

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

September 2023, the 27th Campaign



www.firstdefenderscwrts.us

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As a young Boy Scout I learned how to make my own rope. It was fascinating to see small threads of twine twisting and becoming entangled with other small threads, and together they would continue the process and become larger. These larger pieces would combine with other strands, and soon a strong piece of rope would be produced. If the process was repeated with several of these ropes, a heavier and thicker rope could be made. Something made up of tens of thousands of tiny threads would become strong enough to support enough weight to build an acceptable bridge. Of course, through carelessness or an intentional act, the rope could be broken.

The events of the past several months have suggested to me that life is very much like the rope I made so many years ago. A single individual becomes entangled with another and they with still others until soon there is a strong tie binding them together. America is like that. So, too, is a Round Table. Many different individuals bond together to create an enduring connection spanning the distance of years.

Yet, like my rope, a failure to take care of it or abusing it can result in the strong connection being severed. Even when knotted back together, the bond is never quite the same and its strength is diminished. There's a saying all crafters know, "Take care of your tools, and they will take care of you."

Our national bond seems to be fraying somewhat, in many cases because folks don't really know the history of our country. That's where we as a Round Table can play a part of help educate our friends on how our bonds developed and how we can keep them strong and secure. But, we are fewer than we once were, and we must attend to our own bonds by reaffirming our commitment to the First Defenders for its 27th Campaign. And, we need to rally others to help strengthen and maintain our "rope."

The time is now. A new campaign is upon us. We need YOU to re-enlist. Don't wait. Keep the rope strong by sending your membership today!

Craig

Round Table Business

The final meeting of last season was called to order on May 9, 2023. Thirty-seven members and guests attended. VP Mark Quattroco announced that he was stepping down as vice president as well as giving up his preservation role. President Craig Breneiser thanked Mark for his excellent work for the past several years. Gary Hertzog announced that he would take on our preservation initiative in addition to handling the monthly book raffle.

Joe Schaeffer had no jaunt information yet but announced a list of notable speakers for the 27th campaign. See the listing at the end of the newsletter for some of the programs. We were informed that Joe will step into the vice president's position. As former president for many years, he is a welcome addition to the board in this capacity.

Treasurer Tim Antosy reported a balance in the treasury of \$1,570.06 as of May 9, 2023. There was \$192.00 available for preservation. He added that membership at the end of the 26th campaign stood at 54. The unencumbered balance in the treasury stood at \$1,378.06.

The annual election of officers was held. Most positions were retained with the exception of Joe Schaeffer becoming vice president while still planning our "jaunts" and working diligently on programs. Gary Hertzog is taking on preservation responsibilities while continuing to man the book raffle job. We thank Joe and Gary for adding to their responsibilities for the upcoming campaign as well as the rest of the officers who have agreed to stay in their current positions.

Membership

It's time to renew your membership for the new campaign of 2023-2024. Please fill out the membership form included with this newsletter and which can also be found on the website, and return it with your check as soon as possible. The deadline for payment is October 10, 2023. If you plan to pay your dues in person at the September or October meeting, please be sure to fill out **the renewal form** and **bring it along** with your payment.

Book Raffle News

September is rapidly approaching and with that comes the start of our 27th Campaign of the First Defenders CWRT. Our 26th Campaign closed with our monthly book raffle and a special raffle. Items that were raffled off were 1st prize-CSA Our Heroes & Our Flags Print, 2nd prize-NY Times Civil War Extras, 3rd prize- a coffee table book (The Civil War 1861 to 1865) by David Roth, 4th prize- a framed & matted picture of a PA volunteer (41st Inf Co G), and 5th Prize-a collection of CW metal cast cannon. The winners were:

1st Prize---Ev Binn

2nd Prize---Lisa Breneiser

3rd Prize---Lisa Breneiser

4th Prize---Tim Antosy

5th Prize---Ev Binn

Congratulations & thanks to all the winners! Thank you to everyone for your support of our CW preservation efforts. Hope to see everyone at our September meeting.

Ghost at Sachs Bridge?

Many of us recall a presentation several years ago from renowned Gettysburg Licensed Battlefield Guide Tim Smith which he closed with an emphatic pronouncement: "There are NO GHOSTS IN GETTYSBURG!" And, while Sachs Bridge is not technically "in Gettysburg," a recent photograph circulated on Facebook suggests ghosts may have taken up residence along the Cumberland Township - Freedom Township border where historic Sachs Bridge crosses Marsh Creek.

Built in 1854, the 100-foot long covered bridge was behind Confederate lines on Seminary Ridge and near where a number of field hospitals were known to exist. Water from Marsh Creek would have supported the Army of the Potomac on its way to the battle, and would have been used by the Army of Northern Virginia from the afternoon of July 1st until it retreated three days later. Surely, Marsh Creek supplied the needs of the hospitals, and it is altogether likely more than a few soldiers, wounded or healthy, found their way to the creek to quench their thirst. And, some spirits may have departed this world at Sachs Bridge.

What say you???



Technology Geek(s) Needed!

The Civil War Round Table Congress just concluded its annual conference in Gettysburg. This is an "operational" gathering of Round Tables intended to learn about ways to sustain their organizations and share stories of what works and what does not. Virtual meetings were a major discussion topic.

In the wake of the pandemic, the First Defenders were not alone in trying to maintain our existence through GoToMeeting and Zoom. Nor were we the only Round Tables to experience the "growing pains" of adapting to modern technology (and some of the "horror stories" were truly amusing!)

The Round Tables that opted to provide virtual programs have generally chosen to continue making the option available to their members. Like us, they have noted some of their members have difficulty travelling or are still hesitant to attend public meetings due to continuing COVID outbreaks and their own health. They also report they have been able to bolster and reach more members in more distant areas, and some have opted to make their programs publicly available.



As our 27th Campaign is about to begin, there are new rumblings about possible mask and meeting mandates as a new strain of COVID appears to be on the rise. For this reason, we will continue to offer Zoom programming for the coming year. But, that comes with a request...

For those who have attended our meetings in person, you know that I have been both the presiding officer and the chief technology geek. While I have sometimes managed to do both jobs at once, our ability to reach those members who anticipate a virtual program depends on me being healthy enough to attend the meeting. It would be great if a couple of volunteers step forward to help out. All you need is you; the equipment is available and I would be happy to provide the necessary training (if I can figure it out, so can you!).

If interested, reply by email or see me at the September meeting. Thanks!

Craig

Charley: The True Story of the Youngest Soldier to Die in the American Civil War **by Brendan Lyons**

The story begins in West Chester, PA, on Charley's 12th birthday, shortly before the start of the Civil War. States have begun seceding from the Union and the children of West Chester know that war is coming. Charley, a young drummer, leads them in marching around town as he prepares to go to war himself, against his parent's wishes. They are persuaded by Captain Benjamin Sweeny to allow Charley to join Company F as the drummer boy. Sweeny promises to watch over Charley and do all he can to protect the boy.

From there, he marches to Washington, DC, Virginia, and into several battles alongside his fellow soldiers. Charley experiences grueling marches, bloody battles, loss, sickness, fear, and ultimately his own death.

Available from Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1955041067>

Alas, Confederates



Greytown, Nicaragua. 1899. An old Rebel general pens his Civil War memoirs. Using a local girl as his stenographer, the recollections come easily, until the writing session when he tries to remember the third day at Gettysburg.

This is the final play from the Trilogy of the Confederacy, written by Virginia playwright

James F. Bruns. First came, Confederates (2016) reviewed by DC METRO ARTS writing, "If you are a Civil War buff and a theater lover, this is the show for you" and then, the controversial Black Confederates (2018) called "compelling" by DCist magazine. Both of these plays premiered at the Washington D.C. Capital Fringe Festival.

<https://phillyfringe.org/events/alas-confederates/>

Details

Run Time: 80 mins

Ticket Price: \$20

Venue: [Arden Theatre](#)



Dates: September 9, 2023 -
September 24, 2023

Treasurer Change

Treasurer Tim Antosy has reluctantly stepped down from office due to medical concerns. While Tim still plans to be with us during the coming campaign, we thank former Treasurer Lori Border for agreeing to return to the office for the coming campaign.

As Lori assumes her new duties, Ev Binns has graciously agreed to lead the Membership Committee through the 27th Campaign.

September Program:

"Moments of Contingency & the Rise of Grant"

presented by Chris Mackowski



"The condition of being dependent on chance; uncertainty." Perhaps the least common definition of "contingency," it nonetheless certainly describes the rise of Ulysses S. Grant from an undistinguished pre-Civil War West Pointer to the highest rank in the United States Army in three years (and the presidency of the nation in less than five more). From Belmont to Appomattox (and then to the White House) there was nothing certain about Grant's future. Some may consider him to have been lucky while others would say blessed, but there were more than a few moments of contingency between 1861 and 1865 that could have resulted in an entirely different outcome of the War and the future of the nation, and this program will explore some of those key instances of uncertainty where chance showed its hand.

Chris Mackowski has been a frequent and popular presenter for the First Defenders. A self-described "fanboy" of Stonewall Jackson, Chris' work on Grant probably makes him a fanboy of him, too. The editor-in-chief and co-founder of *Emerging Civil War*, Chris is a writing professor and associate dean for undergraduate programs at St. Bonaventure University in New York. A prolific author with more than two dozen titles to his credit, Chris is also the historian-in-residence at Stevenson's Ridge, a historic property on the Spotsylvania Battlefield. Formerly a National Park Service historian, Chris still leads tours of the Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness and Spotsylvania battlefields as well as the site where Stonewall Jackson died. In his spare (!) time, he is also the vice president of the Central Virginia Battlefield Trust and serves on the advisory board of the Civil War Round Table Congress.



Future 27th Campaign Programs		
Date	Speaker	Program
10/12/2023	Tim Talbott	<i>USCT Soldiers Proved Their Heroism at New Market Heights</i>
11/14/2023	Harold Holtzer	<i>Lincoln & the Press</i>
12/12/2023	Group Participation	<i>Civil War Jeopardy</i>
1/9/2024	Craig Breneiser	<i>General John Hartranft, the 1899 Exeter Train Wreck & Beyond</i>
2/13/2024	Wally Heimbach	<i>Colonel Edward Cross</i>
3/13/2024	Greg Mertz	<i>Intelligence Gathering Issues for Lee and Meade in the Gettysburg Campaign</i>
4/9/2024	Brad Gottfried	<i>Lee Invades the North: A Comparison of the Antietam & Gettysburg Campaigns</i>
5/14/2024	-To Be Announced-	

Dinner Reservations for Tuesday September 12, 2023,
Meeting & Program:

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

Broiled Orange Roughy Pork Chop Cheese Ravioli

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, Sept. 8, 2023, 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.**



Our 27th Campaign!

FIRST DEFENDERS CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE MEMBERSHIP FORM 2023-2024

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **ZIP:** _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

I would like to have Civil War-related emails announcements received by the Round Table forwarded to me (Opt out any time by notifying the Webmaster.)

Annual Membership fee of \$25 is due by October 10, 2023.

Please make the check payable to The First Defenders CWRT and mail with a completed membership form to:

**Lori Border
30 East 40th Street
Reading, PA 19606**

(Or pay in person at the September or October dinner meeting!)