

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

July 2026, the 30th Campaign



www.firstdefenderscwrt.us

President's Message

AMERICA 250 the SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL

Well fellow members, America will reach the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, Lord willing and the river don't rise. We are indeed fortunate to have Tom McMillan joining us on July 14 to deliver a talk on his recent book, *The Year that Made America: From Rebellion to Independence 1775-1776*. I have seen or heard two interviews where he discussed the book, and I expect everyone will discover, as he will tell you he found out, just how little we know of the work of those who created the Declaration. I wish to not steal his thunder and instead give you some portions of speeches or proclamations given by presidents on the 50th, 100th, 150th and 200th anniversaries of the Fourth of July.

John Quincy Adams, serving as President in 1826 appears not to have given a speech of note on July 4. Most celebrations were local in nature. History reports, as you know, both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams died on July 4, 1826. John Quincy in his 2nd Annual Address to Congress lamented, "the hand that penned the ever-memorable Declaration and the voice that sustained it in debate were by one summons—called before the Judge of All to account for their deeds upon the earth. They departed cheered by the benedictions of their country, to whom they left the inheritance of their fame and the memory of their bright example."

The Centennial in 1876 was celebrated with an Exposition in Philadelphia. President Grant issued a Proclamation on June 26, 1876 calling on Americans to "mark its recurrence by some public religious and devout Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the blessings which have been bestowed upon us—and humbly to invoke a continuance of His favor and His protection."

Calvin Coolidge, the only President to be born on the Fourth of July, delivered a speech on the 150th anniversary from the steps of Independence Hall to an enthusiastic throng. It is available to read and worth the ten minutes required. Following are two of his expressions: "There is something beyond the establishment of a new nation, great as that event would be, in the Declaration of Independence which has ever since caused it to be regarded as one of the great charters that not only was to liberate America but was everywhere to ennoble humanity."

Another from President Coolidge: "A spring will cease to flow if its source be dried up; a tree will wither if its roots be destroyed. —If there is any one thing among us that is established beyond question, it is self-government, the right of the people to rule. It was to establish a free government, which must not be permitted to degenerate into unrestrained authority of a mere majority or the unbridled weight of a mere influential few."

We arrive on July 4, 1976 to find President Gerald Ford on a month-long whirlwind tour of historic sites, accompanied by, among others, Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip. From a televised speech in Valley Forge, President Ford credited the Declaration of Independence and Constitution as "the two great documents that continue to supply the moral and intellectual power for the American adventure in self-government. Liberty is a living flame to be fed, not dead ashes to be revered."

GOD BLESS AMERICA!

Joe

Round Table Business

President Joe Schaeffer called the June meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. at Giannotti's, with 33 attending, including the speaker and his lovely wife. Linda Zeiber offered a prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Joe noted that in the fall, new roadwork projects will start on Route 12. This will include a roundabout and 2 traffic lights to be installed. The estimated time to complete the projects is 6 years. Gianotti's has shared their concerns as to how it may impact their business.

Guests: Ben Petersheim

New Members: None

Treasurers Report

The General fund has a balance of \$ 5337.22. Because we are now a 501c3, our total balance includes an anonymous donation of \$ 2,000.00. Preservation has a balance of \$ 143.00.

Membership

Bill Burns reported that there are currently 39 paid members.

Preservation and Book Raffle

At the June meeting, a motion was made by Wally Heimbach and 2nd by Rodney LaPearl, with all in favor to donate \$100 to the American Battlefield Trust for their "Help Save Historic Land at Antietam & Gettysburg" campaign. The campaign targets 2 acres at Antietam, where on September 17, 1862, surging Union troops, having crossed Burnside Bridge, were halted by the timely arrival of A.P. Hill's Division.

The Gettysburg tract (1 acre) is located along the historic Baltimore Pike near Culp's Hill, where on July 3, 1863, Union troops crossed to meet advancing Confederate soldiers. After this acquisition, there are only a few parcels of land that are unprotected along the Baltimore Pike. There is a \$3.95 to \$1 matching grant to reach the goal of \$349,938.

Wally Heimbach suggested that the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation has several preservation campaigns for saving Civil War battlefields. We will be checking out their website for info on their campaigns for possible donations to that organization.

The ABT has a preservation opportunity “Help Save 140 Acres at Stone’s River & Fort Heiman”. There are two tracts at the Stone’s River BF that are to be preserved. The largest is 122 acres & the smallest is 16 acres. The larger tract is ground from which Bragg’s Confederates launched an assault against Union forces, which eventually halted the Confederate advance. This land is not connected to the National Park. The smaller tract is connected to the park.

The Fort Heiman tract is located along the Kentucky side of the Tennessee River. The fort is an earthwork built by the CSA to help protect Fort Henry on the Tennessee side of the river. It is 1.5 acres. The Trust seeks to raise \$377,205 of the \$21million price tag for all 3 tracts. There is a \$57 to \$1 matching grant.

Our June book raffle brought in \$115. In addition, the Book Bonanza brought in \$67 for a total of \$182 added to our preservation fund. After our June donation to the ABT, our July balance for Preservation is \$225.

30TH Campaign	Total for all Seasons
Total amount raised-\$ 334	
Total amount donated-\$ 200	Total amount donated - \$ 40,896
Total contribution with matching grants-\$ 1,395	Total contributed with Matching Grants – \$ 576,947

July Program

The Year That Made America: From Rebellion to Independence 1775-1776

Presented by Tom McMillan

The untold story of how America's declaration of independence hinged on seven critical months in 1776 and the courageous votes that changed the world forever. The precarious path to American independence wound through a series of pivotal dates that history has nearly forgotten. While July



4th claims the glory, the actual vote for independence came on July 2nd—and even that historic moment almost didn't happen. From January's publication of Common Sense to December's darkest hours of the Revolution, it was these seven dramatic months when rebellious colonies transformed into a new nation. The story includes pivotal events of May 15, June 7, and July 2 shaped America's destiny, why Congress's bold January declaration triggered a chain of unstoppable events, the behind-the-scenes feud between Adams and Jefferson on their views of government after independence was won, and how the Declaration's influence extended from Lincoln's Gettysburg Address to modern times. Raw political courage launched a revolution resulting in heated Congressional debates and the dangerous aftermath of declaring independence from Great Britain.

Tom McMillan, a retired sports PR executive and lifelong student of history, has served on the board of trustees of Pittsburgh's Heinz History Center, the board of directors of Friends of Flight 93 National Memorial, the board of directors of the Antietam Institute, and the marketing committee of the Gettysburg Foundation. McMillan has written six books on U.S. history ranging from September 11th to the Battle of Gettysburg to the Star-Spangled Banner. Tom and his wife, Colleen, reside in Pittsburgh and Gettysburg, and also volunteer as ambassadors at Antietam National Battlefield.



Brad Gottfried noted during his presentation of “Grant and Meade: An Uneasy Alliance” that many of Meade’s letters to his wife can be found on Archive.org.

30 th Campaign Programs		
Date	Speaker	Program
August 11, 2026	Mike Rupert	<i>The Big Dogs of Europe Watching Our American Civil War</i>
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	<i>TBA</i>
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 Tuesday, July 14, 2026 Meeting & Program

Meal Captain’s Report for June, 2026: Thirty-Three people attended the meeting, including speakers Brad and Linda Gottfried.

Our meal choices for July are:

Broiled Orange Roughy
Marinated Chicken Breast
Cheese Ravioli

If you make your reservation online and you do not receive a thank you and/or confirmation email, your reservation did not go through, so please try again. If you must call in reservations, please call or text your menu selection to Vicky Heffner at 610.413.5543. Reservations MUST be made no later than noon, July 10, 2026. 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.**

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!

This year’s theme: Partnerships and Rivalries

https://emergingcivilwar.com/ecw_event/2026-symposium/