

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

**September 2024, the 28th Campaign**



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

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

**May 8, 1864 along the Brock Road, south of Todd's Tavern, Wilderness, Virginia...**

**Sergeant Thomas Meyer is doing his best to hide his weariness from the men of Company A, 148th Pennsylvania Volunteers. The soldiers of the 148th have gone three days without rest, constantly moving and yet not finding the fight. The early morning glow in the eastern sky is to their left, a sign they are marching south. The Army of the Potomac is not withdrawing to its base; it is on the road to another meeting with the Army of Northern Virginia. A renewed sense of hope rises in their chests which the lingering stench of battle and the smoldering forest cannot overcome. Maybe, just maybe, somewhere down this road, they will defeat the Rebels and put an end to this nightmare of war. They want to go home.**

**Young men when they left the farms, lumber mills and rail yards of Centre County, they are now hardened veterans. Memories of Buffalo Run, Potters Mill and Bellefonte remain, but there is fighting ahead. They just do not know where or when.**

**Barely a year ago only a few miles to the east they stubbornly held the crossroad at the Chancellor House, buying time for the army to safely withdraw. Losses were heavy, including Colonel James Beaver who went down with a severe wound. Dozens more were captured but now have been exchanged and are back with the regiment. Two months later in the Wheatfield at Gettysburg Colonel Edward Cross placed the 148th at the center of his brigade line. Again, losses were staggering, but again they stood the test.**

**Colonel Beaver returned during the winter and again leads the regiment. Perhaps it is well that neither Beaver nor his men can see into the future as surely their hearts would sink. The war will last another year in this theater and they will miss none of it. U.S. Grant is in charge, and he has pledged to follow R.E. Lee and fight every day until Lee is beaten.**

Winfield Scott Hancock of the Second Corps is Grant's most trusted corps commander, and Grant will hurl Hancock's corps like a spear at the heart of the Army of Northern Virginia. Hancock's favorite brigade commander is John Rutter Brooke and the 148th is in Brooke's Brigade. It will be in the thickest fighting at Po River, Spotsylvania Courthouse, North Anna River, Cold Harbor, Deep Bottom, Strawberry Plains, Weldon Railroad, Ream's Station and South Side Railroad. The 148th is there at every fight.

One thing which makes the 148th somewhat unusual is its losses have been replenished by substitutes and draftees. Approximately 1,400 men will serve in the 148th and one of every four will be killed, wounded or missing. Something else also distinguishes the 148th from other regiments; The War Department in the fall of 1864, authorizes the army to provide Spencer repeating rifles to one regiment in each division, and Hancock gives that honor to the 148th.

The 148th is at Appomattox Courthouse when Lee surrenders. The survivors are discharged in the summer of 1865.

Sergeant Meyer survives the war and returns to Centre County where he becomes a teacher and then a doctor of dentistry. He lives a long, happy life and today lies in peace in the Lutheran Church Cemetery in Rebersburg.

Colonel Beaver will suffer two more severe wounds. The first at Cold Harbor and the second at Ream's Station, where he loses a leg. He also returns to Centre County, eventually to be elected Governor of Pennsylvania and President of Pennsylvania State University. Today a football stadium at Penn State, capable of seating the entire Army of the Potomac bears his name. I have attended many games in that stadium, and as I gaze to the surrounding hills I am reminded that many patriots left their homes and loved ones here to fight and save the Union.

**WELCOME BACK TO A NEW CAMPAIGN. SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER.**

*Joe*

## **Round Table Business**

The First Defenders ended meetings for the 27th campaign at Gianotti's Country Manor on Tuesday, May 14, 2024. President Craig Breneiser called the meeting to order at 6:20 p.m. with 38 members and guests present. Ev Binns offered a prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Craig began by reminding everyone that Chris Mackowski will kick off the next campaign in September with "A Tempest of Iron and Lead: Spotsylvania Courthouse, May 1864.

Joe Schaeffer announced that Brad Gottfried, who had been scheduled to speak at the April meeting, continued to have health problems. Brad was supposed to lead the walking Gettysburg tour on May 19, 2024, but was unable to do so. As events/programs coordinator, he stated that programs for next campaign are by and large booked.

Mark Quattrochio reported that a \$400 donation had been made to the Franklin Battlefield. He informed us that we had raised \$730 for preservation for this campaign and that amount had been leveraged to a total of \$41,210 through matching grants.

Treasurer Lori Border reported that our balance as of May 14, 2024, stood at \$1,142.54 as well as \$268.00 ear-marked for preservation.

Ev Binns, Membership, announced that membership currently stands at 53.

**Election of Officers:** President Breneiser opened the meeting to nominations for president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. Joe Schaeffer was nominated to take over the president's position. Clark Zimmerman was nominated to take over the vice president's office. Lisa Breneiser was nominated to assume the position of secretary/newsletter. All nominations were seconded and unanimously accepted by voice vote.

Lori Border was reelected as treasurer with no opposition. Kathy Little agreed to continue as meal captain. Craig Breneiser will assume the duties of Webmaster. Gary Hertzog will continue his work as book raffle guru which generates countless dollars for land preservation throughout the year.

Many thanks to those retiring from their leadership roles; many thanks to those willing to begin serving our roundtable. Of course, we thank Joe Schaeffer for reprising his presidency.

### **Membership**

It's time to renew your membership for the new campaign of 2024-2025. 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. Our membership dues remain at \$ 25.00. New this year is a line for an added donation. All donations will be put towards securing speakers.

The deadline for payment is October 8, 2024. 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.

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

### **Book Raffle News**

September is rapidly approaching and with that comes the start of our 28<sup>th</sup> Campaign of the First Defenders CWRT.

Gary Hertzog held the final book raffle of the campaign by offering 8 books. At the conclusion of the regular drawing, he drew tickets for the Special Raffle that had been on-going for several months. The R. E. Lee set of books, a pen set, and a shadowbox of Cyclorama memorabilia were all won by Linda Zeiber. A framed reproduction map of the Battle of Gettysburg was won by Ev Binns.

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.

Future 28th Campaign Programs		
Date	Speaker	Program
10/8/2024	Tom Clemens	<i>McClellan's Headquarters at Antietam</i>
11/12/2024	-To Be Announced-	
12/10/2024	Drew Gruber	<i>The Odyssey of Decimus Et Ultimus Barziza, 4th Texas Infantry</i>
1/14/2025	Everitt Binns	<i>Civil War Jeopardy - Round Two</i>
2/11/2025	Wally Heimbach	<i>Colonel Edward Cross &amp; The Fighting 5<sup>Th</sup>!</i>
3/11/2025	Chris Heisey	<i>TBD</i>
4/8/2025	Brad Gottfried	<i>Race to the Potomac</i>
5/13/2025	Greg Mertz	<i>TBD</i>

## Our September Presentation

### *A Tempest of Iron & Lead: Spotsylvania*

featuring Chris Mackowski



Stymied in the Wilderness, Ulysses S. Grant would nonetheless keep up the pressure on the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia by turning south and racing for the crossroads county seat of Spotsylvania Courthouse. There, from May 7th through 12th, the second act in the Overland Campaign would play out in the first large-scale trench warfare in the Eastern Theatre. The cost would be high as more than 18,000 Yankees and 12,000 Rebels would become casualties, and again Grant would be stymied, yet undeterred, by Robert E. Lee. The high point of the battle would come on May 12th at the famed "Mule Shoe," a salient in the Confederate line where combat would swirl for more than twelve straight hours under such a "tempest of iron and lead" that a 22-inch oak tree would be felled by small arms fire!

Chris Mackowski has been the most prolific presented to the First Defenders, and this presentation may be his last for some time. Picking up from his last program which began with Grant's rise in the Wilderness, few current historians are better versed in the Spotsylvania battle (and Chris actually resides on the edge of that bloody field!). Editor-in-chief and co-founder of the popular *Emerging Civil War* and a veteran of the National Park Service, Chris has authored, co-authored and edited dozens of Civil War books.



**Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday Sept 10, 2024 Meeting & Program:**

If possible, please make your meal choices/reservations on the website.

Our meal choices for September are:

Salad

Broiled Haddock

Chicken Parmesan

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, Sept. 6, 2024, which is also the deadline for online reservations.

**ATTENTION! ATTENTION! ATTENTION! ATTENTION!!**

Giannotti's has raised the prices for the meals at our meetings. The price will now be \$32.00.

**\*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 \* New Section\***

This section will list events, tours and other happenings that you may have an interest. Please feel free to share anything that you are aware of and would like added to the monthly newsletter. Please send them to my email me at [Lisa.breneiser@gmail.com](mailto:Lisa.breneiser@gmail.com).

Be sure to keep in mind the timing of the newsletter distribution in relation to the upcoming event, so that we are not listing an event which members may be interested in attending, but with very little time to make plans.

*Here are a few happenings to start the 28<sup>th</sup> Campaign!*

### **CIVIL WAR FRIDAYS with the CIVIL WAR CONGRESS -ONLINE EVENTS**

REGISTER HERE: <https://www.cwrtcongress.org/events.html>

*SEPTEMBER 26-29, 2024*

#### **CHAMBERSBURG CIVLE WAR SEMIARS AND TOURS -CHAMBERSBURG PA**

Gettysburg and Beyond

[www.civilwarsemiars.org](http://www.civilwarsemiars.org)

*SEPTEMBER 27-28, 2024*

#### **THE SEVEN DAYS CAMPAIGN – RICHMOND VA**

Holiday Inn Express, Richmond Airport

491 International Center Dr.

Richmond, VA

Tour cost: \$ 85.00 per person

Room reservations 804-222-1499

To sign up: contact Dan Welch at 330-881-3516 or [dwelch1863@gmail.com](mailto:dwelch1863@gmail.com)



## ***Our 28th Campaign!***

### **FIRST DEFENDERS CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE MEMBERSHIP FORM 2024-2025**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Membership fee is \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 25.00

Additional Contribution \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Memberships are due by October 8, 2024**

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

Lori Border  
30 East 40th Street  
Reading, PA 19606

(Additional contributions are not deductible for Federal Income Tax purposes but provide additional revenue to support First Defender Civil War Roundtable Programming)