

The First Defenders Civil War Round Table Newsletter

May 2019



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"We're not going to make America great again. It was never that great."

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, August 15, 2018

"I think to myself, exactly when did you think America was great?" That, "...past never in fact really existed, this notion of greatness."

(Former) Attorney General Eric Holder, March 27, 2019

"Make America great again."

President Donald Trump, pretty much every day since June 16, 2015

Yet more validation for the "Breneiser Theory of Politics" that there exists no educational requirement to be an elected (or appointed) public official. You can say pretty much any dumb thing you want or prove just how ignorant of history you are and still rise to the pinnacle of the political stratosphere in America.

"Great" is, of course, entirely subjective. The North certainly felt it was "great" that it had prevailed victorious after four years of fratricidal war that left hundreds of thousands dead and millions injured, but the South surely did not describe its ruined country and industry and the loss of its antebellum identity as "great."

One would think the three gentlemen opining on American greatness would, themselves, extol the virtues. Governor Cuomo's grandparents emigrated from Italy and Sicily to seek a new life in America, and their son and grandson would rise to occupy the executive mansion of one of the most important and influential states since the time of the country's founding. It is difficult to believe any of three generations of Cuomos could conclude they had not experienced American promise and greatness.

Attorney General Holder would become the first African-American to hold the post as the nation's chief law enforcement officer during the administration of the first African-American president. Unthinkable at the time of the Civil War (and even a generation or so ago), it is hard to imagine anyone thinking such achievement as anything other than "great" in a country where their forbears were once declared by the Supreme Court to be not even entitled to citizenship.

And then there is Donald Trump. Grandson of a German immigrant, he inherited and expanded the family business to such an extent that he would become a billionaire, an author and a television personality before assuming the highest office in the land: the presidency of the United States. Only in America can a commoner achieve such greatness.

The first immigrants may have come to America as long as 60,000 years ago, and they have continued to arrive ever since from every part of the globe. Not very many have returned to their ancestral homes or emigrated to other countries. They seem to have found something special here, and have continued to build on America's rich bounty and immeasurable resources to produce the greatest nation the world has ever known.

Judging the past on the basis of present-day knowledge and wisdom leaves our generation open to criticism by those yet unborn that will have built on our greatness in the same way we have benefited from that of those who came before us.

So to Governor Cuomo, Attorney General Holder and President Trump I would suggest the American journey has been one of exceptional greatness from the beginning, and each of you, along with millions of others, have benefited from that greatness. Rather than question the past, it is for you...indeed, for all of us...to continue to reach even loftier heights by building a future where America becomes ever greater for those who will follow in our footsteps.

Craig

Round Table Business

President Craig Breneiser called the April meeting of the First Defenders Civil War Round Table to order at 6:20 p.m. at the Inn at Reading on April 9, 2019, for 47 members and guests in attendance. Following a prayer given by Ev Binns and the Pledge of Allegiance, Craig welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited everyone to enjoy dinner and then resumed the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

Craig announced that 33 surveys regarding round table issues have been returned. He urged everyone to fill one out since the results will be quite helpful in determining the future for all of us. The survey is available on our website if you did not receive one at previous meetings.

Chair reports were given as follows:

Preservation

The April meeting of the round table was a success with raising \$140 from our book raffle. Again I wish to thank all of the members who bought tickets or made donations. Special thanks go to our guest speaker, Scott Mingus, for donating one of his books toward the raffle. All of this is greatly appreciated!

The American Battlefield Trust has come out with a new matching grant of \$6.89-\$1 for two battlefields: South Mountain in the area of Crampton's Gap and Shiloh. The 96th Pennsylvania Vol. Infantry with Company G coming from Hamburg, PA, was at Crampton's Gap, and it was one of three battles that were important in its history by helping to break through the Confederate lines in the gap.

The Gettysburg Foundation has successfully raised money to start work on the Farm House. The plan for the house is to: (1) create an interpretive center in the house (2) create a recording studio to do podcasts (3) to create a Conference Room to do classes and presentations (4) space to do breakout sessions, (5) have modern bathrooms and (6) a catering kitchen. Work will be commencing soon and the plan is to have the official ribbon cutting for the house on October 4th during the Gettysburg Foundation's Fall Muster.

That is all for this month! Until next time!

Mark

Treasurer's Report

Tim Antosy reported a balance in the treasury of \$2993.24 as of March 13, 2019. There is currently \$191.00 available for preservation which includes \$150.00 set aside for a special project. The unencumbered balance as of April's meeting stands at \$2802.24. Our membership stands at 78.

Timothy M. Antosy

Meal Captain

Kathy Little reminded us that the deadline for ordering meals is always Friday at noon before the next scheduled meeting. If you have any problems ordering, please call Kathy. Her number is available in the section for "Dinner Reservations" each month. You should receive two replies by email after making reservations online. If you do not, be sure to let Kathy know by telephone. Your reservations may not have gone through.

Programs

Dave Unger reported that Paul Kahan will be the final speaker of the current campaign. See details of his presentation at the end of the newsletter. He noted that next year's programs are in place with the exception of March. He explained that the surveys with your input are very helpful in determining programs.

Joe's Jaunts-Gettysburg

The next field trip, famously 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 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 contact Joe ASAP if you have not already discussed travel arrangements.

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

Book Raffle News

Gary Hertzog brought 13 books which were raffled during the April meeting. He thanked our speaker Scott Mingus for adding one of his books to the raffle.

You may email Gary at gshertzog@verizon.net to purchase any titles outright which are currently listed on our website. The cost is minimal. Thank you once again for your generous support of battlefield preservation.

AAP

The Spring date to work at our sites at Gettysburg National Park is Thursday, June 6.

We will meet at Lowes at 9 and carpool to Gettysburg or you may meet us at the first work site. We work on two of the sites have lunch and then work on the remaining sites.

First Defenders has adopted six sites, John Buford monument, John Reynolds monument, Gregg's monument located at East Cavalry Field, 18th PA Cavalry located at Big Round Top, WV 1st Cav (Farnsworth) and Benning's Brigade (TX) on South Confederate.

We also work on the 6th PA Cavalry and 8th PA Cavalry sites adopted by Barbara Shafer.

We will have eight sites to work on. To accomplish this we need YOU to volunteer, please let Don Stripling (610-750-3998) or Barbara Shafer (484-336-8995) know of your interest.

Berks History Center "Stroll Through History" Rescheduled

The Berks History Center's *Stroll Through History* is now scheduled for Saturday, April 24, 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 Berk's History Center and First Defenders, Berks County Civil War Round Table, and \$8 for non-members. Pre-payment required by calling 610.375.4375.

Election of Officers

May signals the election of officers for your round table. If you have an interest in becoming an officer, be sure to attend the meeting and contact Craig Breneiser or Mark Quattrock who will assure you a place on the "ballot". No campaigning is necessary!

May Program

The Presidency of U.S. Grant & the Impact on Reconstruction

Voters went to the polls in 1868 more than three years after Appomattox, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and the tumultuous presidency of Andrew Johnson. There was little question that Union hero of the war Ulysses S. Grant would become the 18th president of the United States. With the effects of the war still fresh in public memory and the problematic Reconstruction still uncontrolled, the nation turned to Grant.

Much of the martial capacity imbued in Grant during wartime would not translate into political capabilities required in civilian government administration. Unique political, economic and cultural forces had been unleashed by the Civil War that Grant would need to address during his tumultuous two terms as chief executive frequently overshadowed by his wartime service and the administration's many scandals.

Historical reassessment, though, has shed new light on the business of politics in the decade after the Civil War, and Grant has emerged as an energetic and even progressive executive who faced some of the most difficult issues dealing with Reconstruction and the evolving, expanding United States.



Dr. Paul Kahan earned a Ph.D. in U.S. history from Temple University. Prior to that, Dr. Kahan earned an M.A. in Modern American History & Literature from Drew University and B.A.s in history and English (with minors in medieval/Renaissance studies and music) from Alfred University. He has published several books, including "Eastern State Penitentiary: A History," "Amiable Scoundrel: Simon Cameron, Lincoln's Scandalous Secretary of War," "The Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant: Preserving the Civil War's Legacy," and "The Bank War: Andrew Jackson, Nicholas Biddle, and the Fight for American Finance."



Dinner Reservations for the Tuesday, May 14, 2019 Meeting:

If possible please make your meal choices/reservations on the website. Our meal choices for May include: Chicken Fried Steak; Meatloaf with mushroom gravy; Haddock with butter crumb top; or Linguini Forno with fresh grilled vegetables tossed in garlic sauce and pasta. Salad, 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 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, May 10, 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.