



The Signal Station

Happy Birthday United States of America!

The Gettysburg Civil War Roundtable begins each meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. We raise our hands to our hearts and say our oath out loud for the world to hear. The words have the power to remind us how we became Americans.

**I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the
Republic for which it stands, one nation,
indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.**
– Francis Bellamy (1892)

Since the pledge's creation, it has served as a simple yet power affirmation of unity and purpose. Bellamy's goal was to make it brief, no more than fifteen seconds long. These few words pack quite a punch. He took into account the Colonies fighting to become United in the Revolutionary War and the fight to keep the Union together during the Civil War. From these defining chapters came the enduring phrase, "one nation, indivisible".

It has been 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Or as Lincoln scholars call it 'Four score and seven years from... 1863. Known as *America 250*, each state from Alabama to Wyoming, has its own commission to celebrate this historic milestone. A250PA as we call it around these parts, has been meeting since Spring 2025 coordinating events reflecting the Commonwealth's central role in our nation's story.

Be on the lookout this year for events that honor the women and men who had the gumption to play their part in the design of this great experiment of self government; a beacon of strength based on the ideals of liberty and justice for all.
- Jaimee



<https://www.america250pa.org/>



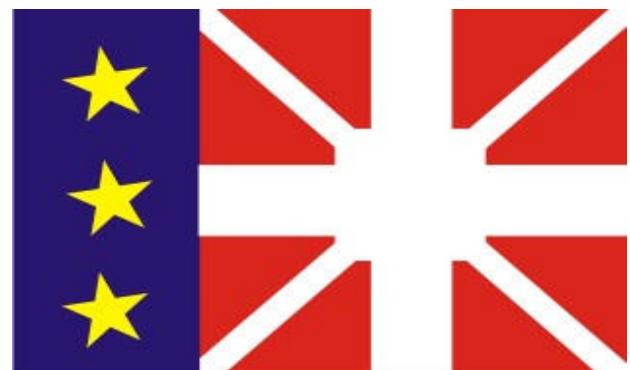
1st Quarter 2026
Issue 10

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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

Hello Members,

I hope you all enjoyed a wonderful holiday season and are ready to kick off a great 2026.

When I first became an empty nester in August 2019, I found myself looking for a new way to fill my time. I set a simple but ambitious goal: walk at least 10,000 steps every day for a year. For someone with a desk job, that meant carving out a minimum of an hour of dedicated stepping each day, no excuses. After a couple of false starts (I learned quickly that you *never* finish your steps after a long day of travel or a late night out), I began in earnest on September 19, 2019.

As you all know, six months later, the world shut down due to Covid. Ironically enough, this actually made my task easier. Even with my children temporarily back home, for the first time in decades, I had nowhere I had to be in the evenings, and I fell into a rhythm. After dinner each night, I would lace up my shoes, choose a random spot on the Gettysburg battlefield, and walk for a couple of hours. Sometimes my husband joined me, occasionally I convinced one of the kids to come along, but often it was just me, with music, a podcast, or my own thoughts for company.

Somewhere along the way, the walks became unexpectedly healing. Moving slowly through familiar lanes, past historic fields, and along paths I'd never noticed before, I found myself stopping to read monuments and markers, seeing the landscape from new angles, and feeling a renewed appreciation for both the beauty of Gettysburg National Military Park and the immense suffering endured here. In a world turned upside down, those evenings offered perspective, gratitude, and peace. On September 19, 2020, I reached my goal: 10,000 steps every single day for a full year. I even kept going for three more months until a stomach flu finally broke the streak.

Lately, I have been considering a new challenge: walking the 2026 New York City Marathon under a charity bib for the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation, a cause close to my heart. As I've begun training, once again out on the battlefield (and trying to ignore the voice asking, "Are you really going to walk a marathon?"), I'm reminded of how lucky I am to live in a place that offers such extensive beauty, deep history, and quiet strength. I know many of you feel the same.

Wishing you all the very best in the year ahead. I look forward to seeing you at a meeting soon.

Yours,

Michele Hessler

President, Civil War Roundtable of Gettysburg



Civil War Sites to Receive Long Deserved Recognition.

Gettysburg is known for its landmarks, monuments, locations forever immortalized with titles, like The Peach Orchard, Devil's Den etc. Every monument and interpretive panel holds not just the history it testifies but also the story of its own creation. As you look closer you begin to see other markers within the National Park and off on side roads. They name a battle era home and/or the location of a field hospital. When you drive down West Confederate Ave you are greeted with signs for The Shultz House, The McMillan House and even where homes stood, like the foundation of the Wentz House on Emmitsburg Road. You will stumble across more modern signs citing Field Hospitals such as 11th Corps Field Hospital, 1st Corps Field Hospital. This is about to be remedied.

Historic Gettysburg Adams County, based out of the historic Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) Hall at 53 E. Middle Street is rectifying this lack of proper recognition. Their Civil War Hospital Sign Project has been funding, creating and placing these markers so hungry historians can be easily satisfied as they drive past these landmarks. In 2025, several members of this preservation group proposed their services to Gettysburg National Historic Park and received approval. In early 2026 you will see these markers at The John Forney House location, The Peter Frey/Basil Biggs Farm, and the 2nd Corps Field Hospital on Granite Schoolhouse Lane. Let's revisit these locations briefly.



Mike Koziski & Greg Kaufman photo courtesy of HGAC.



Forney Homestead: Photo courtesy of The Library of Congress

One burning question on First Day Battlefield Tours, "Why isn't there a sign to the John Forney House?" A home of major significance when it came to the fighting on July 1st, The Forney farm was a good-sized obstacle for both the armies. Devin's vidette watched the flicker of Confederate campfires in the distance while posted around the Forney property the evening of June 30th. The following night, General Richard Ewell used it as his headquarters. Physical scars on the farm buildings are easily seen in the joists on display at the Gettysburg Museum of the American Civil War in the Visitor Center. Long story short, the home was demolished prior to the 75th Anniversary of the battle to provide an unobstructed and tidy view of the newly installed Eternal Peace Light Memorial.



Frey/Biggs Farm: Photo courtesy of NPS

A well photographed home on Taneytown road that is currently unmarked is the Peter Frey/ Basil Biggs farmhouse. The home was owned by Peter Frey during the battle. The good sized barn was perfect for a field hospital and the road adjacent was a highway for artillery and soldiers. After the war, the industrious veterinarian, Basil Biggs offered his hands to care for the dead on the battlefield. The hard-earned capital from this work was enough to purchase this property and the land including the 'Copse of Trees'. Currently the home is owned by the National Park Service and the resident/caretaker is a Park Ranger.

Continued on the next page.

Civil War Sites to Receive Long Deserved Recognition, Continued.

Army Corps Field Hospitals were located on farms with barns and open fields miles behind the front lines. There were occasions where the surgeons preferred to work as quickly as possible and there wasn't time to take cover. You will see this at Stoney Hill's monument to Zabdiel Boyleston Adams, a surgeon that felt immediate triage was worth putting his own life at risk. Thanks to the immense amount of research completed by historian and author, Ron Kirkwood (our 2024 recipient of the John Bachelder Book Award), we know more than ever before about a forgotten Field Hospital. The first location of the 2nd Corps Field Hospital was located at the William Patterson farm house. The over shot on July 2nd, caused them to relocate the hospital further south to the base of Power's Hill, just down Granite Schoolhouse Lane. The area in the dip at the bottom of the hill was clear cut, something hard to imagine now with the forest it has become. Treated at this location were General Samuel Zook and Colonel Edward Cross, mortally wounded on July 2nd, and Major General Hancock the Superb after his wounding on July 3rd. The signage will be posted on the opposite side of the road one-tenth of a mile east of the Batteries B & L Second U.S. Artillery monument.

Last but certainly not least is Schmucker Hall at the Lutheran Theological Seminary. A beacon on July 1st, the seminary buildings are still jewels on the ridge. Now, the Seminary Ridge Museum and Education Center, this building stands as a testament to the efforts to preserve the history of this battle for future historians visitors and locals. Here you can relive Reynold's last words to Buford. You can still see where General McFarland was carried into the building as Confederate soldiers entered the opposite door on the ground floor. The history of healing is revived each day within the doors of this living space.



A view East on Granite Schoolhouse Lane



Schmucker Hall on Seminary Ridge

For more information on these locations and donate to future noble achievements...

Visit <https://www.hgaconline.org/>

You can **become a member**,
purchase something from their online store,
and **donate** all on one site.



Psst... HGAC is updating their Civil War Field Hospital Guide booklet and it will be available Spring 2026.

New Member Spotlight—Don Zavodny

"I asked my wife one day if she wanted to go with me to the battlefield for a few hours and she's like, "You hate nature and you're scared of bees!", but now, I don't care because I'm out there and I get to walk the ground where history happened. Now, I've got hiking boots and tick spray. At this point I can appreciate it."

Just before the holidays, I met up with new member, Don Zavodny, a middle-school history teacher who found his Gettysburg address in 2025. In August he moved from Houston, TX with his wife and four children. We enjoyed some cocoa and braved the hustle and bustle of Starbucks for a chat.



What sparked your interest in the Civil War?

"I've always been kinda interested and I had never seen the movie Gettysburg or visited battlefields when I was young, but I did see the movie Glory. That was one of the first moments where I got interested in the Civil War. I took my first college class and that's where I really started to become deeply interested."

Do you know of any relatives involved in the Civil War?

"No, not that I know of. I was born in Austin, but was adopted and grew up in Houston. I recently found my biological family on Ancestry and they are from Wisconsin and Minnesota so it's possible, but none that I actually know of specifically."

How did you manage to get a Masters at Gettysburg College while living in Texas?

I enrolled in the Masters Degree program at Gettysburg College for American History. The whole program was designed for teachers and remote. I graduated with the inaugural class. The only part in Gettysburg was showing up for the ceremony, if you wanted to attend; so we came up. When I graduated at the Majestic Theatre, it said 'Welcome Home' on the screen and then my wife said "We should live here. We should move here!"

Do you have a favorite Civil War Topic, Person, or battle?

"Most of my focus in college was mainly emancipation, especially because I have a big passion for Lincoln. I wrote two articles published in The Lincoln Herald Journal (postal subscription only). I also submitted guest articles through the Emerging Civil War guest post process. My first article was published last year and I have one that will go up soon on Abraham Lincoln and his public letter response to Horace Greeley about his policy on emancipation. He's already decided he's going to issue the Emancipation Proclamation but he can't announce it until after a major Union victory. Now, I'm transitioning to more military history recently. My favorite battle would be a tie between Antietam and Gettysburg. The two battles are major turning points of the war."

If you could sit down with one Civil War figure forhardtack and coffee (or hot cocoa), who would it be and why?

"Definitely Abraham Lincoln, because I've been so interested in him for so long. I'd ask him about all the pressures he had to deal with. His son died while he was in the White House, just dealing with all those struggles and pressures and the casualties and being the Commander in Chief. Like, how did you manage all that? With Social Media as it is, I can only imagine the kind of criticism he would have gotten today."

Do you have a favorite spot on the Gettysburg battlefield or in town?

"I would say, many different spots. The first place was Little Round Top. Last weekend I hiked up Big Round Top. I really like Valley of Death area, around Crawford Ave, Devil's Den and now Culp's Hill. Those are some of the main ones."

Anything else you'd like fellow Roundtable members to know?

"I'm taking the Town Guide exam in January and I'm hoping to get a job in history whether it's a historic site or museum. I worked at a state historic site in Texas and gave tours and presented education programs before and I'm looking to get back into that."

What does Gettysburg mean to you, personally?

"It's an incredibly significant place where one of the most important battles of the war took place and transformed this town overnight. It is an iconic and important town because of the battle. It's ironic that considering all of the pain and bloodshed, and now when I walk the battlefield—it's a feeling of peace and calm."

Scott MacKenzie—The Fifth Border State

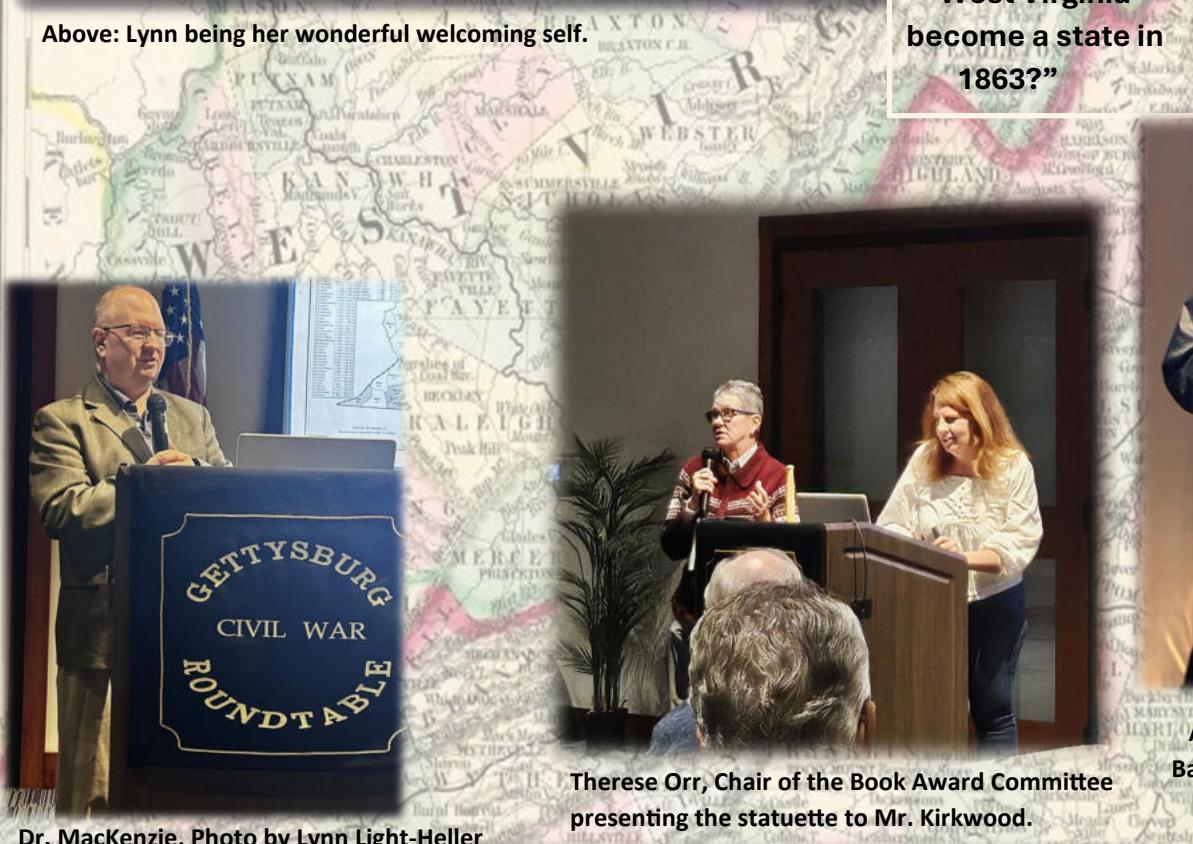


Above: Lynn being her wonderful welcoming self.

October 23rd, 2025
Dr. Scott MacKenzie ventured from his home country of Canada to share his research into our State of West Virginia. In his presentation, Dr. MacKenzie helped answer the question, "Why Did West Virginia become a state in 1863?"

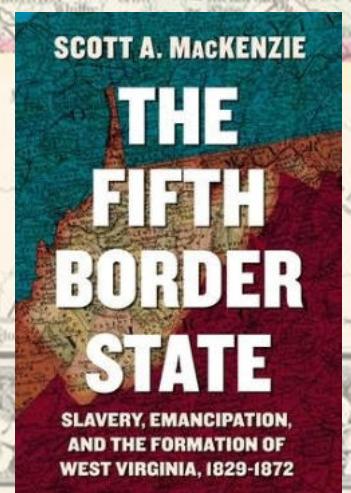


Photo by Lynn Light-Heller



Dr. MacKenzie, Photo by Lynn Light-Heller

Above: Ron Kirkwood accepts his Bachelder Coddington Distinguished Book Award on this night.
Photo by Lynn Light-Heller



Hampton Newsome—Gettysburg's Southern Front

"The design on Richmond was not a feint but a faint."

D.H. Hill



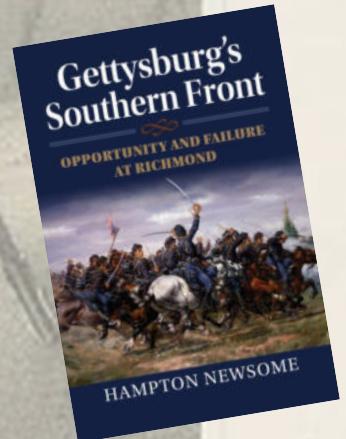
Photo by Lynn Light-Heller



5 Good Minutes with Michele & Pete Miele
November 20th, 2025

5 GOOD MINUTES with guest Pete Miele.
(See page 9 for more details.)

Hampton Newsome presented on Federal offensive at Richmond, often called The Blackberry Raid. He enlightened us on the 20,000 Federal soldiers knocking on Richmond's door during the Gettysburg Campaign. As the title would suggest, *Gettysburg's Southern Front Opportunity and Failure at Richmond*, it was not a success.



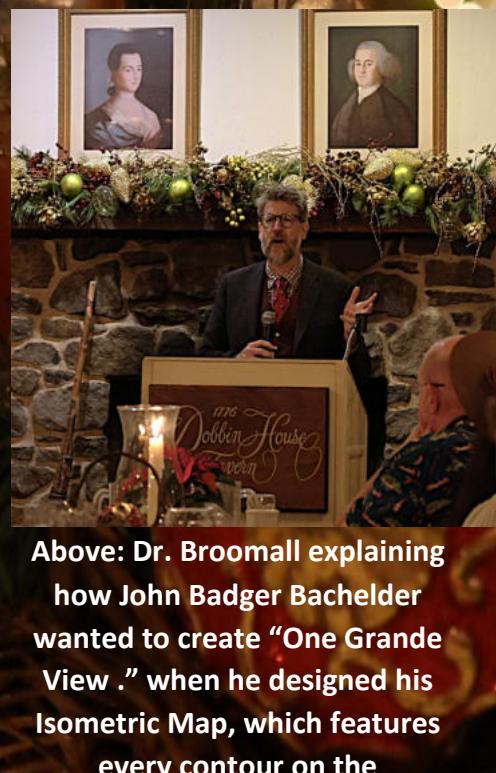
Background image, John Adams Dix —Library of Congress

Holiday Banquet December 4, 2025

Presenter Dr. James Broomall



Bruce Davis giving the Blessing



Above: Dr. Broomall explaining how John Badger Bachelder wanted to create "One Grande View ." when he designed his Isometric Map, which features every contour on the battlefield.



Kathy, Veronica and Roger having a chat.



Lynn & Helena pulling the raffle numbers.



Dave totally not talking about the Budget



Judy & Dwayne by the raffle prize table



Beth announcing our speaker.

D.C.'s African-American Civil War Museum – Opening Soon I Hope!

Probably very few Civil War “buffs” are aware of an important landmark in downtown Washington D.C. – The African American Civil War Memorial, an impressive life-size sculpture of four members of the United States Colored Troops (USCTs), intended to honor the over 209,000 USCTs who fought for freedom during the American Civil War, with an accompanying wall listing each of them. The Memorial is located at the corner of Vermont Avenue, 10th St., and U St. NW, very near the “U Street/African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo Metro Station.”



Photo courtesy of Ted Hirt

See <https://washington.org/find-dc-listings/african-american-civil-war-memorial>.

Photo courtesy of Washington.org

That location was the scene of two very impressive events, and hopefully, early 2026 will complete that trilogy. First, on September 22, 2025, a sculpture of President Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation was formally installed near the Memorial, and outside the planned African-American Civil War Museum (not yet open to the public). Crafted by sculptor Stan Watts, the new bronze Lincoln sculpture is six feet tall and weighs over 600 pounds. The founder of the Museum, former D.C. Council Member Dr. Frank A. Smith, presided at the ceremony. The event was extensively covered by DC news outlets.



Photo courtesy of Ted Hirt

Second, on November 11, 2025, the plaza by the Memorial hosted a large gathering of volunteers, who recited, name by name, each individual who served in the US Colored Troops. The program included a gentleman who portrays Frederick Douglass and a descendant of Harriet Tubman. Ten microphones were deployed for the formal readings, as we stood and took turns reciting the names. The Museum coordinated with other groups across the country, including the Adams County Historical Society and Lincoln Cemetery, to accomplish this daunting – but important! – task. The event may become an annual one.



Photo courtesy of Ted Hirt

Finally, although the African-American Civil War Museum's anticipated November 2025 opening has been delayed, I hope that early 2026 will see it formally open to the public. Based on its website description, I anticipate that the Museum will include many significant documents, photographs, and artifacts concerning the valuable (but largely unknown) contributions of the United States Colored Troops to the War effort. — Ted Hirt

Susquehanna Discovery Center & Heritage Park Project

with Pete



Photo courtesy of Lynn-Light Heller

Susquehanna Discovery Center & Heritage Park

WWW.SUSQNHA.ORG

November we celebrated the return of the "5 Good Minutes" segment. This time we invited former Roundtable Vice President, Peter Meile, back to the stage. This prior President of the Seminary Ridge Museum & Education Center is once more pairing his love of historical buildings along with the birth of a new museum. Currently, Pete is the Senior Project Leader for the Susquehanna Discovery Center & Heritage Park in Wrightsville, Pennsylvania. The Susquehanna National Heritage Area is full of stories and the organization keeps their eyes open for sites but this one came looking for them. Pete explains in the photo below.

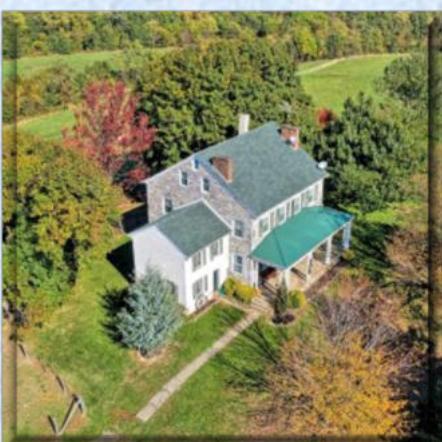
"In 2017 they (SUSQHNA) became aware of this property right along the river that was going to be demolished for warehouse development."

"It is a historic property. The house that you can see, right over Michele's head, was built in 1800 and was a stop on the Underground Railroad for about 35 years."

The original homeowners were Jonathan & Susanna Mifflin who were Quakers. That peace-seeking family would see the war encroach on their backyard.

Miele states, "The fields behind me were the spot of Federal entrenchments during the Confederate fight to get across the bridge."

In 2023, the land was purchased and preserved thanks to the foresight of someone who grew up in the house appreciating its significance, Don Blessing.



Mifflin Home Photo credit SUSQNHA.ORG

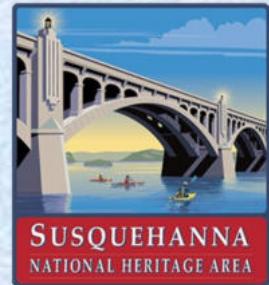
Miele states, "Our vision is to transform this site into the Susquehanna Discovery Center & Heritage Park which will be a world-class visitor destination celebrating the stories of America's 55th National Heritage Area."

The location will ultimately include:

- ◆ Susquehanna Discovery Center—within the Restored Barns
- ◆ Underground Railroad Learning Center—Mifflin House
- ◆ Susquehanna River Art Museum,
- ◆ Heritage Park—79 acres including Civil War interpretation.
- ◆ Trails & River Park—4 Miles of Trails on site.
- ◆ Commercial Development Parcel dedicated 8 acres to compliment the park and provide much needed tax revenue.



This project still needs your help. If you would like to check off your New Year Resolution to fund a good cause, please contact Pete at PMiele@susqnha.org, or call 717-252-0229 x 107



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.

January 2nd, 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. First Friday Wassail Celebration. After months of Jingle Bells, enjoy the unique acoustic music of earlier days in America and Ireland. Come prepared by dressing warmly in brightly colored attire with hats adorned in a festive winter or orchard theme and bring noisemakers! Ages 21+ ID required. \$10 admission for members, \$15 for nonmembers. <https://www.northernyorkhistorical.org/events/january-first-Friday>

January 10th through March 8th, Saturdays and Sundays: Gettysburg National Military Park presents The Winter Lecture Series. Featuring NPS rangers, historians, and authors from across the country, the nine-week Winter Lecture Series returns to the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center. Visit the NPS website for more details. <https://www.nps.gov/thingstodo/gettysburg-winter-programs.htm>

January 10th, 7:30 p.m.—10 p.m. Civil War Era Dancing. At the Village Hall, 108 West Main Street, Fairfield, PA (located 8 miles west of Gettysburg via Route 116). Suggested donation of \$10 per person \$5 for students. All levels of dancers welcome. Email gettysburgdancesociety@gmail.com for details.

January 10th, Step Into History: Civil War Reenacting Workshop for Women. Gettysburg Heritage Center. Whether you're drawn to military roles or civilian life, this hands-on workshop will guide you through the basics and help you make meaningful connections with reenacting units. You'll walk away with the tools and knowledge to get started—plus a list of resources to support your journey. Registration Required. <https://tinyurl.com/47hz7wjr>

Civil War Dance Lessons, January 11th, February 8th, March 8th, 2 p.m.—4 p.m. National Civil War Museum. Join us for Great Family Fun and it's Free! Prepare for the Civil War Preservation Ball, held on March 21, 2026 and join the Victorian Dance Ensemble for this annual event. TFREE. Register in advance. To register for the classes, email: PreservationBall@civilwardance.org <http://www.civilwardance.org/>

January 17, Gettysburg Winter Civil War Ball Sponsored by Civilians of Gettysburg 1861-1865. **Battlefield Overlook Event Center**, 625 Biglerville Road, Gettysburg, PA. Dance Master and Mistress Briant and Karin Bohleke. Music by Smash the Windows. Light refreshments. Registration Required. Visit Civilians of Gettysburg 1861-1865 on Facebook or email civilwardance@earthlink.net

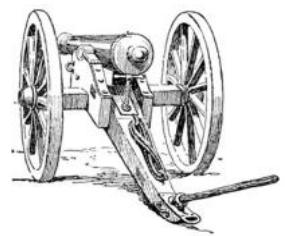
January 25, 4 p.m. Robert Burns Night. In the **Chapel of the Lutheran Seminary** We honor the great Scots poet by reading his greatest works (featuring Jeff Greenawalt), singing his songs and enjoying dances he'd have known (led by Cormorant's Fancy), then feasting on haggis and shortbread. www.musicgettysburg.org/

February 9th, 6 p.m. –7:30 p.m. Celebrate Daniel A. Payne: A Visionary Beyond Borders. Seminary Ridge Museum He crossed boundaries – geographic, intellectual, and cultural. He built institutions that continue to shape generations. He believed education could transform a nation. And yet, so many have never heard his name. <https://www.seminaryridgemuseum.org/events/>

Cumberland Valley Civil War Roundtable: February 10th, LBG Bob Steenstra Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. **March 10th**, Ranger Dan Welch: The Last Road North; A guide to the Gettysburg Campaign, 1863. **April 14th**, Jeff Irwin Archaeologist, Historian, Archaeological Investigation at Gettysburg. <https://www.facebook.com/cvcwrt/>

February 28th, 8:45 a.m.—3:30 p.m. Winter Symposium. The Second Battle of Gettysburg: Controversies, Conspiracies, and Conundrums at America's Most Famous Battlefield. Explore the fierce debates and lingering mysteries that still shape our understanding of Gettysburg more than 160 years later. <https://www.seminaryridgemuseum.org/events/>

March 21st, Washington D.C. Bus Trip: Gettysburg Battlefield Bus Tours. Join us on March 21st 2026 for a memorable one-day bus tour to our Nation's capital as we honor 250 years of American history, freedom and spirit! <https://www.gettysburgbattlefieldtours.com/>



Upcoming Speakers

January 22

Scott Mingus

Railroads in the Gettysburg Campaign

February 26

Richard Condon

Pittsburgh at Gettysburg

March 26

Stephen Evangelista

The Gettysburg Gun

April 23

Ron Kirkwood

The Spangler Farm, Part 2

May 28

Jeff Harding

& **Jonathan Nese**

The Weather in the Gettysburg Campaign

June 25

(rain date 6/29)

Deb Novotny

Evergreen Cemetery, Part 2

July 23

(rain date July 27)

Jasan Hileman

The McClean Farm

August 27

(rain date August 31)

Eric Lindblade

The Union Signal Corps at Gettysburg

September 24

Keith Kehlbeck

The Old Capital Prison

October 22

Dr. Clifton Potter

Yankees in the Hill City: POWs in Lynchburg, VA



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.

All photos in this publication are by Jaimee Umstated unless otherwise noted.

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The Civil War Roundtable of Gettysburg, PA

2026 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:

<u>Join</u>	<u>Individual</u>	<u>Family</u>
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

RENEWAL

\$ _____ AMOUNT ENCLOSED

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE (LAND LINE CELL) _____ E-MAIL _____

If you would like notifications to be sent to more than one email, please list the emails below:

Thank you, and welcome to the Civil War Roundtable of Gettysburg, PA

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