



The Civil War Round Table (CWRT) is a place to meet and discuss everything about the American Civil War. When one mentions the CWRT two questions come to mind. These are:

1. What is the Civil War Round Table?
2. Why is the American Civil War relevant today?

This brief essay is my take on these questions. And, as you will read, the core question is that people have different answers to even these two questions. However, I have discussed this document with the officers and members of the Civil War Round Table of Palm Beach County and this is how we address these matters.

The Civil War Round Table is an international organization devoted to research, discussion, and presentation of all aspects of the American Civil War. We meet in cities and towns to exchange ideas and listen to experts in the field. The first Round Table was founded in Chicago on December 3, 1940 and the concept has grown ever since. There is no central organization to the CWRT; every group structures itself in a manner that best fits the needs of the local group. Our group, founded on September 17, 1988, meets monthly year round, usually on the second Wednesday of each month. During those meetings we have formal presentations by members and experts in the field, informal discussions, and social interaction. We also raise funds to contribute to the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Trust for the preservation of Civil War battlefields. The guns of war have been silent now for almost 150 years at the time of this writing. Why are people still interested in the American Civil War (in the eyes of some more properly labeled as the “War Between the States”!)? I have heard that there are over 80,000 books published on the war; greater than any other war in history. The answer to this interest this war is wrapped up in the trick question: When did the Civil War end? Was it Lee’s surrender on April 9, 1865? Johnston’s surrender? Kirby Smith’s surrender in May or the capture of Jefferson Davis? When the last Confederate unit surrendered in Oklahoma Territory June 23, 1865? President Andrew Johnson’s Proclamations dated August 20, 1866, declaring the “insurrection” to be at an end and “peace, order, tranquility, and civil authority now exist throughout the whole of the United States of America?” The adoption of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution? Or how about the end of the poll tax or the integration of American schools? Or are the issues raised by the Civil War still unresolved? The Revolutionary War, which settled American independence, ended. The Civil War, did not simply end and left many, many issues unsettled. The our group delves into these questions and is therefore a body interested in far more than a discussion about battles, winners, and losers.

If you have even a modicum of interest in 19th century history and would enjoy the give and take of discussing the core issues of what it means to be an American, we would invite you to come to one of our meetings. They are free and open to the public. Membership is open to all. We do not take sides, neither Blue nor Gray. Here we are truly one People.