

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

November 2025, the 29th Campaign



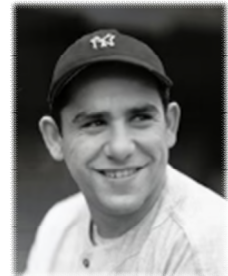
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President's Message

CHANGES

“Oh, the more it changes, the more it stays the same.” So sings Al Stewart on the song, *Nostradamus*, from his 1973 album entitled *Past, Present and Future*. I have always been a fan of Stewart's work because he writes history into his poetry. Stewart in this song and others portrays history not as a series of disconnected fits and starts, but as a continuous stream of evolution and revolution. Everything changes and yet somehow feels the same. Mark Twain famously noted that history does not repeat itself, but it rhymes.

We in this Roundtable cannot physically return to walk in the freezing rain beside Washington's soldiers as they march to Trenton or stand in Wilmer McLean's parlor as a witness while R. E. Lee surrenders to U.S. Grant at Appomattox. That said, part of our love of history is being able to visually go to these places and moments. We know that all change is inevitable and yet we cling to the past. Some might question why, but we know the answer. You cannot know the way ahead unless you know where you have been. A great man once said; “When you come to the fork in the road, take it.” God bless Yogi Berra.



Well fellow members, we have come to that fork in the road. We could go one way and stay just as we are, or we can take the other and add some change. The First Defenders, as we are known, came to life in 1997 as strictly a Civil War Roundtable. Members have come and gone with only a small handful of charter members remaining active. Officers have changed. A generation of authors and speakers have presented to us and retired or passed away. Sum it all up though and we have had a wonderful past and a bright future. We are taking the fork in the road as Yogi suggested. We are still the First Defenders Civil War Roundtable, and the majority of our presentations will still be of that period in history. At the same time, we are broadening our perspective to include other historical times.

November 19, 2025, will mark our first venture out of the Civil War, but not entirely. Craig Symonds, one of the great authors and lecturers of our time, will present a talk on Admirals David Farragut and Chester Nimitz. Though born decades apart, their lives and their personalities showed common traits of courage and selfless determination. You will see how each played a pivotal role in leading the U.S. Navy and America to victory.

REMEMBER: MEETING DATE IS WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025.

Joe

Round Table Business

Joe called the meeting to order at 6:25 pm.

There was one guest this evening. Gus Person joined us from Masonic Village.

New Members: none

Member update:

Gary Hertzog had a knee replacement and is doing well

Ev Binns had an operation and is on the mend

Ray Kempf had shoulder surgery

Linda Zeiber will be having a knee replacement in January

We wish them all a speedy recovery and hope to see them back with us soon.

Craig thanked Joe for completing the 501c3. This was no easy task. All agreed.

Treasurers Report

Chuck reported the 501c3 has been approved. If you make a donation to support our Roundtable, you may now claim it on your tax return.

The account has a balance of \$ 1,900.00, with the General Fund having a balance of \$1,867.00 and Preservation having a balance of \$ 133.00.

Membership

Ev was not in attendance at the meeting, but he provided a written membership update. We now stand at 49 members for the 29th Campaign, which includes 7 new members. We received an additional \$ 456 to support the speaker programs.

Preservation and Book Raffle

At our October meeting, the book raffle took in \$83. A motion was made to hold preservation funding until next month by Chuck and 2nd by Rodney, AIF. We will put forth some suggestions at our meeting in November. Our current Preservation balance is \$216.

Gary expressed his thanks to Wally Heimbach for taking care of the raffle in his absence as well as his appreciation for all the thoughts and concerns of the members for his health and well-being. Gary's rehab is going well so he should be able to join the group for our November meeting. Thanks to everyone!

Preservation Scoreboard	
29 th Campaign	Total for all Seasons
Total amount raised-\$ 406	
Total amount donated-\$ 275	Total amount donated - \$ 39,921
Total contribution with matching grants-\$ 6,675	Total contributed with Matching Grants - \$ 569,772

First Defenders Bookshelf

Rodney recommended “Somewhere Towards Freedom” The black perspective of Shermans March to the Sea.

“Destiny of a Republic” by Candace Millard, covers the Garfield assassination.

November Program

Clark announced that November’s speaker will be Dr. Craig Symonds.

****Please note the date for this meeting is November 19, 2025. This is a special date for this presentation only!****

David Farragut & Chester Nimitz

presented by Dr. Craig Symonds



David Farragut and Chester Nimitz served their country in the United States Navy nearly a century apart. The former would become the very first U.S. admiral while the latter would be one of only five who would achieve five-star rank. Farragut would win the Civil War on the water from the deck of a ship while Nimitz would direct his armada from shore to defeat Japan in World War II. Different men who approached their duties from different perspectives, both facing leadership challenges that had commonalities and disparities. Possibly no historian is better versed or positioned to provide an in-depth analysis of these two naval legends than Craig Symonds.



Dr. Craig Symonds is a professor emeritus of history at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis. Upon his retirement from the academy, he accepted a professorship at the Naval War College from where he has also retired. A prolific author, Dr. Symonds has specialized in both the Civil War and World War II, and has hosted The Great Courses+ video series on both the War in the Pacific and the United States Navy.



29 th Campaign Programs		
Date	Speaker	Program
12/9/2025	Michael Harris	<i>The Philadelphia Campaign (Revolutionary War)</i>

If you would be interested in presenting a future program to our membership, please reach out to Clark.

Website

In response to a question from the membership, Craig explained the by-laws can be found under the “Newsletters” tab on the website.

Dinner Reservations for the Wednesday, November 19, 2025

Meeting & Program: Deadline to order is Friday, November 14th, NOON.

We had 29 in attendance at the October meeting, and Vicky wanted to express her sincere “thanks” to all of you for getting your reservations in on time. It is very much appreciated!

Our meal choices for November are:

Soup
Steamed Shrimp
NY Strip Steak
Eggplant

If possible, please make your reservation on the website. When doing so, you should receive:

- An immediate email “thank you” for making the reservation.
- A follow-up email that includes a copy of your meal selection, and
- A second email confirmation that everything has worked properly (this may be delayed by up to 24-hours).

If you must call in reservations, please, CALL or TEXT your menu selection to Vicky Heffner at 610.413.5543 no later than NOON, November 14, 2025, which is also the deadline for online reservations. The price is \$32.00 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.



Checks may be made payable to “First Defenders Civil War Roundtable.”

Events / Tours/ and Other Happenings

Please feel free to send anything that you are aware of that you would like to share with our Company. I will gladly add it to the monthly newsletter. Please send your items of interest to my email at Lisa.breneiser@gmail.com.

Berks History Center Bus Trip **“Brandywine: The Battle That Lost Philadelphia, But Saved America”**

To sign up: Contact Vicky Heffner at 610-375-4275 or Cell at 610-413-5543 or email to: education@berkshistory.org



BHC BUS TRIP

Brandywine: The Battle That Lost Philadelphia But Saved America
11/15/2025

Join us on **November 15, 2025**, for an engaging historical journey that explores the Brandywine Battlefield, an event that, while resulting in the loss of Philadelphia, played a crucial role in saving America. Led by step-on guide and military historian, Mike Harris, this event is organized by the Berks History Center (BHC) and offers a full day of exploration and learning. **Starting at 7:45 AM and concluding around 5:30 PM**, the day includes a guided tour of the battlefield's back roads and a visit to significant sites where the largest single-day land battle of the American Revolution was fought on September 11, 1777. This battle saw British General Sir William Howe face off against General George Washington, with the Americans making a valiant stand at Birmingham Hill.

Participants will also visit the Brandywine Battlefield Visitor's Center and the Chadd's Ford Historical Society to gain deeper insights into this pivotal historical moment. Enjoy a lunch at the historic Black Powder Tavern, where you can choose from a Pork Milanese Sandwich, Chicken Salad, or Classic Reuben, all served with house-made chips, pickle spears, and a Chocolate Brownie Custard dessert. Beverages include soft drinks, iced tea, coffee, and hot tea. In the afternoon, explore Valley Forge, where Washington and his troops endured the harsh winter of 1777-1778. The tour includes a visit to the newly renovated Valley Forge Visitor's Center, an immersive film, and a scenic driving tour of the Valley Forge Encampment.

The bus departs promptly at 8 AM (so please arrive by 7:45 AM) from the REAR corner of the parking lot BEHIND the Boscov's EAST Reading Mall (4500 Perkiomen Avenue, Reading) where the old Fox Movie Theatre and currently the Reading Civic Performing Arts Theatre is located. The event concludes at approximately 5 PM, with transportation provided by Elite Coach. Please note that bus driver tips are not included in the price of **\$175 for BHC Members and \$200 for Non-Members** (an envelope will be passed around the bus on the return trip). For additional information contact Vicky Heffner at (610) 375. 4375 (BHC) or (610) 413-5543 (cell) or education@berkshistory.org. Don't miss this opportunity to relive a crucial chapter in American history with expert guidance. Secure your spot today!



New Excursion in Gettysburg! **Gettysburg Railway**

Gettysburg Excursions Train Ride

All Ages! • 1 Hour Round-trip

- As the train winds through the countryside, enjoy captivating storytelling about the leaders of the Battle of Gettysburg and historical landmarks along the route.

<https://fareharbor.com/embeds/book/gettysburgrailway/items/?language=en-us&full-items=yes&back=https://gettysburgrailway.com/>

Blue and Gray Education Society (BGES)

Winter 2025 / Spring 2026 Schedule of Events

Even though we've still got a few good months left in 2025—along with some incredible BGES tours- we're already looking ahead to 2026. Here's a first look at next year's tour lineup as it currently stands.

We're still working on the registration forms, and online registration isn't open yet. For more information or to join a tour, please reach out to BGES Executive Director Wade Sokolosky at BgesExDir@gmail.com. We'll be posting registration forms in the coming months, so stay tuned.

Winter 2025 Tours starting in 2026

- **Revolutionary Williamsburg and Yorktown**, with Bert Dunkerly, from Williamsburg, VA: Feb. 7. 2026
- **The Wilmington Campaign**, with Chris Fonvielle, from Wilmington, NC: Feb. 12–15, 2026
- **Forrest and the Streight Raid**, with Norman Dasinger, from Gadsden, AL: Feb. 20–22, 2026
- **Monmouth Campaign**, with Gary Ecelbarger and Scott Patchan, from Princeton, NJ: Feb. 26–March 1, 2026

Spring 2026

- **The War of 1812 on the Gulf Coast: Pensacola, Mobile, Fort Mims, Fort Sinquefield, and New Orleans**, with Mike Bunn, from Mobile, AL & New Orleans, LA: March 10–15, 2026
- **Spring 1865 North Carolina Campaign Wyse Fork, Monroe's Crossroads, Averagesboro, and Bentonville**, with Wade Sokolosky: March 26–29, 2026
- **The Atlanta Campaign—New Hope to Kennesaw, Part II**, with Dave Powell, from Marietta/Kennesaw, GA: April 15–19, 2026.
- **The Siege of Suffolk, April 11–May 4, 1863**, with Brian Wills, from Suffolk, VA: April 23–26, 2026.
- **George Washington's Alexandria and Mt. Vernon Tour, including the Carlyle House**, with John Maass, from Alexandria, VA: May 1–3, 2026.
- **From Petersburg to Appomattox, The Final Chapter in Virginia & Five Forks, Amelia Courthouse, Dinwiddie, High Bridge, and Sailor's Creek**, with Phil Greenwalt, from Richmond, VA: May 6–10, 2026.
- **The Wilderness Campaign**, with Greg Mertz, from Fredericksburg, VA: May 13–17, 2026.

The Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall

is pleased to announce our eighth annual Civil War Symposium, slated for April 17 – 18, 2026. Though overlooked in favor of later years and larger battles, the first year of the Civil War witnessed many advances and setbacks, trials and tribulations, personalities and decisions that affected how the remainder of the war came to be fought. In 1861: Small Battles, Big Outcomes, seven dynamic historians will unpack the military, political, and social threads of this pivotal year in our nation's history.



<https://www.showelix.com/event/andrew-carnegie-free-library-music-hall-civil-war-symposium-1861>