

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

September 2026, the 30th Campaign



www.firstdefenderscwrt.us

President's Message

CANADA AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

Hopefully the presentation given by Mike Rupert on August 11 stimulated many of you to examine the context of our Civil War in terms of how other nations perceived it. Our relationship with Canada has intrigued me.

So, just what was our relationship during the war with our northern neighbor? The simple answer is not so simple. In fact, the relationship was complicated and, at times, strained. How so, you ask?

Canada in the mid-nineteenth century was not an independent nation. In fact, it was not even a country, but three separate colonies; Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and the Province of Canada, all under British rule. Confederation was not attained until 1867, then heavily inspired by the American Civil War. Canada did not achieve total independence from the British Parliament until 1982. Therefore, during our Civil War, relations with Canada were highly dependent on the same with Great Britain. Britain had declared itself neutral in the struggle, but what does that mean in practical terms? To the Brits it meant they recognized two governments at war with each other. Britain intended to not intervene and to maintain trade with both parties. Therein lies the first dilemma.

Lincoln and his government were infuriated by the effect of this stance. Confederate agents who could reach Canada were allowed near unfettered freedom to pursue hostile and subversive efforts across the border against the Union. Canada, in true British fashion, had a class system in which the wealthy viewed themselves as above the rest of society. As such, they saw themselves as kindred souls to the Southern aristocracy.

Commerce leaders openly traded with the Confederacy. Yarmouth and Halifax were ports of call for Rebel blockade runners. Jefferson Davis sent one million dollars in gold to a Montreal bank for use by his agents, and the St. Lawrence Hotel in the same city was the meeting place for Rebel agents. Some wealthy citizens even opened their estates to private use by the agents. Newspapers in Toronto and Montreal applauded Confederate successes and condemned Lincoln as a destroyer of the U.S. Constitution. After the assassination several papers proclaimed that he had it coming.

In 1864, Confederate raiders staging in Canada, crossed the border into St. Albans, Vermont and robbed four banks and dozens of businesses, killing at least one American citizen. Fleeing back across the border they were arrested, but freed, since their actions did not violate Canada's sovereignty. This brought the United States even closer to war with Canada and Britain than had the Trent Affair. British troops were sent to Canada and new forts were built in Kingston and other border areas. Fortunately, tensions eased again.

Now, balance those bad times against the good. Slavery was abolished in Canada in 1834. From that moment forward, blacks escaping slavery in the South achieved total freedom upon reaching the Canadian border. Thousands made their way on the Underground Railroad, and, fearful of recapture, did not stop until they reached Canada. Thousands of black men then left this safe haven, marched South and joined the Union army. Imagine the courage that action required. Several thousand white Canadians also fought in the war, the overwhelming majority for the Union. The average Canadian citizen seemed to favor the Union.

After the war ended, tensions gradually eased, but not entirely. When Jefferson Davis was released from two years in prison, he immediately boarded a train to Canada, was welcomed in Niagra and feted as a hero. Since I bleed blue, I would have wished them to put him in a barrel and sent over the falls. Oh well...

Joe

Round Table Business

President Joe Schaeffer called the August meeting to order at 7:28 p.m. at Giannotti's, with 31 attending. Linda Zeiber offered the prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Guests: We were joined by two guests this evening, Brian Blasic and Patti Pettitti.

New Members: None

It was reported that Roger Cotterill is recovering from surgery.

Joe noted that next year's topic at the Emerging Civil War Conference will be "Crime and Punishment" with Jim Hessler as the keynote speaker entailing the murder trial of Dan Sickles. Chris Mackowski is also stepping down as President of the ECW and told Joe that he would like to come back as a speaker to our roundtable now that he has more time available.

Dr. Curt Fields, who portrays U.S Grant, has a new book out called "Unconditional Surrender: Ulysses S Grant in the Civil War.

Wally announced that the Binghamton NY Roundtable, with a 30 year history is folding, due to lack of membership.

Treasurers Report

Chuck reported that the general fund currently has a balance of \$ 5,146.53 which includes donations made to the organization since its 501c3 designation; the preservation fund balance is \$270.00 for a total fund balance of \$5416.53.

Membership

Bill Burns reported there are currently 42 paid members, with no new enlistments.

Bill and Joe attended the Emerging Civil War Conference in August held at Stevenson's Ridge in Virginia. Along with the conference they had a special presentation from the Civil War Congress in which they discussed many topics.

Here is a synopsis from Bill:

The meeting began with introductions and then a summary of the Congress's mission to help CWRTs grow. Afterwards, break-out sessions were held to discuss various changes other Round Tables have made to recruit and retain members. Joe paired with Dr. Curt Fields, a recognized interpreter of General U.S Grant. Back in session, we immediately spoke of the changes our Round Table has made noting that we became a 501C not-for-profit entity, changed our meeting schedule to April through December to avoid weather cancellations and opened up presentations to all American wars. These changes impressed Dr. Fields.

We reviewed a chart that showed actions of successful and frustrated CWRTs. The key to a successful Round Table is communication, communication, communication. The First Defenders communicate through monthly newsletters and meeting notifications. Another activity successful CWRTs do is discuss recruitment at every meeting and have brain storming sessions occasionally. Other suggested recruitment ideas are advertising with card racks and contacting schools and university history departments.

They concluded, when making a membership pitch, show enthusiasm and speak first of the value of our Round Table. Emphasize the knowledge and friendliness of our members as well as the expertise of our speakers, many of whom are published authors. Talk about the variety of programs we feature that are not limited to discussing battles but have included female reenactors, biographies of Civil War era individuals, railroad and naval presentations and foreign intervention programs.

Preservation and Book Raffle

At our August meeting, the Round Table was informed that our July contribution, which was to go to the Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Association for the Cross Keys Battlefield VA, had successfully ended prior to us sending the donation. At this time, there were no suitable preservation opportunities by the Shenandoah Association, so the membership made a motion to rescind their donation until another opportunity should arise with that organization. That motion carried.

For an August donation, the Round Table voted to make a \$100 donation to the ABT for their "Help Save 140 Acres at Stone's River & Fort Heiman" campaign. This campaign would save 138 acres at Stone's River Battlefield, TN & 1.5 acres at Fort Heiman, KY. The ABT needs to collect \$377,205 to complete the \$21 million price tag. There is a \$57 to \$1 matching grant with donation.

The motion to donate \$100 to ABT was made by Glenn Adams and 2nd by Bill Burns. AIF.

Our August Book raffle took in \$104. Our Preservation total for September 2026 is \$274. A reminder that our Bonus Raffle is continuing. Thanks to everyone for your support of our preservation efforts!

30TH Campaign	Total for all Seasons
Total amount raised-\$ 583	
Total amount donated-\$ 400	Total amount donated - \$ 41,096
Total contribution with matching grants - \$ 7,095	Total contributed with Matching Grants - \$ 582,647

September Program

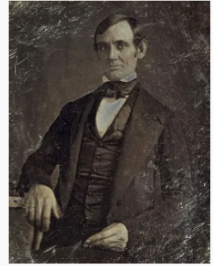
Lincoln Treasures at the Library of Congress

Presented by Michelle Krowl

The Library of Congress dates to 1800, and is the oldest federal cultural institution in the United States. Serving as a library and research facility for the United States Congress, it is the *de facto* national library. It should be no surprise, then, to learn the Library has no small number of "treasures" from Abraham Lincoln.

Somewhere between 15,000-18,000 books and articles have been written about Lincoln, and many of them have used snippets of the Library's collection. Examples include some of his earliest writings as a boy, love letters, his evolving thoughts on slavery and legislation he authored during his single term in Congress. The collection also include copies of some of his best known works such as his first inaugural speech, the Emancipation Proclamation and, of course, the Gettysburg Address as his thoughts evolved from early notes to a final version.

In addition to many writings, the Library also maintains a number of photographs and other items related to the 16th president making it possibly the largest publicly-available collection of Lincoln memorabilia. This program will open one's mind to many "Lincoln treasures."



Michelle Krowl is a Civil War and Reconstruction specialist in the Manuscript Division at the Library of Congress where she also oversees presidential papers from James K. Polk through Theodore Roosevelt. She co-curated the 2012-14 exhibition "The Civil War in America." With a Ph.D. from the University of California, Krowl has authored several articles and books on topics related to the Civil War. She has also served as a research assistant to historian Doris Kearns Goodwin.

Clark noted all speakers have been secured for our next campaign in 2027.

30 th Campaign Programs		
Date	Speaker	Program
October 13, 2026	Michael Jesberger	1913 Gettysburg Reunion
November 10, 2026	Bruce Mowday	Common Soldiers: Uncommon Heroes
December 8, 2026	Michael Harris	Battle of Paoli

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

Website

Craig reminded us the initial meeting notice will be emailed 2 weeks prior to the meeting. A reminder notice will be sent 1 week prior to the meeting. If you do not receive your email notice, please reach out to the meal captain to order your meal.

We continue to work out bugs on the website, including emails that may be blocked by your email server. Please reach out to me if you failed to receive an email notification. If you receive traditional mail, it is mailed 2 weeks prior to the meeting.

Dinner Reservations for Tuesday, September 8, 2026 Meeting & Program

Meal Captain's Report for August 2026: Thirty-One people attended the meeting.

Our meal choices for September are:

Steamed Shrimp
8 oz N Y Strip Steak
Eggplant Parmesan
Salad

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, September 4, 2026.** 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.**

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.

Date	Event	Topic	Location
September 12, 2026	National Civil War Museum	Retreat from Victory; The Battle of Malvern Hill; Presented by Frank O'Reilly	Harrisburg, PA
September 11-13, 2026	Central Virginia Battlefield Trust	Second Fredericksburg; "The Forgotten Front"	Fredericksburg, VA
April 2-3, 2027	Andrew Carnegie Free Library	June 1863: The Road to Gettysburg	Carnegie, PA
August 6-8, 2027	Emerging Civil War Symposium	"Crime and Punishment"	Stevenson's Ridge, VA