

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

May 2024



www.firstdefenderscwrts.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It was several years ago that Lisa and I were invited to the Robert E. Lee Civil War Round Table where I was to give a lecture. Located in central New Jersey, it took about an hour to get within 10 miles of the venue and another hour to cover the final distance (Jersey traffic!!). We enjoyed our time there as we were among a likable group of interested and dedicated fellow travelers on the Civil War trail.

Now word has come informing us the Robert E. Lee CWRT is no more. This once vibrant organization, complete with its own extensive library, has been forced to strike its tent after 33 years, another victim of the modern generation's history malaise.

As I prepare to step down as president of the First Defenders, I look to our future with some trepidation. We have experienced a significant decline in membership over the past ten years as long-time friends have left for other pursuits or have gone on to commune with true Civil War veterans in eternal paradise. Yet we have also been blessed to welcome new members and make new friends, and continue to generate interest and good attendances with wonderful, interesting presentations on the Civil War period.

The fate of the Robert E. Lee CWRT could be ours as well. But, more hopefully, it could be an alarm bell in the night summoning us to do more and work harder to ensure Civil War history...indeed ALL American history... is remembered and studied critically. Our past is also our future, and we must continue to come together to ensure it is not forgotten.

It has been my privilege and honor to serve as your president for the past decade. Lisa and I look forward to the continued health and vitality of the First Defenders, its members and our friends for many years to come as we transition into new roles while others step forward to continue our traditions. Although it may be lacking in a Civil War relationship, I bid you farewell as president with a word first learned from, and often used by, my best friend: Namaste!

Craig

Round Table Business

Vice President Joe Schaeffer officiated the April meeting of the First Defenders CWRT beginning at 6:30 p.m. on April 9, 2024, at Gianotti's after President Craig Breneiser explained that the evening's guest speaker would not be attending because of a sudden illness. Craig volunteered himself for the program and, therefore, did not conduct the business meeting.

Forty-five members including two guests attended. Ev Binns offered a moving and heartfelt prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice President/Programs

VP Joe Schaeffer reported an updated schedule of programs for the next campaign. As has been tradition, Chris Mackowski will be speaking at our September meeting. Joe reported that Brad Gottfried, who had been scheduled for the April program, would be re-scheduled for next campaign. That leaves only one program opening for the next campaign. The next 'Joe's Jaunt' is scheduled for May 18, 2024, in Gettysburg. Look for details later in the newsletter.

Treasurer

Treasurer Lori Border reported that the treasury has \$1414.76 as of the end of March 2024. Currently, there is \$578.00 set aside for battlefield preservation.

Website

Webmaster Lisa Breneiser reported a problem with the website that is being worked on and should be resolved prior to ordering meals for the May meeting. The manager of the site was on vacation at the time so it was not possible to order meals using our site for the April meeting. Kathy Little was able to circumvent the issue by using the phone. Sometimes one just needs old technology!

Membership

Ev Binns reported that we currently have 53 members of the round table. A sustainability conference is being held. The purpose is to learn techniques to increase and sustain round table memberships. Craig Breneiser has information regarding this important initiative for those interested in attending.

May Book Raffle News

It doesn't seem possible, but our 27th Campaign is coming to a close with our May meeting. At our May meeting we will conclude our Special Raffle for this campaign by drawing tickets for Gettysburg Cyclorama memorabilia, a Gettysburg map, a patriotic pen & key chain set, & a 1st edition 3 vol. set of *R.E.Lee* by Douglas S. Freeman. Good Luck to everyone.

We will also have the final monthly book raffle for this campaign. It can't be said enough: "Thank you to everyone who buys tickets, donates books, or gives donations." Our work supports the preservation of our history. We took in \$150.00 in our May raffle. An excellent effort! To everyone---enjoy your summer & hope to see everyone in September.

Meal Captain

Kathy Little announced reservation deadlines for the May 14, 2024, meeting. All reservations must be received by May 10, 2024, at noon. If you have any issues, please call Kathy. Her number and further details are found in the reservation portion of the newsletter.

Preservation

Mark Quattroch informed the membership about a matching grant through the American Battlefield Trust with a leverage of \$50:\$1. Mark suggested a gift of \$400 in order to take advantage of this generous leverage. The membership approved the motion unanimously.

Newsletter

With the May election approaching quickly, I would like to let the membership know that I will be stepping down as Secretary/Newsletter at the end of this season. I have worked in this capacity for 17 years since 2007, and I want to lay down the responsibility. If anyone has an interest in taking over this job, please make it known to me or Craig. I want to thank those of you for acknowledging and thanking me for my contribution to our organization.

Linda

Joe's Jaunts

Joe Schaeffer has given details for the next "Jaunt". On Saturday morning, May 18, 2024, we will have a guided walk of sites in Gettysburg Borough. Bradley Gottfried will be our guide. The group will meet at 9:00 a.m. in Gettysburg. Contact Joe Schaeffer if you plan to attend.

The tour will be approximately 2 hours, and the cost will be \$15.00 per person. Since the walk is in town, no mud and/or rocky trails are expected.

Joe will offer, as usual, plans for those who wish to have lunch together by arranging a location. He thinks that we might make more of a day out of it by having a walk after lunch guided by one of our own.

May Program

Fire on the Mountains: The Battles of South Mountain and Harpers Ferry, September 12-15, 1862

featuring Kevin Pawlak

In mid-September 1862, Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia undertook a bold advance north of the Potomac River into Maryland. Their invasion would come to a premature end on September 17th along the Antietam Creek outside of Sharpsburg; however, three days earlier a bloody prelude took place along South Mountain. At Harpers Ferry, Crampton's Gap, Turner's Gap and Fox's Gap artillery and musketry fire and the smoke they created engulfed the landscape on nearly a fifteen-mile front. Lee fought for time to reunite his badly fragmented army while George McClellan and the Army of the Potomac fought to drive the enemy from Maryland and relieve Harpers Ferry. The Battle of South Mountain actually constituted four separate actions that literally and figuratively resulted in "fire on the mountains."



Kevin Pawlak is a historic site manager for Prince William County's Office of Historic Preservation and a Certified Battlefield Guide at Antietam National Battlefield. He previously worked as a Park Ranger at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Kevin is the author of seven books about the American Civil War, including To Hazard All: A Guide to the Maryland Campaign, 1862, part of the Emerging Civil War Series and Such a Clash of Arms: The Maryland Campaign of September 1862. This will be Kevin's third presentation to the First Defenders.

28th Campaign Reorganization

The May meeting and program brings to an end our successful 27th Campaign (marred, unfortunately, by two weather-related cancellations.) September, though, is a mere four months away, and that means our 28th Campaign is on the horizon!

May also means it is time to elect our leadership for the coming campaign. Both President Breneiser and Secretary Zeiber are stepping away from their positions after long service. These offices, along with those of Vice President and Treasurer, will be up for election by the membership. Any member is eligible to serve in any office: the only qualification is a desire to advance the Round Table mission to educate. This is your opportunity to make a difference!

**Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, May 14, 2024,
Meeting & Program:**

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

**Salad
Broiled Crab Imperial
Lasagna
Cheese Tortellini**

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, May 10, 2024, which is also the deadline for online reservations. The price is \$31.00 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.**