we will communicate any additional updates or volunteering opportunities as they arise.

Those of us who have participated in the initiative hope that next year will bring a return of the program. It is a worthy “job” to look after several monuments twice a year. It was always a time of fellowship spending the day together in Gettysburg.

Website Post of Interest

If you haven't spent time recently on our website, take a minute and check out the recent post of January 14, 2021. Our president, Craig Breneiser, was interviewed by WFMZ Channel 69 during which he explained the “First Defenders” called to Washington many years before the National Guard of today was called to safeguard the recent inauguration. It is a great newsclip. Well done President B.!

February Program:

Doctor Mary Edwards Walker- featuring Hallie Vaughan

Mary Edwards Walker stands out as one of the more interesting and unusual personalities of the Civil War era. Born in 1832, she would earn a medical degree from Syracuse Medical College in 1855 and pursue a profession that was virtually unheard for a “proper” Victorian Era lady. Throughout her 87 years, she would be an abolitionist, prohibitionist, a prisoner of war and a Civil War surgeon. Along the way, she would become the only woman to ever receive the Medal of Honor.



Doctor Walker would volunteer her services to the Union Army at the outbreak of the War, breaking what today we would call a “glass ceiling.” She was captured by the Confederates when she crossed enemy lines to treat wounded civilians, and was arrested as a spy. Doctor Walker would remain a “guest” of the Richmond government until finally being exchanged. After Appomattox, she would receive the Medal of Honor, but would spend much of her life fighting to keep it.

Hallie Vaughan has been a Berks Countian since age 12. Graduating from Wilson High School, Slippery Rock University and Gratz College, she taught in the Muhlenberg School District for 35 years during which time she developed an interest in women's history. Hallie has continued doing research on the subject, and has lectured at Alvernia University Seniors College while also presenting to a wide assortment of community and school groups as well as “anyone who wants to listen!” A docent at the Berks History Center, Hallie also volunteers at the Berks County Veterans Affairs Office. She is married and has two sons and four grandchildren.



Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, February 9, 2021 Meeting

Please make your meal choices/reservations on the website. Our meal choices for February include: Chicken Piccata; Broiled Crab Cake; or Risotto. Soup, starch, vegetables, dessert, bread, coffee, tea, soda, and water are included. The price is \$27.00 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 5, 2021, 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 TUESDAY 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.**

24th Campaign Upcoming Programs		
Date	Speaker	Program
9 MAR 2021	Phillip Greenwalt	<i>From Kirby's Kingdom: Ramifications from the Trans-Mississippi in 1864</i>
13 APR 2021	Robert Dunkerly	<i>The Confederate Surrender at Greensboro</i>
11 MAY 2021	Tom Huntington	<i>In Search of George Gordon Meade</i>