

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

May 2020



www.firstdefenderscwrts.us

The may 12th round table program has been cancelled!!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Days are filled with uncertainty. A threat previously not experienced faces the nation. Everyone is anxious that something needs to be done, but there is political (and personal!) disagreement on how to best find a way out of the dilemma. A wrong move can have dire consequences for the country, and may cost an untold amount of blood and treasure. Yet despite the consternation, outside the cold winter has yielded its icy grip as nature blossoms with new life and beauty oblivious to the human drama it surrounds.

As April gives way to May, we can rightly ask whether it is 2020 or 1861? Surely we are all living in new and uncertain times with an unseen enemy lurking among us, yet Americans have come this way before. It is a different kind of army marshaled today than it was 159 years ago when Abraham Lincoln stared across the Potomac River at a foe that had the power to dramatically change, and possibly destroy, the United States. Close study reveals that Lincoln focused on the twin goals of putting down the rebellion and restoring the nation, a focus that would remain razor-sharp for the next four years. We also know he suffered conflicting counsel, an unfriendly press and a large number of fellow-citizens who did support his policies or trust him to lead the country. And, we know Lincoln had his own personal doubts, too.

In the end, Lincoln would be able to claim victory. The price would be steep...more than three quarter million men would not be alive to share that victory, and the war would reach out and touch every heart and hearthstone in the nation. Many would carry life-long reminders of the conflict and many more would question whether the end justified the means, a debate that continues today.

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As a nation, we will prevail in our modern struggle just as we did a century-and-a-half ago. There will, of course, be congratulations and recriminations as the dust settles, and there will again be a steep cost in blood and treasure. In our own time, it will be an impossibility to say with certainty whether we travelled the best path to victory (although many will try). However, we must leave it to posterity to (endlessly) debate, and ultimately judge, the question. As it was in 1865, however, the victory today will be that the United States will still be here tomorrow for such questions to be discussed *ad nauseum* by wise people blessed with the benefit of hindsight. But, America will endure as a shining beacon for all while continuing to provide imperfect leadership in an imperfect world.

Craig

Round Table Business

Since the last meeting was held in March, there is no new business to report on. Refer to the April newsletter for various reports from committee heads. The world that we knew has changed. As a result, cancellations due to the Covid-19 pandemic are determining the future of the round table at this time.

With the cancellation of the May program, election of officers for the coming campaign must be postponed (Lincoln could hold a national election during a Civil War, but we are thwarted by a bug!). The officers and Board will continue to serve until we can again meet and reorganize.

We wish for everyone to stay safe and to stay tuned as this crisis continues and the ensuing consequences that it has for our group. Hopefully, we will meet together in September.

Book Raffle News

I am hoping that everyone is remaining healthy and safe as we patiently wait for the pandemic to pass. The Special Raffle of the Keith Rocco print and other prizes will not be concluded until our next campaign. The drawing will be held at our October meeting rather than our initial September meeting. This will allow members the opportunity to purchase tickets two more additional times.

We have also received several more items that we can offer in "Special Raffles". They will be offered in raffles beginning in January 2021. Here's hoping we can get together shortly and back to our fundraising efforts.

Joe's Jaunts

The next "Jaunt" scheduled for Saturday, May 16, 2020, in Gettysburg has been cancelled. We optimistically have hope for a jaunt in the fall. Like everything else at this time, a holding pattern dictates future plans.

Adopt-A-Position

Our spring 2020 date to work on our sites scheduled for Thursday, May 28, has been cancelled due to the virus situation.

GNMP will work with us to reschedule. The AAP coordinator requests that we should have a make-up date in mind. Therefore, let Barbara Shafer know of your availability for one of the following four June dates: Thursday, June 18; Monday, June 20; Thursday, June 25; Monday, June 27. We meet at 8:30 am at Lowe's and carpool to Gettysburg or you can meet us in Gettysburg.

The purpose of the Adopt A Position (AAP) program is for volunteers to provide labor for a selected site(s) at Gettysburg National Military Park that would not be done due to budget and/or staffing. Volunteers provide time and labor for maintenance of the site. The Park provides the tools.

Please contact Barbara Shafer at 484-336-8995 if you are able to volunteer on one of the alternate June dates.

The 24th Campaign (and the Future of the Round Table)

When the Program Committee met back in January, there was hope and enthusiasm for the 24th Campaign. At this writing, nine programs have been confirmed and the calendar is full; however, a microscopic organism threatens both the Campaign and our future.

Already, several members have been heard to express concerns about ever going out in public again, and we are likely looking at a new paradigm for social gatherings in general. In March, the Round Table made a decision to relocate from the Inn at Reading to Giannotti's in Alsace Manor, but the "bug" has precluded the ability to confirm those arrangements since the facility has been closed and cannot be contacted. At the moment, we are a "Round Table without a home."

Over the next few months, there will be additional postings on our website to update everyone on our future. Too, there will be a variety of on-line "virtual" programs that some may find of interest. Many of these are courtesy of the Civil War Round Table Congress which has been actively recruiting presenters to fill in the voids many are experiencing. Check the site (at least) weekly for new content.

Please begin to consider whether you will be comfortable "re-enlisting" in the fall. What was once, perhaps, an academic question now takes on new meaning as we ALL face an indiscriminate and unseen enemy that has already struck down many. Face masks, gloves, hand sanitizer and disinfectants have become a norm that almost none of us would have foreseen when we last met less than two months ago. Our world has changed, and we can only hope our Round Table can weather the storm.

At the May program ending our annual campaigns, it has been tradition to tell everyone to "stay safe and healthy, and we'll see everyone in September." This year, these words take on a new meaning. Please do all you can to keep you and yours out of harm's way; we hope we can all be together again on September 8th!