The First Defenders
Civil War Round Table Newsletter

November 2026, the 30th Campaign



www.firstdefenderscwrt.us

President's Message

Making Decisions

We all spend our waking hours making countless decisions. What shall I wear to work today? Should I watch the baseball playoff game tonight or Monday Night Football? Soup or salad or both tonight for dinner? Within the myriad of decisions we make every day, very few seem to have serious consequences. That said, there are moments in the lives of some people, where the choices they make have profound effects on the future of the nation and indeed the world. Before we meet again, most of us will cast votes in the mid-term elections. This is not an essay on which way to vote. Instead, it is a presentation of two decisions made by two of our most famous Presidents and the far-reaching effects still felt today. Mark Nesbitt, in his book *Saber and Scapegoat*, stated that, "Decisions can only be made once, with the knowledge, experience and limited foresight that is available at the time, then acted upon."

When the ballots were counted on November 8, 1904, Theodore Roosevelt had been elected to a full term as president after serving the remaining term of the assassinated William McKinley. TR never lacked for something to say. His daughter, Alice Roosevelt Longworth, said of her father, "he wanted to be the baby at every christening, the bride at every wedding and the corpse at every wake." That fateful evening, caught up in the glorious moment, TR told the world that he intended to honor the example set by George Washington and not seek a third term. Family and friends were taken aback and asked him to pull back that promise. He thought about it, but saw no reason at that moment to take back his words. In 1908, sticking to his word, he backed his Vice-President, William Taft, who won easily. All seemed well, as Taft was his hand-picked successor and would surely follow TR's policies.

Alas, that was not to be. Taft had different ideas, and by 1912 the relationship with TR had fallen apart. TR announced himself to be a candidate and sought the Republican nomination. The party's power brokers backed Taft, who won the nomination. TR, unwilling to yield, set about founding a third party known as the Progressive Party, or more commonly, the Bull Moose Party. By so doing, the Republican votes were split handing the presidency to Woodrow Wilson. Either candidate on his own would easily have defeated Wilson, but as they say, elections have consequences. Wilson's ideas sent the nation in a different direction, and his racist policies set back the cause of civil rights for decades.

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Fast forward now to March 31, 1963. President John Kennedy made an unannounced visit to Gettysburg National Military Park. Famous photos taken that day show Kennedy driving a convertible with a battlefield guide, Secret Service agents and his wife, Jackie, riding along as passengers. The nation was due to honor the 100th anniversary of Lincoln's Gettysburg address on November 19, 1963. It being the Centennial, the invitation to deliver the keynote speech was extended to Kennedy and most expected him to accept. He had verbally indicated his eagerness to do so. When the formal invitation was sent, Kennedy declined, citing the importance of a political trip to Dallas, as the next presidential election lay only one year in the future and he needed to win Texas. Sadly, that decision meant for Kennedy there was to be no future. How much different might the world be today had he chosen Gettysburg instead of Dallas? We will never know.

When Mrs. Kennedy contemplated honoring her husband, she asked that an eternal flame be placed on his gravesite. She remembered how the eternal flame on the Peace Light Memorial on Oak Hill had touched her soul.

Joe

Round Table Business

President Joe Schaeffer called the September meeting to order at 6:20 p.m. at Giannotti's, with 26 attending. Linda Zeiber offered the prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Joe talked about the passing of Warren Weber which most likely happened during our September Round Table meeting. Joe also discussed the absence of Lisa and Craig as Lisa was hospitalized after experiencing chest pain. A blockage of the right coronary artery was found and stented. She is recovering nicely.

Clark noted that Craig Symonds, naval historian, prolific author and professor at Annapolis, who had spoken at our Round Table recently has passed. He had cancer.

Iris shared that her granddaughter passed away from ovarian cancer.

Ray Kemp had surgery recently but expects to return to the Round Table next season.

Treasurers Report

Chuck reported that the general fund currently has a balance of $ 4,720.58 which includes donations made to the organization since its 501c3 designation; the preservation fund balance is $296.00 for a total fund balance of $5,016.58.

Membership

Bill Burns reported there are currently 42 paid members.

Bill reported that the board recently held a meeting to discuss increasing membership. He said Vicky can send out flyers to many organizations online. Printed flyers are currently on hold. We are looking for a graphic designer to assist with design.

Joe noted that the website needs a mission statement as well as the history of the First Defenders. Some costs will be incurred with all of this. We will need membership approval.

Errol Steffy said the website is "unsecured". This needs to be remedied. Will need to hire someone to fix certain areas.

Preservation and Book Raffle

At our October meeting, the membership voted to donate $150 to the ABT for its "Preserve 127 Acres Across TN, GA and AL." The campaign would preserve acreage at Shiloh National Military Park (32 acres) & Stone's River National Battlefield (30.5 acres) TN, Battle of Dallas (20 acres) GA, and Battle of Spanish Fort & Fort Blakely (45 acres) AL. The total cost is $7.5 million, but with promised grants, the Trust has a goal of $196 thousand to raise. There is a matching grant of $39 to $1. Within two months, two of these plots would be up for sale. The membership moved to make a donation.

Joe asked about two plots in Gettysburg at the Seminary and along the Fairfield Road, there's a $5.50:1 leverage for those.

Our book raffle took in $101.
Our preservation total for November is $247.
Our Bonus Raffle will end at our November meeting.

30TH Campaign	Total for all Seasons
Total amount raised-$ 806	
Total amount donated-$ 650	Total amount donated - $ 41,396
Total contribution with matching grants - $ 16,445	Total contributed with matching grants - $ 591,997

November Program

Uncommon Soldier: Uncommon Heroes

Presented by Bruce Mowday

As we celebrate our nation's 250th anniversary, we are seeing information on our leaders like, Lincoln, Grant, Washington and many others. History books are filled with the exploits (and failures) of the great and near-great. But, what about the common soldiers that sacrificed so much for our freedom? Why were they willing to sacrifice so much? Too, civilians have contributed so much to our freedom. The stories of these patriots are integral to our continuous fight for liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and their stories have a place in our history that deserve to be told.





Bruce E. Mowday is a newspaper reported and award-winning author of more than 25 books on history, sports, business and true crime. He is also a consulting producer with Lionsgate/Blackfin Productions in connection with a documentary on his new book, Killer at the Door. *Mowday has appeared on numerous television and radio shows, and has been active in many historical organizations and initiatives in Chester County where he makes his home. Named a "Five-Star Speaker" by the Civil War Round Table Congress, Mowday was honored in 2025 by the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution with its prestigious "1776-2026 DAR America 250! Commendation."*

30th Campaign Programs		
Date	**Speaker**	**Program**
December 8, 2026	Michael Harris	*Battle of Paoli*

Clark reviewed the remaining 2 speakers in the 30th Campaign. Bruce Mowday on Common Soldiers and Michael Harris in December will talk about the Battle of Brandywine and Paoli.

Bobbie Hampson spoke about the Ringgold Band and their upcoming anniversary. The band president is interested in pursuing a joint venture with the Round Table. The Ringgold Band has a historian. It was decided to invite two Ringgold members to our meeting next month and cover their dinner cost.

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

Dinner Reservations for Tuesday, November 10, 2026 Meeting & Program

Meal Captain's Report for September 2026:

Our meal choices for November are:

Breaded Shrimp Chopped Sirloin Risotto

All meals include 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, Friday, November 6, 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.

Date	Event	Topic	Location
November 8, 2026	**Conference**	Founding Fathers	Stratford Hall 483 Great House Rd Statford, Va. **https://tickets.stratfordhall.org/event/feuding-founders-3j1pp3**
November 6-8, 2026	Assoc of Licensed Battlefield Guides-Gettysburg	ALBG Annual Seminar: From the Peach Orchard to the Brian Farm	**https://gettysburgtour** guides.org/albgseminar