

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

October 2017



www.firstdefenderscwrts.us

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The book has received polarized reviews. It is a score-settling jubilee. It is a rant that veers between regret and righteousness, and is an extended defense of a political style. It has been called an apologia for a failure that should not have been.

The reviews are in, and, SURPRISE!, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, garners only a "B" rating even from its most sympathetic readers. It seems Hillary Clinton is not the first to explain away a loss and fix blame on the reasons for it in print. That honor may belong to Jefferson Davis.

Davis would require 1,500 pages spread out over two volumes to tell his story (Secretary Clinton managed to keep hers to a more modest single 512-page tome). Then, as now, the work found favor with supporters while being panned by at least one academic as, "perhaps the longest, most turgid, and most self-righteous defense of a failed political cause ever written by an American." For anyone who has tried to read it for the sake of enjoyment, there is near-universal agreement that root canal may be more enjoyable and less painful. Davis in prose is as bland as Davis in person.

The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government promotes the view the Southern struggle for independence was as honorable and righteous as the fight for American independence 85 years prior. In legalistic prose that would be an anathema today, Davis defends the morality and goodness of slavery and the hypocrisy of Northerners who also once embraced servitude while continuing to profit from it to the detriment of the Southern planters. He excoriates Abraham Lincoln's duplicity in opposing American involvement in Mexico's right to self-govern while using armed force against a similar effort by the Confederacy. (Davis also blames Lincoln for "forcing" the South to fire on Fort Sumter.)

Unlike Secretary Clinton, Jefferson Davis did not go on an extended book tour, conduct media interviews or schedule speaking engagements. In fact, while *What Happened* sold more than 300,000 copies in less than a week, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* would sell a mere 22,000 copies in the nine years following its publication in 1881.

Jefferson Davis had hoped his effort would provide a measure of financial security for himself and his family in their declining years, but he would have to file a

lawsuit against the publisher that would only be settled after his death to even provide a modest income for his widow. He also hoped it would serve as a defense of the Southern cause and define its place in history. And, while Davis may have been among the first to write about a lost cause, he would not be the last.

For the Glory,

Craig

Round Table Business

President Craig Breneiser called the September meeting to order at 6:25 p.m. at the Inn at Reading on September 12, 2017. Greg Stull offered a prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance for the 67 members and guests present. Following dinner and a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday" for our friend, guest and speaker, Dennis Frye, Craig began the business meeting reminding everyone of member Bob Shuman who remains in a nursing facility in Hamburg, PA. Bob's current address is given in the September newsletter for those who would like to send a card or note. Introduction of new members guests was next on the agenda. Craig also informed us that Don Stripling experienced cardiac problems over the summer and now has several stents resolving the issue. He is currently in cardiac rehab and expects to be in Gettysburg in October for the AAP work day.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Tim Antosy presented his report at the September meeting. Our balance as of September 20, 2017, stood at \$ 3731.32 with \$204 ear-marked for preservation. The unencumbered balance as of September 20, 2017, is \$3527.32.

Preservation

Mark Quattroch thanked the membership for supporting preservation through tickets sold for the book raffle. He noted that contributions have totaled \$99,000 for land preservation over the past years. He announced eight current locations that are seeking donations. Mark made a motion to send \$200.00 to Gettysburg to help with the Oak Ridge initiative. He also announced that there is no new news about Camp Letterman and that the plans for a casino have once again fallen through.

Mark distributed the polo shirts and name tags that had been ordered last season.

**On a personal note, I would like to thank Mark for his work in researching and ordering these items for us. The shirts are great-looking and will be an asset as members wear them proudly bearing our logo and the celebration of our 20th year. L. Z.

Joe's Jaunts

Joe Schaeffer announced that the fall "jaunt" is scheduled for November 4, 2017. Final details are still being worked on. He will give more information at the October meeting.

Joe also made a pitch for the importance of enlisting new members to the round table. He reminded us that there are no limits on membership since we have been meeting at the Inn at Reading. Everyone needs to understand that the money paid for meals goes entirely to the Inn for our dinners. All raffle money is used for battlefield preservation. Membership dues pay our speaker fees. If membership remains stagnant, dues will need to be increased in order to pay for speakers. Everyone can help in the enlistment of new members. It is essential for our survival to do so.

Programs

Dave Unger reported that most of the speakers for the current campaign are now in place. The membership is currently 58 which is well under our usual strength. Steve French will speak about McNeill's Raiders in October. Greg Stull has agreed to speak about Leonidas Polk at Perryville for the December meeting. In February, David Ward will speak about the 96th PA Volunteer Regiment.

Website

Webmaster Lisa Breneiser reported that work on our website was done over the summer. It is not completely finished but is nearing completion. Changes will be noticed next month when meals are ordered online. The new website looks different from the old one and includes blog posts.

The new site was funded by Craig Breneiser and will have the same address: www.firstdefenderscwr.us.

AAP

Barbara Shafer announced that Adopt-A-Position volunteers will be meeting on Thursday, October, 2017, at the parking lot at Lowe's on Route 724 at 9 a.m. to travel to Gettysburg to maintain "our" adopted monuments. If you would like to join the group and have never done so, contact Don Stripling or Barbara for additional details. The day always involves more fun than work; it's Gettysburg after all!

Preservation Corner

Welcome to another season as we successfully kicked it off with our September meeting. During the meeting we were able to raise \$163 for Preservation from our book raffle. Thank you to all of those who book tickets or made donations.

In addition, we donated \$200 to the Civil War Trust to put towards a \$10-\$1 Matching Grant to help preserve 2 acres of Oak Ridge in Gettysburg. This makes our Total Contribution to date at \$2000. We are off to a great start for the Season.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank Dennis Frye for all the great compliments he gave us for our Preservation efforts these past 20 seasons. He is a fantastic speaker and

it was a great feeling as he thanked the Roundtable for the money we have donated and made some great comments about why Preservation is important. Thank you Dennis for everything you do and for continuing to come to our Roundtable and present. It is greatly appreciated!

That's all for this month. Until next time!!

Mark Quattro

October Program

Presented by Steve French:

"The Kidnapping of the Generals"

This program will relate McNeill Ranger's successful February 1865 capture of Generals Crook and Kelley from their Cumberland, Maryland hotel rooms and their escape into their mountain stronghold fifty miles away. While not as well known as Mosby's Rangers, John Hanson McNeill and his band of irregulars caused the Union military (and the Baltimore Railroad) no small amount of fits. And, while the more illustrious Mosby had one captured general to his credit, "Hanse" McNeill would capture two! This will be an excellent presentation on a subject long overdue for some improved public relations that you won't want to miss! Steve will have several of his books available for purchase, too.

Steve French, a middle school history teacher in Martinsburg, West Virginia, is the author of several Civil War books including Imboden's Brigade in the Gettysburg Campaign, for which he received the 2008 Bachelder-Coddington Literary Award and the 2009 Civil War Round Table of Gettysburg Book Award. His most recent book is Rebel Chronicles: Raiders, Scouts, and Train Robbers of the Potomac. French has written over 70 Civil War articles and numerous book reviews that have appeared in such publications as The Washington Times, Gettysburg Magazine and North & South Magazine.

Speakers and Programs for 2017-2018

November 14	Gene Schmeil	General Jacob Cox
December 12	Greg Stull	Leonidas Polk at Perryville
January 9	Dale Kratzer	Naval Schemes, Plots & Interesting Tidbits
February 13	David Ward	69th PA Volunteers
March 13	Wayne Motts	Picketts Charge
	Jim Hessler	
April 10	TBA	
May 6	Jim Hessler	Sickles at Gettysburg

**Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, October 10, 2017
Meeting:**

If possible, please make your meal choices/reservation on the website. Our meal choices for October include: Chicken Parmesan; Smoked Country Style Sausage with onion gravy; Potato Crusted Cod with dill cream sauce; or Rigatoni with zesty vegetable marinara sauce. Salad, soup, starch, vegetables, dessert, rolls, coffee, tea, and water are included. The price is \$25.00 inclusive for meals.

If you make your reservation online and you do not receive a thank-you and/or a 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, October 6, 2017, which is also the deadline for online reservations.

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 the Inn at Reading, 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.**

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