

History and Activities

Colonel Henry Ryerson Civil War Round Table

Newton, New Jersey

The concept of organizing a civil war round table in Sussex County started in September back in 2003 with a first meeting at the Sussex County Community College, spearheaded by then College president Brad Gottfried. A Civil War Round Table is an independent organization that shares a common objective in promoting and expanding interest in the study of the military, political, and sociological history of the American Civil War. There are hundreds of such organizations throughout the United States, with some in other countries as well. Our organization became a recognized not-for-profit with the State of New Jersey and has a duly elected Board of Trustees and Officers.

At those first few meetings there was much discussion about a name for the group. Many sided heavily for the General Judson Kilpatrick Civil War Round Table – the General having been born and raised in Wantage Township within Sussex County. In the end it was decided that the group would be named after Colonel Henry Ryerson, a resident of Newton during the war who helped recruit, and then volunteered with, the 2nd NJ Volunteer Infantry regiment. He was fatally injured at the Battle of the Wilderness in 1864 in Virginia, and is buried in the Old Newton Burial Grounds in Newton, New Jersey.

Each year since then the group has met in September, October, November, January, February, March, April, and May, first at the College, then at the Main Branch of the Sussex County Library, and currently in the Town Hall room at Bristol Glen United Methodist Community off Route 206 in Newton. Our accommodations at Bristol Glen are superb with easy parking, comfortable chairs, and good audio/visual capabilities. Our regular meetings start at 7:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of those months listed above (except for May when we meet at a local restaurant).

At each meeting we have a professor, author or artist, historian, reenactor, or other expert give a presentation that lasts approximately an hour. Past local speakers have included Dr. Heidi Weber, County Historian Wayne McCabe, and author Dr. Peter Lubrecht. Regionally and nationally known speakers have included Bill Styple, Joe Truglio, and David Martin. One year we had actor / historian Patrick Falci give a memorable presentation as General A.P. Hill.

Each year in January we have our Annual Movie Night and have watched notable (and lesser known) movies that have included Buster Keaton's silent classic *The General*, *The Red Badge of Courage* with Audie Murphy, and in 2019 we watched *The Hunley* with Armand Assante and Donald Sutherland.

Twice a year the group organizes a Civil War Tour, most of which occur in Gettysburg and its environs, though we have met at Antietam, Monocacy, Arlington Cemetery, Fort Delaware between Delaware and New Jersey, and Harpers Ferry. At the tours the Round Table picks up the cost of the Tour Guide. We give special attention to our New Jersey monuments at Gettysburg and at times have been recognized for our maintenance around these monuments by the Gettysburg National Military Park.

The Round Table is a member of the League of NJ Historical Societies, and our members have participated in numerous local events such as the Sussex Historical Society's Newton Burial Grounds Tour, Sussex County History Day, and the Sussex County Farm and Horse Show with a display booth.

Funds to run the organization and help defray costs are only collected from annual dues, a book raffle at each meeting, and donations. The Board and Officers receive no remuneration for their time or efforts. Though meetings can easily number 50 attendees, paid memberships average about 25.

One of the highlights of our year is the annual Dinner Meeting in May. It has been held in various locations throughout the County including Sheridan's, Lafayette House, and one notable year at The Sacred Heart Center in Newton. This year our speaker at the dinner meeting will be author and historian Jay Jorgensen who will talk about the Battle of Shiloh. More information about this dinner can be found at our website: www.ryersoncwr.org.

Now in existence as a historical group in the County for over fifteen years, the Round Table has been a place for people who enjoy history, the Civil War, and the 19th Century to get together to discuss and enjoy that aspect of our nation's history. Our meetings are free and open to the public. All who are interested are encouraged to attend! For more information about the Round Table, please contact Jennifer during the day at 973-948-4724.

Current Officers and Board of Trustees:

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Jennifer CS Brylinski

President, Colonel Henry Ryerson Civil War Round Table

January 5, 2020