

Newsletter of The Harrisburg Civil War Round Table

Welcome to our fellowship forum where we discuss our past, emphasizing remembrance, education & preservation.

Meetings held at Central Penn College Conference Center and virtually on Zoom

Friday, February 16 — John D. Hoptak

"All the Boys in Our Place Were Ready: Hardly Anyone Who Could Shoulder a Musket Stayed Home:" South Central Pennsylvanians in the 54th Massachusetts Infantry

In honor of Black History Month, please join us on Friday, February 16, as National Park Service Ranger John D. Hoptak pays a special tribute to the many South-Central Pennsylvanians who fought in the celebrated 54th Massachusetts Infantry.

The 54th Massachusetts remains one of the most famous fighting units of the Civil War. One of the first African-American regiments recruited during the war, their story was told, in part, in the award-winning 1989 movie *Glory*. However, many will be surprised to learn that when the 54th Massachusetts was first organized and first marched off to war, there were more men from Pennsylvania in the ranks of this storied regiment than from any other state, including more than 100 men who hailed from South Central Pennsylvania—places like Mercersburg, Shippensburg, Carlisle, Middletown, Columbia, and Harrisburg.

Mr. Hoptak has worked as an interpreter and educator with the National Park Service since 2006, first at Antietam National Battlefield and, since 2012, at Gettysburg National Military Park. A native of Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, he is also the author of numerous articles and several books including *The Battle of South Mountain, First in Defense of the Union, Confrontation at Gettysburg*, and *Dear Ma: The Civil War Letters of Curtis Pollock*.



Those unable to attend this engagement in person are invited to tune in to the lecture and Q&A session via Zoom. Click on the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83649612237>. No password is required. Call 1-301-715-8592 to dial in by phone, or click on the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83649612237>. The meeting ID # is 879 5265 3473.

Zoom participants should join the meeting by 7:00 pm.

DINNER IS SERVED!

5:30 pm—Refreshments
6:15 pm—Dinner

7:15 pm—Announcements
7:30 pm—Presentation



Buffet Dinner Selections

Orange Beef Satay, Cajun Salmon, Olive Oil Roasted Potatoes, Stir Fried Vegetables, Classic Caesar Salad, House Made Soup du Jour, Rolls/butter, Assorted Cookies

Cost: \$26 per person

pay at the door or on our website: harrisburgcwrt.org/events



Dinner reservations must be made no later than noon on Monday, February 12



Phone: Brian Foster at 717-962-6122 or
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President's Pen

*"The best-laid schemes o' Mice an' Men go oft awry."
—Robert Burns*

I closed my last President's Pen column with "I see nothing but sunlit uplands ahead." I was trying to sound an optimistic, Churchillian note, but I may have spoken too soon. After several mild winters in a row, none of us expected the kind of snow we had in January.



So, it came as a bit of a shock when a blizzard blew in over the Martin Luther King weekend, and snow reared its ugly head again the day before our January engagement. Central Penn College, putting safety first as they should, decided late on the afternoon of Thursday, January 18 to close its facilities the following day, making it impossible for us to hold our January engagement Friday evening. In retrospect, it was the right call. The snow was intense that Friday, few of us could have attended the event, and some of us could have wound up in a ditch.

In response, our dedicated team swiftly implemented our cancellation protocol. Dana Ledger, our esteemed webmaster, promptly communicated the news on our webpage. Todd Little, our Facebook guru, disseminated the information on our official Facebook page, and Steve Williamson, our Treasurer, and Norm Daniels ensured that all 42 individuals who had indicated they planned to attend were individually notified. Special thanks to Brian Foster, our Membership Chair, who got word of the cancellation out to all our members via email.

We were very much looking forward to hearing Dr. Doug Douds' comparative analysis of the "commanding machines" of the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia at the Battle of Gettysburg, and will try to re-schedule his presentation in Campaign 66.

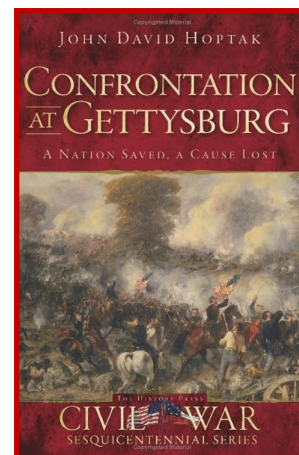
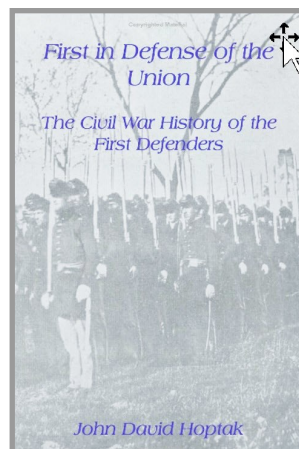
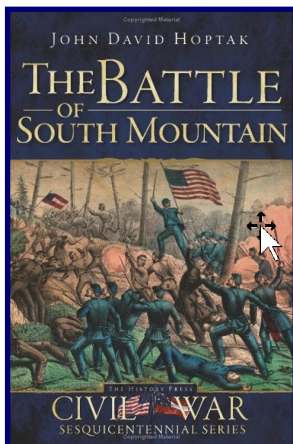
For those who made payments via PayPal for dinner in January, your funds remain secure and will be applicable to future events. We encourage you to mark Friday, February 16 on your calendars, as we anticipate resuming our meetings at Central Penn, weather permitting. In honor of Black History Month, Ranger John D. Hoptak will recount the story of the scores of African-Americans from South Central Pennsylvania who enlisted in the famous 54th Massachusetts Infantry to fight for their freedom. It promises to be a profoundly moving presentation. John has a well-deserved reputation for delivering talks that not only inform but inspire, and he has a large following, as evidenced last weekend when he spoke about Major General George Sykes to a capacity crowd as part of Gettysburg's Winter Lecture Series. Don't miss this opportunity to hear his "Glory" story.

We also look forward to celebrating our 65th anniversary in May, a testament to the enduring legacy of our Round Table. Stay tuned for more information as we get closer to that event.

The way we pulled together on short notice to address a cancellation crisis is further testament to the dedication and commitment of our Board of Directors. Thank you all for your understanding and continued support. We eagerly anticipate reconnecting with you at Central Penn College on Friday, February 16. Please plan to attend, and bring a friend!

John West

Books by Our Speaker



Spring Field Trip to Spotsylvania Court House

On Saturday, May 4, we will head south to study the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House, which witnessed the most protracted and vicious combat of the Overland Campaign of 1864. Chris Mackowski, who served as our guide to the Wilderness, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville, will be back by popular demand. Our visit will coincide with the 160th anniversary of the Battle of Spotsylvania. This is a great opportunity to walk the terrain under the same conditions that existed when the battle was fought. For more information on the trip, download the flyer posted on the Events tab of our website: <https://harrisburgcwrt.org/events/>. As this newsletter went to press, there were only a dozen seats left on our 56-passenger bus, so the best advice is: ***“don’t delay, reserve a seat today!”***

Gettysburg Winter Lecture Series

The Gettysburg National Military Park’s schedule for its 2024 Winter Lecture Series is on its website: <https://www.nps.gov/thingstodo/gettysburg-winter-programs.htm>. Featuring some of the finest rangers, historians, and authors from across the country, the nine-week series is being held at 1:30 pm on weekends in the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center through March 3, unless otherwise noted on the schedule. Seating is available on a first come – first serve basis. Free tickets will be available the day of the program at the Visitor Center beginning at 9:00 am. All programs will be recorded by our friends at *Addressing Gettysburg* and posted to their YouTube Channel; no live stream will be available. <https://www.youtube.com/@addressinggettysburg/videos>.



Programs Chair Steve Smith congratulates our February speaker, Ranger John D. Hoptak, on his well-attended Winter Lecture series talk on Major General George Sykes in Gettysburg last Saturday.

#CWRT Membership News

- HCWRT now accepts VISA, MasterCard, AMEX, Discovery, Apple Pay and Google Pay at our monthly meetings not only for meals, but also for donations, membership dues (both new enlistments and renewals) and field trip reservations (seat deposits, trip balances or the entire purchase).
- We have made online purchases on the HCWRT website easier by eliminating the need for a username and password prior to purchasing a meal, paying dues renewal or joining the HCWRT, making a donation, or reserving or paying for our field trips.

A donation to the Harrisburg CWRT has been made in memory of

Frederick Revere Ployer ❖ Mary Jane Webb Ployer Cooper ❖ Everett W. Cooper

Meeting Schedule—Campaign 65

03/15/24

The Struggle for Spotsylvania’s Mule Shoe
Jeffrey D. Wert

04/11/24 (THURSDAY)

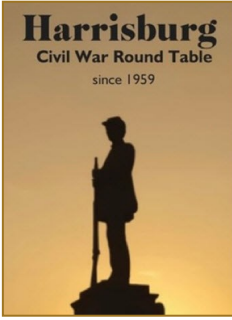
Weather at the Battle of Gettysburg
Dr. Jon M. Nese

05/17/24—65th Anniversary Speaker

The Civil War Career of President James A. Garfield
C. W. Goodyear

06/06/24 (THURSDAY)—Nye-Sommers Lecture

*The Good, The Bad, The Ugly, and the Mediocre:
Leadership at the Battle of South Mountain*
D. Scott Hartwig



The Dispatch

The Harrisburg Civil War Round Table
121 Windrush Lane
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-9236

February 2024

130th PA Monument
Antietam National
Battlefield

The Harrisburg Civil War Round Table

Where we discuss our past, emphasizing remembrance, education & preservation. **All Are Welcome**
Meetings are held at Central Penn College Conference Center, 600 Valley Road, Summerdale, PA



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Harrisburg Civil War Round Table Enlistment Form

Current Member Renewal

- Individual \$24
- Family \$36
- Full Time Student \$5

Donations*

- \$25
- \$50
- \$100
- Other _____ (specify)

Individual or Family Name _____
 Address _____
 City/State/Zip _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

Contacts:
 For questions call: Brian Foster, Membership, Phone: 717-962-6122, email hcwrt.membership@gmail.com
 Mail checks to: Steve Williamson, Treasurer, Phone 717-580-0443, 121 Windrush Lane, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-9236

If your donation is made in memory or in recognition of someone, please provide name(s) here: _____
