

# The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

February 2022



[www.firstdefenderscwrts.us](http://www.firstdefenderscwrts.us)

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"History is about who tells it." So says actor, rapper, singer, songwriter and film producer Daveed Diggs. Not exactly a household name, Diggs is both a Tony and a Grammy award winner having gained fame in the roles of the Marquis de Lafayette and Thomas Jefferson in the acclaimed musical *Hamilton*. (And therein he illustrates his point as a black man portraying Revolutionary War era white men!)

What Mr. Diggs should have said, though, was "*Historiography* is about who tells it." While "history" is a factual event generally not open to discussion, "historiography" is how one studies and (tries to) make sense of it. That a Civil War battle occurred in Adams County on the first three days of July 1863 is, indeed, a fact of history. Whether it was a turning point in the War, Robert E. Lee's worst-fought battle or when James Longstreet personally doomed the Southern cause depends, as Diggs says, on "who tells it."

In the modern era, there are many who suggest we are losing our history to "woke" revisionists who, as the theory goes, never read or studied history in the first place. Time was the "War for Northern Aggression" was all about state's rights; now the conflict is viewed in the more social vein as cleansing the nation from the sin of slavery (an effort that, according to some, is yet to be fully accomplished).

There have been three distinct phases of Civil War literature. The "contemporary" phase was written by those who were there, and they told the story as they saw it (or wanted to see it if you have ever read John Brown Gordon's *Reminiscences of the Civil War* or pretty much anything from Jubal Early). The "post-contemporary" phase through the first half of the 20th Century relied heavily on published and unpublished contemporary sources (which is why both Douglas Southall Freeman and Shelby Foote support Lee's "sunrise attack order" on the second of July as evidence of Longstreet's apostasy). The last phase is best described as the "objective" phase, as authors came to rely less on anecdotes and memories and more solid research to prove or disprove what was thought to be "history."

The social revolution of the last decade suggests a new literary period may now be upon us, one in which the historiography approaches the facts of history from a different perspective. Uncomfortable to some, perhaps shocking to others, it may shine a new, intriguing light on the most significant event of our national story. In our quest to understand, we should welcome the chance to learn more. While historiography may change now and again, the history behind it never will.

*Craig*

## **Round Table Business**

The January meeting of the First Defenders Civil War Round Table met virtually only on January 11, 2022, beginning at 7:58 p.m. Between illness of members and the uptick in Covid cases, President Breneiser thought it wise to forego the in-person gathering for dinner. Our speaker Richard Shaus had already been scheduled for an online presentation. A total of 15 attended virtually to hear “Lee is Trapped, and Must be Taken - Eleven Fateful Days after Gettysburg July 4-14, 1863.”

Craig announced that the February meeting is to be determined as of this writing. Member Dave Fox is scheduled to be our presenter. Craig also had the sad news that Charlie Fennell will not be giving our March program nor will he be able to lead our Culps’ Hill field trip in April. He is facing some serious medical issues and will be having surgery. We send our best wishes and prayers to Charlie as he faces these challenges. Joe Schaeffer will keep us informed as to his health and regarding the spring “jaunt”.

## **Treasurer’s Report**

Treasurer Tim Antosy presented his report for the January meeting. Our balance as of January 11, 2022, stood at \$3504.31 with \$230.00 ear-marked for preservation plus \$150.00 for a special project. The unencumbered balance as of January 11, 2022, is \$3124.31. There is a total of 53 paid members.

## **Book Raffle**

**Our book selections for February 2022 are as follows:**

1. The Seven Days (The Emergence of Lee) by Clifford Dowdey
2. Soldiers Blue & Gray by James I. Robertson, Jr.
3. Gettysburg’s Bloody Wheatfield by Jay Jorgensen
4. Stars in their Courses (The Gettysburg Campaign) by Shelby Foote
5. Voices from the Civil War by Milton Meltzer
6. This was Andersonville by John McElroy
7. From Fields of Glory (Letters of the Civil War) by Rod Gragg
8. The Civil War in Depth, Vols I & II (History in 3-D) by Bob Zeller

We will also be starting a new special raffle so look for details of this endeavor.  
Gary Hertzog

## Website

Lisa Breneiser reported the website has been updated with the new preservation totals through the 24<sup>th</sup> Campaign and the Booklist has been updated.

The member area includes the links to our previous presenters and their presentations. Our website address is: <http://firstdefenderscwr.us> Please reach out to Lisa at [Lisa.breneiser@gmail.com](mailto:Lisa.breneiser@gmail.com) if you need access to the member area.

Please verify that First Defenders is a trusted email address, in your address book. There have been reports of members not receiving their meal confirmations. Gmail, especially has been cracking down on email blasts. Please check your spam folder for our emails.

## Newsletter

Please keep in mind that items to be included in the newsletter are due one week from the meeting date. All items of interest and information are welcomed. Send your articles to Linda Zeiber, [zeibers@comcast.net](mailto:zeibers@comcast.net) or call 610-678-1168 for further information.

---

## February Program

### Henry Washington Sawyer- Cape May's Civil War Hero

*featuring Dave Fox*

Henry Washington Saeger entered the world in 1830 near Allentown, but would venture off to find his own way as a carpenter 18 years later. Relocating to Cape May, New Jersey, he would shed his German heritage by changing his surname to "Sawyer."

When the Civil War broke out, Henry would reach out to Governor Charles Olden even before efforts began to organize volunteers in response to Abraham Lincoln's call on April 15th. The Governor would dispatch Sawyer to Washington with messages for Secretary of War Simon Cameron, and would subsequently be attached to the First Defenders when they arrived.



Following three-months service, Sawyer would return to New Jersey and again tender his services to Governor Olden. Commissioned a second lieutenant in the 1st New Jersey Cavalry, Sawyer would be promoted twice before being wounded and captured at the Battle of Brandy Station in June 1863. During his imprisonment, he would be placed under a death sentence in retribution for the execution of Confederate officers in Kentucky; only the Lincoln government's threat to execute W.H.F.

"Rooney" Lee, son of General Robert E. Lee, as further retaliation brought a stay for Sawyer. He would be exchanged in March 1864, eventually return to his regiment, and be mustered out of service as a brevet lieutenant colonel in the summer of 1865.

Sawyer would return to his adopted home town where he served in both public and business capacities before dying in 1893.



*Dave Fox is a charter member of the First Defenders, and has presented to the group on three previous occasions. A graduate of Reading High School and Albright College, Dave is a U.S. Army veteran of the Vietnam Conflict and a recipient of a Bronze Star. Now retired, Dave spends much of his time immersed in history with a focus on Union cavalry in Virginia (and apparently bores his devoted wife, Susan, with constant references to Civil War history!).*



Coming Silver Anniversary Campaign Programs		
Date	Speaker	Program
8 MAR 2022	Dwight Hughes	<i>Unlike Anything That Ever Floated: the USS Monitor</i>
12 APR 2022	John Schildt	<i>The Hospitals of Antietam</i>
10 MAY 2022	**To Be Announced**	

**Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, Feb. 8, 2022 Meeting & Program:**

If possible, please make your meal choices/reservations on the website. Our meal choices for February are:

- Broiled Orange Roughy
- Chopped Sirloin
- Linguine with Mushroom Sauce

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, Feb. 4, 2022, which is also the deadline for online reservations. The price is \$30.00 inclusive for meals.

**\*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 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.**

Our 25<sup>th</sup> Campaign Anniversary celebration will be held at our April 12, 2022 meeting. We hope to see you there!