

# **The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter**

**October 2026, the 30th Campaign**



**[www.firstdefenderscwrt.us](http://www.firstdefenderscwrt.us)**

## **President's Message**

### **LET US ALL PLAY A PART**

The First Defenders Civil War Roundtable was organized in 1997. Being one of the last few remaining charter members and outgoing President gives me a somewhat unique perspective. I have always felt that we provide a valuable platform through which like-minded students of history can gather to learn and share our knowledge. We have been through many challenges and changes and weathered them all. In many ways we are now in a better position than ever to provide for the future. First and foremost, we are now a legally-recognized non-profit organization which allows us to be the beneficiary of some recent generous contributions. We have also expanded our areas of lecture to include subjects of history outside of the Civil War.

Now it is incumbent on each of us to help in any way which we can to not simply maintain, but to increase, our membership. In the heyday of Civil War Roundtables our membership peaked at 110 strong. Alas, the nation's interest in the Civil War and history in general has declined. We now stand at 44 members. Age and the passing of our friends have also contributed in the decline. Just last month, Wally announced the closing of the doors of another longstanding Roundtable in Binghamton, N.Y. It is totally within our power to not go down that way. We have a strong core of dedicated history lovers and we can turn things around.

Membership Chairman Bill Burns and I came away from a Civil War Roundtable Congress meeting during the recent Emerging Civil War Symposium with some ideas. At the last meeting, more suggestions came from the membership. Following is a short, but not exclusive list of ideas presented:

- Designing, printing and distributing cards to announce to the region who we are and what we do. They can be placed at various locations. We can use any help available in design and distribution.
- Designing and printing a more thorough story of our group to be distributed in person to targeted groups.
- Contacting by email history teachers and professors.
- Placing ads in the County Visitor Bureau magazine, Reading Eagle or other magazines and newspapers.
- Contacting and interacting with historical societies on the Borough and Township level.

By the time you read this, we will have had a Board meeting to discuss these and more ideas. Do not be shy. When there is a request for help, please step forward. We will need more volunteers.

All of you have done a great deal in the past. Word of mouth has been our best recruiting tool. To this we must add public exposure. Thank you for what you have and will do.

*Joe*

### **Round Table Business**

President Joe Schaeffer called the September meeting to order at 7:31 p.m. at Giannotti's, with 30 attending. Linda Zeiber offered the prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Guests: We were joined by Michael Biancone

New Members: Brian Blasic joined this evening, bringing our membership to 44.

Joe announced that Iris Ringler wasn't with us this evening, as her step-daughter passed away. Joe also noted that Warren Weber was not with us this evening as he was feeling unwell (it was discovered the next day that Warren, too, had passed away).

### **Treasurers Report**

Chuck reported the general fund currently has a balance of \$4,893.08 which includes donations made to the organization since its 501c3 designation; the preservation fund balance is \$274.00 for a total fund balance of \$5,167.08.

### **Membership**

Bill Burns reported that there are currently 44 paid members, with one new enlistment and one who re-upped.

Bill led the membership in a brain-storming session, to address increasing the membership. Here is the list of suggestions:

- Card Racks
- Email History teachers at high school and college level
- Michael Biancone participates in many historical groups and will spread the word
- Visitors Bureau "Get Curious" booklets reach 10,000 people – place an advertisement. Reach out to Margo
- Pamphlets could be placed at the Boyertown Spatz Museum or Antique Car Museum
- Design Pamphlets to be placed in local venues such as the Goggleworks

### **Preservation and Book Raffle**

In October, the membership voted to donate a \$100 to the ABT for their "Save More Than 340 Acres at 4 CW Battlefields." The largest parcel (337 acres) is at the Cedar Mountain Battlefield (VA). The remaining 3 acres are divided among the Chickasaw Bayou BF(MS), Fredericksburg BF(VA) & Petersburg BF(VA). The total cost of the plan is nearly \$4 million. Along with grants from state, Federal & other preservation groups, the goal is \$115 thousand. There is a matching grant of \$35 to \$1.

Wally Heimbach made the motion for \$100 & it was seconded by Rodney LaPearl. The motion carried.

Our September Book Raffle took in \$122, which brings our preservation fund to \$296 for October. Our Bonus Raffle continues and will end at our November meeting.

| 30 <sup>TH</sup> Campaign                           | Total for all Seasons                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Total amount raised-\$ 683                          |                                                     |
| Total amount donated-\$ 500                         | Total amount donated - \$ 41,196                    |
| Total contribution with matching grants - \$ 10,595 | Total contributed with matching grants - \$ 586,147 |

## October Program

### They Meet Again - The 1913 Battle of Gettysburg 50th Anniversary Reunion

Presented by Michael Jesberger

The Battle of Gettysburg from July 1st through July 3rd, 1863, turned the tide of the American Civil War, but not before 50,000 Union and Confederate



soldiers became casualties from the ferocious three days of fighting. Fifty years later, from June 29-July 4, 1913, to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg more than 50,000 Civil War veterans ranging in age from 60 to 112 years old descended on the rolling hills and the town of Gettysburg. They traveled back to the site where half a century earlier they engaged in combat and would now host an occasion of healing that was known as the Grand Reunion. Although Abraham Lincoln had been proven wrong when he stated in his endearing Gettysburg Address "the world will little note nor long remember what we say here", and those same words do apply to the Grand Reunion. The 1913 gathering was a widely anticipated, momentous event with over 50,000 spectators joining the 50,000 veterans, but this largest of all reunions of Civil War veterans has been all but forgotten in the 100 years since that occasion. This presentation seeks to bring new life to this often overlooked story of the American Civil War.

*Michael Jesberger is an independent military historian who styles himself as "Mr. U.S. History," who brings the American Revolution and Civil War to life with engaging and passionate manner that won't be found in many history books. Whether as a living historian or lecturer, Michael's presentations are designed to be captivating and take his audience back in time. A member of numerous history-based organizations and active living historian, Michael is a lifelong resident of the greater Philadelphia area.*



Clark reviewed the remaining 3 speakers in the 30<sup>th</sup> Campaign. He also shared that the New Ringold Band was the band for the First Defenders, and he is reaching out to them to see about a presentation.

If you would like to reach out to tonight's speaker, Michelle Krowl, at the the Library of Congress, her email is [mkrowl@loc.gov](mailto:mkrowl@loc.gov). If you need help accessing the Library of Congress resources, use the "Ask the Librarian" at <https://ask.loc.gov>.

| 30 <sup>th</sup> Campaign Programs |                |                                         |
|------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Date                               | Speaker        | Program                                 |
| November 10, 2026                  | Bruce Mowday   | <i>Common Soldiers: Uncommon Heroes</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.

**Joe's Jaunts – TBD**

## Website

Craig thanked everyone for their patience as the First Defenders website appeared to have been hacked. This caused some notification problems not being sent to those who signed up on the website. As a reminder, you should receive 3 total notices: the first is a "Thank You" for signing up; the second email notice will also thank you for signing up and include the date and speaker information; the third email will come from the Roundtable as a confirmation. If you did not receive 3 total emails, then your dinner reservation is not complete. Please reach out to Vicky directly or email [firstdefenderscwr@gmail.com](mailto:firstdefenderscwr@gmail.com) to confirm your meal selection.

### Dinner Reservations for Tuesday, October 13, 2026 Meeting & Program

Meal Captain's Report for September 2026: Thirty people attended the meeting.

**Our meal choices for October are:**

**Broiled Crab Imperial  
Grilled Chicken with Rice  
Linguini with Mushroom Sauce  
Soup**

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, **October 9, 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.**

## 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. Please send your items of interest to: [Lisa.breneiser@gmail.com](mailto:Lisa.breneiser@gmail.com).

| Date                    | Event                                            | Topic                                                                                       | Location                                                                                                |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Friday October 30, 2026 | Fridays on The Ridge                             | Cody Eash: That Trimble is a dangerous man: the Seminary Hospital's Highest Ranking Patient | Seminary Ridge Museum and Education Center 111 Seminary Ridge, Gettysburg, PA, 17325                    |
| November 6-8, 2026      | Assoc of Licensed Battlefield Guides- Gettysburg | ALBG Annual Seminar: From the Peach Orchard to the Brian Farm                               | <a href="https://gettysburgtourguides.org/albgseminar">https://gettysburgtourguides.org/albgseminar</a> |