

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

January 2021



www.firstdefenderscwrt.us

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is a strange, politically-charged time when the veracity of a presidential election is seriously questioned. Four states seem to have uncertain vote tallies, and both Democrats and Republicans are claiming victory and shrilly maligning each other. Some ballots appear to be of dubious validity, and there are innumerable reports of voter intimidation and irregularities. Party surrogates are pursuing legal actions to enforce "the will of the people," and it seems the case will yet wind up in the Supreme Court. The turmoil leads to the inevitable question: who will be inaugurated as the next President of the United States?

The answer is "Rutherford B. Hayes," and he will become the 19th president on March 4th 1877. While undeniably losing the popular vote by three-percent, Hayes would win the Electoral College by a single vote. Outraged losing Democrats would label him "His Fraudulence" or "RutherFRAUD B. Hayes." Even during the Gilded Age, politics were hardly civil.

Republicans would claim a fair 1876 canvass would have clearly given Hayes the presidency. But, determined, violent efforts by un-reconstructed Southerners suppressed Black votes, and South Carolina would even claim that all 101% of its eligible voters had cast ballots! Democrat Samuel J. Tilden undeniably captured 184 Electoral College votes to only 165 for Hayes; however, the fate of the remaining 20 in four states would hang in the balance for nearly three months after Election Day.

A 15-man Electoral Commission is appointed to adjudicate the dispute. Five congressmen from the Democratic House and five senators from the Republican-controlled upper chamber would join with five Supreme Court justices to review the disparate claims from each state. Ultimately voting along party lines, they would award the Electoral College delegates of Florida, Louisiana, South Carolina and Oregon (!) to Hayes. (At the same time, informal closed-door meetings resulted in grudging Democratic concurrence to accept Hayes in return for Republican agreement to remove the remaining federal troops from southern states to effectively end Reconstruction. Other political promises were included in the deal, but many would never materialize.)

Notwithstanding those in our own times, the Election of 1876 still ranks as the closest and most Constitutionally-challenging presidential contest in United States history. Yet somehow, the ship-of-state continues to float even when sailing turbulent seas. Even the obviously dejected and disappointed Samuel Tilden could find some serenity in his loss when he commented, "I can retire from public life with the consciousness that I shall receive from posterity the credit of having been elected to the highest position in the gift of the people without any of the cares and responsibilities of the office." Sadly though, much of a history-starved posterity has never heard of Samuel Tilden or has any notion of the starring role he played in the contentious Election of 1876.

Craig

Round Table Business

The First Defenders CWRT met on December 8, 2020, at Giannotti's. Twenty-four members were present with ten others joining the meeting virtually when speaker Denton Schucker began his program discussing "The Army of the Potomac, Chapter 1."

The meeting was begun at 6:35 p.m. with a prayer, originally prayed by a Union soldier during the war, offered by Ev Binns followed by President Craig Breneiser leading the Pledge of Allegiance.

The business portion of the meeting began at 7:30 p.m. by welcoming former member Mike Straus as a guest. A brief report was given concerning the health of member Roger Cotterill who has experienced complications following implantation of a pacemaker and is currently seeking an in-house physical therapy facility. We all look forward to his speedy recovery and return to the Round Table.

President Breneiser opened up a discussion about the future of meetings considering the uptick in COVID-19 infections in our area. It was suggested that the dining room tables at Giannotti's need to be opened up further for safer social distancing. Several members also spoke out in favor of meeting in person as long as Giannotti's is open for business.

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 January meeting, please be sure to fill out **the renewal form** and **bring it along** with your payment. There are currently 55 paid members.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Tim Antosy reported as of December 8, 2020, the balance in the treasury stood at \$3,763.35 with \$137.00 ear-marked for preservation. The unencumbered balance as of December 8, 2020, is \$3626.35.

Preservation

The December meeting has come and gone and we are continuing to raise money for Preservation. At the meeting we were able to raise \$101 from our book raffle and from those who made donations. Thanks again to all of you who bought tickets and contributed. The \$101 is in addition to the \$113 we raised in October and \$100 that we were able to raise in November.

As of now we have made two donations to the American Battlefield Trust for Preservation. The first one is a \$300 donation made in the name of Ed Bearss towards a \$2.70 Matching Grant for Shiloh, TN, Raymond, MS, and Vicksburg, MS. Our total contribution for this donation was \$810. The second donation we made was in the amount of \$200 to go towards a \$53-\$1 Matching Grant for Lookout Mountain at the Chattanooga Battlefield and Franklin, TN. The total contribution for this donation is \$10,600.

In Season 24 we have now raised to date \$504. We have donated, not including matching grants, a total of \$500; and our total contribution with matching grants is \$11,410. This puts the total amount we donated for all of our seasons to present at \$35,697 and our total contribution with matching grant for all of our Seasons at \$421,503.

You can see the money we are raising is making a difference not just in the amount of our total contributions but for the number of battlefields that we are helping to preserve. Your continued support is greatly appreciated!!

Happy Holidays everyone! Stay safe and well!!

Mark

Book Raffle News

Happy New Year everyone!!!

Thank you to everybody for continuing to support the book raffle and our preservation efforts. In December, we took in \$101 for battlefield preservation. We do make a difference. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 situation, I will absent myself for a few meetings until the number of cases returns 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, www.firstdefenderscwrt.us. Lisa is in the process completing work on this section and 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.

January Program:

"Help Yourself and God Will Help You"- the Birth, Life & Death of the C.S.S. Alabama presented by Joe Schaeffer

"Help Yourself and God Will Help You" was stamped in French in bronze letters on the ship's wheel of the Confederate raider, CSS Alabama. Most of us know the basic story of this infamous vessel. Joe will explore some of the intrigue and characters involved in the birth of the ship, its campaign of destruction, and the ultimate duel-to-the-death with the USS Kearsarge. Stay tuned to learn of the lives of the main characters after the war and an interesting connection to another famous American.



Joe Schaeffer grew up in Douglassville. Graduating from Daniel Boone High School, received a degree in Secondary Education, Social Studies, in 1975 from Bloomsburg University. Joe has worked his entire adult life in the Land Title industry, eventually owning and managing Heartland Settlement Company from 1996 until 2015. Since then he has partially retired, but still works as a consultant in the industry. History, especially American history, is never far from his mind. Joe is a charter member and former president of the First Defenders, and is making his fourth presentation.

IMPORTANT PROGRAM NOTE!

As the newsletter has been prepared, Pennsylvania COVID restrictions for restaurants are scheduled to expire on January 4th, 2021. Giannotti's plans to re-open at that time, and is prepared for our January program (meal and reservation information is included in this newsletter). In the event state regulations change and we cannot meet as usual, Joe Schaeffer's presentation will be re-scheduled. There will, however, be a virtual program on Fort Jefferson presented by Round Table President Craig Breneiser.

24th Campaign Upcoming Programs		
Date	Speaker	Program
9 FEB 2021	Hallie Vaughn	<i>Dr. Mary Edwards Walker - A Living History Portrayal</i>
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>

Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, January 12, 2021 Meeting

Please make your meal choices/reservations on the website.

Our meal choices for January include: Veal Marsala; Breaded Fantail Shrimp; or Pasta with Grilled Vegetables. 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 January 8, 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 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.**