

Tennessee Valley Civil War Round Table History

In 1993 three interesting guys bumping into one another in a cafeteria repeatedly and discussed various battles and topics regarding the American Civil War. They made a decision to share their passion and establish a Round Table. Jerry Peddycoat, Doug Cubbison, and Mark Hubbs conceived the idea. Civil War Round Tables are not unusual; they have existed since the beginning of the 20th Century, gradually expanding to over two hundred in the United States and several foreign countries. Folklore says 1993 was not the beginning in North Alabama but the previous organization is lost to memory and membership. So, today we acknowledge 1993 as the beginning.

There are five former presidents. The effort of the founding trio stimulated growth and interest by defining the Tennessee Valley as the domain of the Round Table. One of the individuals attracted to the new Round Table was Brian Hogan. Brian may be the single most recognized and established historian of the Civil War in the Valley. If anyone begins research in Huntsville/Madison County Library the archivists will refer any and everyone to Brian for detailed answers and locations where tidbits of Civil War history are found. Brian became the treasurer, programs coordinator, and eventually, when the position of president was defined, assumed the role for the Round Table. He held that position for several years until a former newspaper man, teacher, and writer, John Allen, reluctantly assumed the role pending finding a better qualified individual. Seven delightfully progressive years later he turned over the duty to a more reluctant, frequently quoting himself as “a draftee”, General John Scales.

With a voice vote of the members and not an utter of opposition General Scales was replaced by an enthusiastic female president, Carol Codori. She is a descendent of a family that owned the farm on the Gettysburg battlefield. Now John Mason and equally dedicated civil war author and enthusiast has taken the position. He integrated presentations on the Civil War in Alabama at the University of Alabama, Huntsville, Osher Life Long Learning Institute (OLLI) in 2016,

In the early days and alongside Bryan and Mark Hubbs, Kent and Elizabeth Wright (the current Director of Programs), Morris Penny, and George Mahoney joined the team of organizers and they selected sites for holding meetings based on price (free), availability, and just as important, accommodation for the growing membership. In the beginning the basement of the Madison City Hall served the purpose, and then the Round Table moved to the Conference Room. The growing Round Table moved to Quincy's in Madison, now closed, and then in 1999 to Fox Army Hospital on Redstone Arsenal, and finally Shaver's Book Store in 2000. Mr. Shaver continues to support the success of the Round Table

but retirement and growth compelled another move. In 2005, George Mahoney facilitated the move to the Elk's Lodge where we reside to this day.

During the Round Tables 20 year existence our membership grew steadily to over 200 members. But, as the Sesquicentennial came to and end the membership has steadily declined to around 120 today. A Round Table of our size survives and grows based upon the parade of speakers that share and entertain with their knowledge of the Civil War and our ability to market the Round Table programs. Initially, speakers were local and included well known characters from reenacting circles and Civil War Battlefield parks. Today we attract not only Civil War experts of local origin but well established and published scholars, authors, and historians. Our membership includes at least six published authors and the list of speakers interested in being introduced on our dais is growing.

The unwritten goal of the Round Table is to increase the membership. Membership dues and other small fund raising activities provide the financial resources to support the superb cast of speakers our Round Table enjoys and our preservation effort. The Round Table is fortunate to have two officers on the Board of Directors, who above all others create the opportunity to serve the Tennessee Valley; Kent Wright Programs Officer and Emil Posey, Vice President.

A major milestone was achieved in 2012 when the Round Table not only crossed the threshold of donating over \$10,000 to the preservation of Battlefields around the country but also, principally because of the efforts of John Allen and Cheryl McAuley (a former Vice President) acquired the not-for-profit tax status of 501(c)(3). The status provides more flexibility in acquiring funds to expand our education programs to a younger generation.

Now that the Sesquicentennial has drawn to a close and the National and State governments are attracted to other historical events that affected the growth of our nation, our challenge is to continue efforts to educate our future generations on the history of our Country and specifically the Civil War. Where will it lead? We are writing that chapter now. Join us and be a part of history.