

## The Signal Station

1st Quarter 2025 Issue 6

### **Greetings & Salutations**



As the clock ticks those last moments before midnight, we look back upon the year to make peace with what has occurred. Like Scrooge on Christmas morning, we come to realize there is still time. We have so many more decisions to make and mystery roads to turn down. How many more books about Gettysburg will be published this year. Wherever you may be, may the New Year bring you more joy than you thought possible.

#### Cheers To 2025!

Be sure to **renew your membership** so you will receive an invite to our Holiday Banquet again. Speaking of, this event was once again a smashing success with Charlie Fennell regaling us with stories of Culps Hill. **Please give an extra Thanks** to those who *gave* and those who *collected* the gifts for the Holiday Banquet.

**Members:** Linda Seamon, Linda Joswick, Dave Willmann, GBCWRT Book Committee, Kirsten Boyd, Ted Hirt, Carolyn Ivanoff, Lynn Heller, Roger Heller, Michele Hessler, Lucy Green, Brad Gottfried, Deb Novotny.

**Businesses:** Adams County Historical Society, Studio Elysian, The Union Drummer Boy, The Jeweler's Daughter, Gettysburg Emporium, The Regimental Quartermaster, Lord Nelson's Gallery, For the Historian, Mason Dixon Distillery, La Bella Italia.



Your CWRT Board Members. Photo taken by our multi-talented server at Perkins



#### Officers

Bruce Davis, President

Michele Hessler, Vice President

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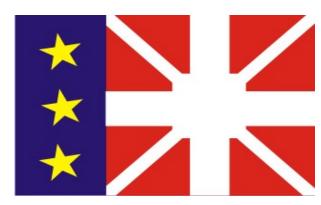
Lynn Heller, Facebook Administrator/Event Planner

#### **Board Members**

(2024) Lynn Heller; (2025) Rip Engle, Roger Heller; (2026) Ted Hirt, Jaimee Umstattd; (2027)Randall Livingston, Beth Wheiler.

Board Member Ex Officio: Therese Orr

Committee for The Bachelder-Coddington Distinguished Book Award of the Civil War Round Table of Gettysburg: Therese Orr, Randy Livingston, Tom Reed, Jeannie Schearer, Rip Engle, Brenda Ritterpusch



CHRONICLES OF "THE MOST IMPORTANT ROUND TABLE, IN THE MOST IMPORTANT SMALL TOWN, AT THE MOST IMPORTANT BATTLEFIELD, IN THE MOST IMPORTANT COUNTRY IN THE WORLD."

Joe Mieczkowski

#### President's Letter

I'm writing this on December 29 with "Auld Lang Syne" playing in my head; hence this retrospective:

The Civil War Round Table of Gettysburg initiated 2024 with a presentation by Codie Eash of the Seminary Ridge Museum speaking to the little-known Gettysburg Reunion of 1869. The officers-only occasion was held at the newly opened Springs Hotel and Codie suggested organizers, including David McConaughy, were looking to fill the rooms and profit off the attendant publicity. In February, my own self was afforded opportunity to brag on Oliver Otis Howard, positing the Christian General's decision making on July 1, 1863, saved the Union. Yes, I received pushback; No, I was not deterred. Allen Thompson was with us in March, sharing material from his prize-winning book on the Longstreet countermarch, "In The Shadow Of The Round Tops."

In April, Steven Evangelista told the story of Battery B, First Rhode Island Light Artillery, better known, perhaps, as Brown's Battery. The famous "Gettysburg Gun" has been moved from the Rhode Island State House and is now displayed at the Varnum Armony Museum. In May, award-winning poet Lisa Samia read selections from her highly acclaimed volume, "The Nameless And Faceless Of The Civil War: Gettysburg, Manassas & More." That same evening, the Cal Doucette Award for Community Service was presented to well-deserving Wendy Allen.

Our outdoor season began with a Saturday morning program along Hancock Avenue, led by Licensed Battlefield Guide and former Round Table President Fred Hawthorne. In June, LBG Jasan Hileman led us from Ziegler's Grove to East Cemetery Hill in the footsteps of Samuel Sprigg "Red" Carroll's "Gibraltar Brigade." Yes, Carroll's brigade provided heroic service in repulsing the Harry Hay's led night attack of July 2, 1863, driving the enemy from the guns of R. Bruce Ricketts; No, they did not single-handedly save the day, Hileman crediting 11<sup>th</sup> Corps reinforcements for rushing across Baltimore Pike to save Michael Wiedrich's battery. Our July meeting was in the Rose Wheatfield—the second of what will be three explorations of the fighting in those 19 acres with LBG Larry Korczyk. Ralph Siegel led our August tour along Howard Avenue, north of town. The Licensed Battlefield Guide focused on the German immigrants who fought with 11<sup>th</sup> Corps, most famously, Lincoln's great friend Carl Schurz.

Back inside the ACHS in September, Derek Maxfield spoke to his book, "Man On Fire: William T. Sherman In The Civil War." Maxfield's telling of his subject's life story never got to the war itself and we're planning to have him back. Carolyn Ivanoff, herself a member of our Round

Table and one of our favorite presenters, elaborated on material from her wonderful volume, "We Fought At Gettysburg: First Hand Accounts by the Survivors of the 17<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Volunteer Infantry." In November, retired Park Ranger John Heiser drew a full house for his presentation on the George Rose Farm. We put a bow on the year with another festive Lynn Heller-organized Holiday Banquet, graced by Charlie Fennell bringing us up-to-speed on what's happening at Culp's Hill.

Having started with a Scottish saying for times gone by, so we close with a Highlander hope for time to come:

Lang may yer lum reek!

—Bruce Davis



#### **Autumn Meetings**



Photo by Jaimee Umstattd



Photo by Jaimee Umstattd



November 21, 2024

The night started with Randy Livingston's

on the stage for '5 Good Minutes' speaking

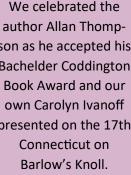
on his research on the 53rd Penna Infantry.

This evening John Heiser presented "The

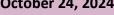
George Rose Farm: The Center of the

Photo by Jaimee Umstattd

#### October 24, 2024



We celebrated the



son as he accepted his **Bachelder Coddington** presented on the 17th



Photo courtesy of Lynn Light-Heller

Photo by Jaimee Umstattd



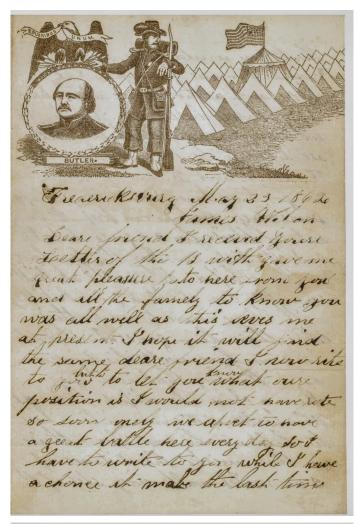
Photo by Jaimee Umstattd

Photo by Jaimee Umstattd









that you would every here from I soil for me from for but! hope not although we will have very hard battle very likely the hardest was fught get the revels all Sopere to be for over Strong betwin Frederick and Richmond we have to see to kichmond to morrow seff Davis days that he can keep Me Dow out of theire for 20 years but I don't think he can they think as long as they whiped Me sowell at bull sun they can do it a gain but they will have more to whip this time than him general Shredels has come fere with his division he is the boy that will give them a chase he whiled them at Wenshester and came on here here to help us he come from theire. in three weeks the distance of 2 60 miles walk cevery step of the

#### **Member Showcase**

When you tell your friends and family that you are interested in something you may accidentally open a floodgate of thoughtful gifts. I have a very eclectic collection of owls thanks to mentioning I liked them *once* to my sister. Thanks Mary. However, sometimes a gift is more than delightful kitsch. Sometimes, you become a steward for an object. That happened to me in 2024. Some of my oldest friends passed into my care, a letter. There was little to no provenance for the piece because they acquired it through an auction gallery. Undeterred, I went down a rabbit hole and with the assistance of my colleague, Billy Griffith, we were able to uncover more on the author. It is my wish to share this piece with you. You will find it in it's entirety in the next two pages. It was written in real time and is altogether exciting, unnerving and a snapshot full of personality.

This letter was written by James Mahoney of the 90th PA Infantry who was in Fredericksburg for just two more days after writing this. He will find himself at Antietam later that year and after healing from wounds received there. He will be with the 90th again here at Gettysburg on Oak Ridge. Finally in 1864 he is transferred to the 11th PA where he could have met Sallie. My research hasn't delved that deep yet.

I have transcribed it exactly as it is written, so there is no added punctuation, capitalization, spelling is as is. Since this is a digital newsletter you should be able to zoom in on the letter if you'd like a closer look.

-Jaimee

Fredericksburg May 23, 1862 James Wilson

Dear friend I received youre letter of the 18 which gave me great pleasure to here from you and all the famely to know you was all well as this (illegible) me at present. I hope it will find the same deare friend I now rite to you but to let know what oure position is I would not have rote so soon onely we about to have a great battle here every day so I have to write to you while I have a chance it mabe the last time

that you would ever here from (illegible) me for me from you but I hope not although we will have very hard battle very likely the hardest was fought yet the rebels are supose to be 100000 strong betwine Frederick and Richmond we have to go to Richmond tomorrow. Jeff Davis says that he can keep McDowell out of theire for 20 years but I dont think he can they think as long as they whiped McDowell at bull run they can do it again but they will have more to whip this time than him general Shiedels has come here with his division he is the boy that will give them a chase he whiped them at Wenchester and came on here here to help us he come from theire in three weeks the distance of 260 miles walk every step of the

was the moste of his men had to throw their sheet got to sove they were hard looking Soldiers Raged and dirty but they all fell good they want to get at the rebels we will soone have a chance before the mudle of negh week theire is to be aman Shot here to morow or the day after of gest wie will have to pass by him wehen he Is shot it tis most to four for him he has been shot 2 before on picket gained his more is shot of on one side but this will be his last time to be shot he tide a old woman and went at her dauflistes against her will he was Court marsabled and cintensed to be shet fin Isel in youre letter that you thought I would be back in to weeks but fam afmid they will be the longest I ever saw I hope that I

donte lite untill I right a game will get back by fall if I dink be back then I don't think I ever will get back it think if we gain this. battle the whelever will be brank up but if they should gain it it will four as back to mouth's more fin I believe I have tilde you all I now this tis of will send my catifacate this time we got payed the day that I rote you the other letter we got payed in the after. noon but I did not get much they enely payed me for a month and fere days I have sime money fet they prime to pay the 20th of this munt againe but they did not do so when you get the certifacate give it to youre father toll him to keep it straightend out or els it will out rite soone and let me four how all the famely is give my love and respects to all the famely no more frompour friend fames Shahoney but sprewell facuell for ever fin we have to care 50 yours wase the moste of this men had to throw their shoes away theire feet got so sore they were hard looking soldiers raged and dirty but they all fell good they want to get at the rebels we will soone have a chance before the middle of next week theire is to be a man shot here tomorrow or the day after I gess we will have to pass by him when he is shot it is moste to (illegible) for him he has been shot before on picket gaurd his nose is shot of on one side but this will be his last time to shot he tide a old woman and went at her daughters against her will he was court marshalled and cinstensed to be shot Jim I see in youre letter that you thought I would be back in 2 weeks but I am afraid they will be the longest I ever saw I hope that I

Don't rite until I right again

will get back by fall if I dont be back then I dont think I ever will get back. I think if we gain this battle the rebeliun will be braak up but if they should gain it it will put us back 6 months now Jim I belive I have tolde you all I now this time I will send my certifacate this time we got payed the day that I rote you the other letter we got payed in the after noon but I did not get much they only payed me for a month and few days I have some money yet they promised to pay the 20th of this mont againe but they did not do so when you get the certifacate give it to youre father tell him to keep it straightened out or els it will (out) rite soone and let me know how all the famely is give my love and respects to all the famely no more from your friend James Mahoney but Farewell farewell for ever Jim we have to care 50 rounds of cartrige.

Share something you have found with us. Email photos and a story or description to: gettysburgcwrtnewsletter@gmail.com

PA Memorial where the bronze plaque to the 90th PA INFANTRY is emblazoned with the name James S. Mahoney.





### Nothing can prepare you for what you don't know.

### The LBG Exam.

The parking lot was very full at the place lovingly referred to as HACC; pronounced /hack/. This is Harrisburg Area Community College's satellite campus in Gettysburg. To the North lies a Weis and just mere blocks South is the famed Coster Avenue. It had been a dry week. And by dry week, I mean, I wasn't going to prematurely celebrate or drown my stress the weeks leading up to the Licensed Battlefield Guide Exam. I needed as many brain cells functioning at full capacity as I could muster. That being said, there was an unopened bottle of Angel's Envy Bourbon awaiting my arrival home on December 7th, 2024.



Many things had occurred since I had registered for the guide exam. My study companions and I had been meeting Wednesdays, keeping each other focused with flashcards, quiz questions and deep dives on the monuments. When I flew solo, each day I wrote out as much as I knew of the Order of Battle by heart in a notebook. First it was the Corps Commanders, then Division Commanders, down to Brigade level. Time was running out and I'd been given hints from others that Regiment level wouldn't be necessary unless they have a story or nickname along with them. This is something that would come back to bite me in the future. I read everything I could about Reconstruction, finished Coddington and reread the Battle Hymn Republic by James McPherson. Audible is truly a wonderful app that can get those words in your head even when you are Winterizing your garden. As Daylight Saving Time came to its end, we found creative ways to get alongside those battlefield stories. Darkness came quickly in November so we benefitted in the numerous parking lots that sidle up to the battlefield.

One day out of the blue, I got a message from my colleague, Mike Lentz. As it turns out, a reporter from the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) has caught wind of the difficulty of this exam and wanted to write a story about it. His focus would be on Mike while also interviewing the others in his study group. In November, Mike, Debbie Jones and myself, shared our reasons for taking the exam, explained what we are studying and why we are doing this to ourselves. He even sent out a photographer to take some excellent photos. The article came out online first and then in the physical paper on December 5<sup>th</sup>, a scant 2 days before exam day. We did receive some jeers and pokes by our friends when we walked by because the online version got around like wildfire. My proud father bought all the physical WSJ papers in the Slate Belt. We had our moment in the sun like the celebrities we are. Days before the exam, we received an official NPS email stating CBS was sending reporters to the exam site and it was our choice to speak with them or not.

The day had come. I woke early and glanced through my study sheets one more time. When I arrived it was a balmy 36 degrees Fahrenheit. Friends huddled together waiting for those formidable doors to open. 148 people out of the 158 registrants lined up. We saw familiar faces and new. I met a wonderful 18-year-old named Grace who was taking the test and was cool, calm and collected. I saw grown men sweating bullets. I heard loud nervous laughs and I saw genuine fear in some faces. At the stroke of 8:15 a.m. we entered in two lines and were directed to registration by a dapperly dressed Rob Abbott. A wall of smiling Battlefield Guides & Park Service friends greeted us. Everyone was welcoming and encouraging, "best of luck," "you got this," "fingers crossed," "knock'em dead", "you'll do great"; And the most unsettling, "see you on the other side." We were given our test room assignment alphabetically based on our last name. Luckily, I know a few people who share T-Z with me and I had some friends in my room. My study partners were in another room down the hall. At 9 a.m. we were given the large envelope, our fates sealed inside. As we were assigned our 3 digit number to write on our booklet I heard one person exclaim, "143, YEAH, Ben Crippen's Regiment!" There was much rejoicing and then we listened intently on the instructions. The wait was over, 3 years for me; 7 years for others.



The exam was in front of me. There was something mighty humbling at that moment. I broke the tape and was greeted with the photo you see to the left. A reminder that you are daring to become a part of Gettysburg's story. Have you considered that? I thumbed through the exam booklet with a thrill. There were beautiful full color images on the battlefield as well as sketches and maps. At the end of the book, I mentally noted, 161 numbered questions. I would come to find out later there were 382 blanks fill in. Best laid plans are

thrown out the window at these moments. I went in thinking I would see how many questions there were and decide if I had time to write out the Order of Battle so it would be readily available. The first 3-4 pages didn't require it so I got started filling in answers. It didn't take long to realize I didn't study enough. 3 hours later, we walked out of the building like zombies, leg dragging and all. I saw some guys with fancier than usual cameras approaching the people shuffling toward the door. I strafed to the right and got away. Most of us were just glad to make it to our car. We had to leave our mobile phones and smart watches in our vehicles so first off, I told my family I was still alive. I was surprisingly hungry after 3 hours on a steady diet of water and cough drops. I heard another examinee say he brought a bottle of Pepto Bismol for breakfast and he was leaving it in his car for lunch. I'm sure others feverishly began looking up the answers to the most frustrating questions when they reconnected to the world wide web. My cookie butter sandwich was satisfying and grounding.

At 1 p.m. we lined up once again to complete the Essay portion. The doors were locked up tight so we commiserated with friends in the chill of the day until Carol Reardon allowed entry. This portion required the completion of 3 single page essays graded on a rubric. This was another reason why I've been writing the Order of Battle every day, to strengthen my hand muscles. The first essay, everyone had to answer. The second and third had two choices of which you had to pick one. My last two months cramming the Reconstruction and everything I learned about monumentation in the Addressing Gettysburg Book Club paid off. This time when you stood up and left, you were on your own. I tried to use every minute but when you only get one page and that page is full, then you are done. I ambled out the door and into the afternoon air. A gentleman waiting for his friend asked me how I felt and I told him the first half killed me but the essay section gave me hope. He laughed and said his essay was a prime example of make stuff up. The evening was all revelry. Days ahead I felt stunned it was over.

It's been nearly a month and no news. Rumors abound. "It was a bloodbath", One of the graders was heard to shriek. Another test taker lamented "This exam is intentionally difficult. It's like the Voter Exams forced upon uneducated minorities during post Reconstruction. It's guaranteed no one will pass." We wait. I've found how rumors can be incorrect before. As we check in on each other in my study group, Mike tells me, "I check my mail every day, but I am certainly not eager to receive my execution letter."



# New Year Resolutions are all about Commitment. Why not commit to something you like to do? Join A Book Club. Heck! Join Both!

#### ADDRESSING GETTYSBURG BOOK CLUB

We meet by Zoom EVERY Wednesday night, 8:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

January 8th First Meeting of the Year.

On Great Fields by Ronald C White (January-February)

Contact Steve Byers to be added to the email list at addressinggettysburgbookclub@gmail.com



"The people who read the history books tend to have a natural zeal and are alarmingly well-read." Saul David

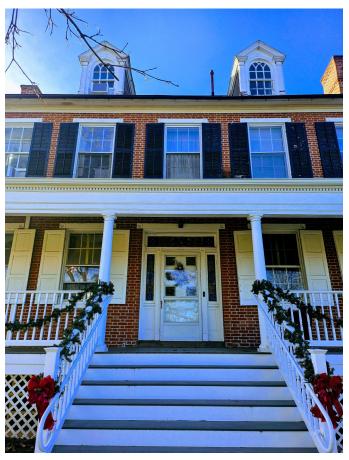


Photo by Jaimee Umstattd

#### WHAT IS BEHIND THIS DOOR?

# Come find out and join us at the next Nonfiction Book Club February 18th at 1 p.m.

Through a collaboration with Adams County Library and The Seminary Ridge Museum, come join us at the Schmucker House for a discussion on a selected nonfiction book. This February we will explore the book,

**Thin Light of Freedom** by Edward Ayers The discussions are about the books, not just the topics. So please have the book read ahead of the meeting.

Registration Required: adamslibrary.org or call (717) 334-5716

Samuel Schmucker House, 15 Seminary Ridge, Gettysburg

### Events and Programs!

Our humble town boasts opportunities to listen and learn year round, so celebrate Gettysburg and join us at these Upcoming Events with our Community partners.



Beginning January 4th, Gettysburg National Military Park Winter Lecture Series; Saturdays and Sundays from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Featuring some of the best National Park Service rangers and historians from across the region, the 8-week Winter Lecture Series of hour-long talks will examine a wide array of subjects related to the American Civil War and Gettysburg history. Limited Advanced Tickets Required. Pick them up at the Visitor's Center at 9 a.m. Day Of the Lecture.

https://www.nps.gov/gett/learn/news/2025-winter-lecture-series.htm

Beginning January 4th, History Kids Reading Adventures. Saturdays at 11 a.m. Families are invited to join a park educator to read a new book each weekend, with pages projected onto the screen. The 2025 theme is National Parks & the Arts. Then, participate in a related indoor activity or outdoor adventure. Recommended for families with children ages 4-10. No registration or tickets necessary.

https://www.nps.gov/gett/learn/education/family-adventures.htm

Continuing weekly in 2025; January 4<sup>th</sup>, ACHS Historian Tim Smith Lectures. Saturdays at 11 a.m. Free Public program with various topics such as Roads to Gettysburg, Gettysburg in Photography, Civilian Casualties... See the website for more listings.

https://www.achs-pa.org/upcoming-programs-events/

January 25<sup>th</sup>, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Battle of the Bulge Conference at Gettysburg's World War II American Experience has organized a powerful day-long lineup of speakers for the second annual Gettysburg Bulge conference. This event is co-sponsored by the Battle of the Bulge Association. Tickets are Required. Register Early.

https://visitww2.org/event/battle-of-the-bulge-conference-2025/

January 16<sup>th</sup>, February 20<sup>th</sup>, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Northern York County Historical & Preservation Society at Maple Shade Barn in Dillsburg. The Winter Speaker Series launches in January with Buck Buchanan with "The Helicopter War in Vietnam"; February with Andre Weltman titled "Charcoal Hearths, Collier Huts & Haul Roads: Traces of the Iron Industry on the Michaux State Forest Landscape."; March 20th with Abby Teaford" The Susquehannock's York County Legacy." https://northernyorkhistorical.org/events

February 8<sup>th</sup>, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Sensory Friendly Hours at Gettysburg Museum of the American Civil War. Illumination at Soldiers National Cemetery. A quiet and calm way during the morning hours. Special Hands-on History Carts and other gentle surprises are in store for attending families and guests. A Reading & Relaxation Station will be available in the Ford Education Center at the Museum & Visitor Center.www.gettysburgfoundation.org

March 1st, Seminary Ridge Museum Winter Symposium 2025 – Underrated MVPs of the Gettysburg Campaign. We are excited to once again welcome Gettysburg historians James Hessler, Stuart Dempsey, Eric Lindblade, and Jody Wilson as they join SRMEC's Judy Morley and Codie Eash to examine six undervalued individuals whose actions left an indelible mark on the course and consequences of the Gettysburg Campaign

https://www.seminaryridgemuseum.org/events/winter-symposium-2025

**Upcoming Speakers** 

\* 2025

January 23 **Dr. Christian Keller**Southern Strategies

February 27, 2025

James Hessler

Humphrey's Division
at Gettysburg

March 27, 2025
Cindy Beaston
Wrightsville-Columbia
and the Bridge in the
Gettysburg Campaign

April 24, 2025 **Dr. Jared Frederick**The Civil War in Cinema

May 22, 2025 **Kevin Pawlak** The Second Manassas Campaign

June 14, 2025 9:30-11:30 a.m. (Rain Date June 16 6:30-8:30 p.m.) **Deb Novotny** A Tour of Evergreen Cemetery

June 26, 2025
(Rain Date June 28th)
Fran Feyock
Tour of Camp Letterman

July 24, 2025 **Ranger Dan Vermilya**A Study of

Confederate Monuments



Our meetings are the Fourth Thursday of each month.

We meet at ACHS Battlefield Overlook Events Center, 625 Biglerville Road, Gettysburg, PA. The doors open at 6:30 pm. Meeting starts at 7:00 pm.



# The Civil War Roundtable of Gettysburg, PA 2024 MEMBERSHIP FORM

The Civil War Roundtable of Gettysburg, PA welcomes new and returning members to join us for our monthly meetings and activities. Individual membership dues are \$30 a year. A family membership is \$45 a year per family living at the same address. Your membership runs from January 1 to December 31 of the calendar year.

*New members* can join anytime during the year and dues are prorated as follows:

Join	Individual	Family	
January - December	\$ 30.00	\$45.00	

Please fill in the information requested below and return it with your dues payable to **Gettysburg Civil War Roundtable • PO Box 4236 • Gettysburg, PA 17325.** You may pay your dues with PayPal using the link at **https://cwrtgettysburg.org/membership.htm**. For further Gettysburg Roundtable information, please visit our website at **cwrtgettysburg.org**.

NEW MEMBERSHIP	ORENEWAL	\$	AMOUNT ENCLOSED
NAME			
ADDRESS			
CITY		STATE	ZIP
PHONE ( LAND LINE CELL)		E-MAIL _	
If you would like notification emails below:	ons to be sent to m	ore than one	e email, please list the
Thank you, and welcom	e to the Civil Wo	ır Roundta	ble of Gettysburg, PA