

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

July 2025, the 29th Campaign



www.firstdefenderscwrt.us

RAILROADS AND AMERICA'S CIVIL WAR

One might argue that America was built by the railroads. Long before concrete interstate highways, airplanes, telephones, televisions, internet and cell phones existed, there were the railroads. For two centuries, pioneers and settlers had slowly ventured westward, expanding the territory of the United States. Roads were few, primitive and poorly maintained. Travel by water was risky and limited by weather conditions. Geography prevented travel to many regions.

Then came the railroads. Beginning in the second quarter of the 19th century, railroads were built at a dizzying pace, crisscrossing the continent. Passenger travel from New York to San Francisco, which took weeks by ship or months by wagon, now took days by train. American agricultural products could travel by rail from farm to city in a day. Manufacturing plants sprouted overnight in every town and city. American industry came to dominate the world, made possible by the railroads. The largest, most powerful companies in the world were the railroads. Most of us had ancestors who worked for the railroads or a related industry. My great-grandfather worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad in the Altoona shops, and his son drove trains for the same company.

In 1861 America was torn in two by the Civil War. Young men volunteering for service walked or took a carriage to the nearest train station for a journey to meet their destiny. The First Defenders traveled by train to Harrisburg, then to Baltimore and from there to Washington in defense of the capital.

The Civil War became the first war in history where the railroads played an integral part in the success or failure of the armies. Books about the impact of railroads on logistics lack the flair of glorious attacks and repulses. Countless publications cover the struggles of soldiers and civilians during the Gettysburg campaign, but few have covered the importance of the railroads.

This month, Scott Mingus will speak to us on the Cumberland Valley Railroad, a vital supply line between Hagerstown, Maryland and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Robert E. Lee wanted it destroyed while the Union depended on its survival. Please attend and listen to the tale of this vital railroad. Scott has joined us several times, and we welcome him back.

Joe

Round Table Business

Joe called the meeting to order at 6:22 pm.

There was one guest in attendance this evening, Bobby Hampson.

Joe noted there are many changes to the Round Table, and he thanked everyone for their input.

Joe reported the by-laws are completed, approved by the board and will be posted on the website. Please take a look at them. Any structural changes can be brought before the membership.

Joe thanked Lori and Chuck for their assistance in moving the organization's finances to Diamond Credit Union.

Dues will be collected and due at the July meeting to cover the remainder of the year through December as our 29th Campaign.

Moving forward, starting with our 29th Campaign which began in June, we have raised the dues to \$35. Dues have not been raised since 2013, and with the continuing rising costs associated with speakers and hotel accommodations, we are no longer able to sustain the quality of speakers without additional funding. The survey that was sent out indicated the majority would be in favor of the \$35 rate, and that was used to set the new dues. This increase will allow us to continue to bring in the quality speakers we have enjoyed. If any member would like to do a presentation, please reach out to Clark with your topic. The more participation we get from the membership, the further our membership fees go.

The membership applications for the 29th Campaign starting in June and ending in December 2025, can be found on the website's main page under "VOLUNTEERS NEEDED" by simply clicking on the graphic.

The 30th Campaign will run from April – December 2026.

Once again, Joe thanked Lori and Kathy for their service to the Round Table.

Finally, the not-for-profit 501 (c) (3) application is almost complete.

Treasurers Report

Chuck Bezler reported the balance as of June 10th in the general fund is \$ 758.00, as well as \$85.00 in preservation.

Membership

Our membership now stands at 55 members. We received an additional \$570 in donations for the 28th Campaign. Ev suggested that we reach out in other mediums, such as YouTube, podcasts, Zoom, and talk to friends and family to help increase the membership. He also noted that people will join, but don't necessarily want to come to a dinner meeting. We should also consider a student membership to draw a younger audience, such as college students.

Preservation and Book Raffle

The 29th Campaign is off and running. At our first meeting in June, the book raffle raised \$72. With our remaining balance from the 28th Campaign (\$85), our Preservation balance stands at \$157. The membership declined to donate any money for battlefield preservation this month. We will be searching for new matching grants for our July meeting.

We are removing the Book Shelf list from the website. If anyone is interested in our inventory, Gary can provide you with a list of our books. In the past, only a few members have purchased books from the list, and we have not always been able to update the list in an adequate time.

While our Civil War book inventory is good, Gary would be interested in receiving books on other historical subjects. Our focus is still on the Civil War, but we will be entertaining other conflicts and issues throughout our history. These books may be added to the raffle selections or offered for sale in addition to the book raffle. Thank you to all for your support!

First Defenders CWRT Preservation History	
29th Season	Total for all Seasons
Total amount raised-\$72	
Total amount donated-\$ 0	Total amount donated - \$ 39,546
Total contribution w/ matching grants-\$ 0	Total contributed w/ matching grants – \$ 563,097

June Program

Targeted Tracks: the Cumberland Valley Railroad in the Civil War

presented by Scott Mingus

The 19th Century witnessed the birth of railroads around the world, but nowhere more than in the United States. Bands of iron began to extend for miles and miles, bringing once distant communities into easy reach. People and products were connected by rail, and Pennsylvania's bountiful Cumberland Valley was no exception. By the time the Civil War broke out, the line linked Harrisburg with Hagerstown playing an important logistical role immediately following the Battle of Antietam. But, the CVRR tracks would be a target for Confederate raiders in 1862 and 1864, and for the Army of Northern Virginia itself during the Gettysburg Campaign in 1863. The railroad would pick itself up, repair the extensive damage to its infrastructure and resume serving the Cumberland Valley until well into the next century. This program tells the story of the CVRR in the Civil War.



Scott Mingus is a retired scientist and executive in the global specialty paper industry and an award-winning author. The Ohio native graduated from Miami University, and was part of the research team that developed the first commercially successful self-adhesive U.S. postage stamps. Scott has written more than 30 Civil War and Underground Railroad books and numerous articles for Gettysburg Magazine and other historical journals. He writes a blog on the Civil War history of York County, PA, where he and his wife Debi live. Scott has received lifetime achievement awards from the York County History Center and the Camp Curtin Historical Society for his many contributions to local history.

29th Campaign Programs		
Date	Speaker	Program
8/12/2025	Wally Heimbach	<i>Colonel Edward Cross and the Fighting 5th New Hampshire</i>
9/9/2025	Jason Elmeron	<i>Robert Todd Lincoln</i>
10/14/2025	Damini Miller	<i>Five Women in the Civil War</i>
November 2025 **	Craig Symonds	<i>Nimitz and Farragut</i>
12/9/2025	Michael Harris	<i>The Philadelphia Campaign (Revolutionary War)</i>

**** The November 2025 meeting will be held on an alternate date to accommodate Craig Symond's presentation. Stay tuned! ****

Clark noted that we are fully booked for the remainder of this year and the 30th Campaign, which starts in April 2026, is booked through October.

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

Website

Craig reported the website online reservations has been fixed. Both he and Vicky received the emails. As a reminder, if you order online for your meal and you do not get an email confirmation, please contact Vicky.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! – Craig noted that the 29th Campaign renewal form is located on the main page of the website under the “Volunteers Needed” icon.

Watch for new content to be uploaded onto the website. There have been recent posts on the spring seminar of the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust and the Andrew Carnegie Free Library & Music Hall conference.

Events / Tours/ and Other Happenings

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.

Summer is upon us and there are a variety of opportunities to take part in! Our Battlefields, Battlefield Trusts, and other historical outlets, including our local Berks History Center, have a variety of tours, seminars and events to fulfill your summer!

Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, July 8, 2025 Meeting & Program: Deadline to order is July 3rd, NOON.

We had 25 members, 1 Guest, the Speaker Frank Garmon, Jr., and his Wife and Kiddo (total 29) attending the June meeting.

Many thanks to Kathy Little for her years and years of service as our Meal Captain.
HIP! HIP HOORAY!

Our meal choices for July are:

Broiled Salmon	Veal Marsala	Manicotti
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If possible, please make your reservation on the website. If you must call in reservations, please CALL or TEXT your menu selection to Vicky Heffner at 610.413.5543 no later than **NOON, July 3, 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 reason after 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 you will be asked to reimburse the Round Table 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, AND WE WILL NOT ACCEPT \$50 OR \$100 BILLS IN PAYMENT. THANKS FOR YOUR COOPERATION.**

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