

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

March 2019



www.firstdefenderscwrts.org

Please note: Because of the cancellation of the February 2019 meeting of the Round Table, there is no new business to report. Refer to the February newsletter for the most recent committee news.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

News from North Carolina reports that yet another military statue was recently targeted for destruction. Once again, the Old Dominion suffers an attack on history by would-be purveyors of political correctness. Almost...

It seems these "Midnight Marauders" suffer from a staggering dearth of historical acumen or an understanding of some basic tenets of science (thus leading to the inescapable question of whether they ever went to ANY class in high school).

First, the science. Pouring lighter fluid on marble will, at best, make a temporary show and leave some scorching. But, with a melting temperature of over 1300 degrees Celsius, a tanker-truck load of Zippo is unlikely to make any significant inroads into damaging the marble sculpture.

Then, there is the history. There have been many military figures with the surname of "Lee," but not every statue is of Robert E. In this instance, the target was Major General William Lee, the father of U.S. Army airborne operations in World War II. While it is possible William and Robert have some common lineage dating back to the days of King Arthur, there appears to be no evidence the former commander of the 101st Airborne "Screaming Eagles" has any kinship to the "Gray Fox."

It was George Santayana who wrote in his 1905-06 classic *The Life of Reason: The Phases of Human Progress* that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." "Human progress" appears doubtful based on the scientific and historical capabilities exhibited by these chuckleheads, to which I would add this 21st century observation: you can't fix stupid.

Craig

Joe's Jaunts

The next field trip, known as Joe's Jaunts, will take place on Saturday, May 4, 2019. We will visit Harper's Ferry with retired National Park Service Ranger/Historian Dennis Frye. Dennis has spoken multiple times to our round table and is a truly dynamic speaker and guide. You will not forget nor will you be bored on a tour with Dennis. You can be sure that we will visit some sites not normally seen by the public.

Expect a long day with very minimal and light walking. As usual we will carpool, so at the March meeting, I will begin to inquire who wishes to go and start to organize drivers.

We plan to meet Dennis near Boonesboro around 10:00 a.m. and tour until 3 or 4 p.m. You should bring drinks, snacks and lunch for yourself. For those who wish, we will stop on the way home at Inn 94, New Oxford, for dinner.

Joe Schaeffer

Berks History Center "*Stroll Through History*"

The Berks History Center is hosting another *Stroll Through History* on Saturday, April 6, 2019, at 12:30 and 2:30 p.m. Dig up the past with guided tours of Aulenbach's Cemetery and enjoy history presentations by Civil War enthusiast, Mark Pflum. Participants, please meet 15 minutes prior to tour start time at the upper parking lot of Francesca's Restaurant (formerly Arner's) on Howard Boulevard, Mt. Penn. Cost is \$5 for members of the Berks History Center and First Defenders, Berks County Civil War Round Table, and \$8 for non-members. Pre-payment required by calling 610.375.4375.

March Program

The Sultana Disaster

The *Sultana* was a classic Mississippi River side-wheel steamboat heading north with an overloaded passenger manifest on April 27, 1865 when three of her four boilers exploded near Memphis. In the worst maritime disaster in United States history, the disaster claimed nearly 1,200 victims.



Taking on passengers and cargo at Vicksburg, the *Sultana* was intended to carry fewer than 400 people. But, with the end of the Civil War, the upriver trip would include many former Union POWs anxious to return home. When the *Sultana* left the dock, there were more than 2,100 souls-on-board a vessel whose captain already had concerns about her mechanical condition.

It was about 2 o'clock in the morning as the *Sultana* was fighting a strong spring flood current that her first boiler exploded with two others following in quick succession. Passengers were scalded, burned to death in the ensuing fire or thrown overboard into icy waters to perish. Yet, at least 760 would survive to tell their stories.

The assassination of President Abraham Lincoln less than two weeks before consumed the nation's interest, and the *Sultana* disaster would be relegated to "below the fold" in news reporting. Yet in disaster, there are fascinating stories of courage to be told and important lessons to be learned.

Jim Lawler is a retired computer software engineer and a long-time resident of Chester County where he is a member of the Brandywine Valley Civil War Round Table. Jim is also a past Camp Commander and current Secretary-Treasurer of the Bradbury Camp, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. Jim's interest in the Civil War is due to his Great-Grandfather, Private Michael Dougherty of the 13th Pennsylvania Cavalry, a Medal of Honor Recipient, and survivor of the prisoner-of-war camps in Richmond and Andersonville. He also survived the Sultana Disaster.



Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, March 12, 2019 Meeting:

If possible, please make your meal choices/reservations on the website. Our meal choices for March include: Stuffed Chicken with Sausage and Sage; Beef Stroganoff over egg noodles; Tropical Glazed Salmon; or Pasta Carbonara, Penne Pasta with peas and mushrooms in a cream sauce. 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, March 8, 2019, 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.**

Speakers and Program Topics for 2019

4/9/2019	Scott Mingus Sr.	The Louisiana Tigers at Gettysburg
5/14/2019	Paul Kahan	U.S. Grant and Reconstruction

Newsletter contact: Linda Zeiber, zeibers@comcast.net

