

BROADSIDE

The Newsletter of the American Revolution Round Table

<http://www.arrrt-ny.org>

April 2019

WARREN: ANOTHER WASHINGTON?

On February 5, Round Tablers learned about yet another Revolutionary hero who has fallen in familiarity and needs some freshening up: Dr. Joseph Warren.

Our speaker was Christian Di Spigna, author of *Founding Martyr: The Life and Death of Dr. Joseph Warren, The American Revolution's Lost Hero*. Mr. Di Spigna said that he has been working on this book for twenty years. Mr. Di Spigna is a Brooklyn native – he brought his proud father to the dinner – but he now divides his time between NY and Williamsburg, Virginia: the Revolution fan's natural habitat.



Christian Di Spigna (left) chats with Joanne Grasso and Jack Buchanan before dinner at the February meeting.

Our speaker's talk was peppered with terms like "primary source" and "material culture," which reflect his thorough research on his subject's life. Like

any good historian, he is a Sherlock Holmes. He has pored over the records of Warren's medical practice and his ledgers, and finds that Warren was very rich and very busy in his practice. He owned a carriage equal in quality to the wealthy John Hancock's. Carriages were owned only by the richest colonial Americans. How did Warren make his dough? The surviving records of his purchases show that he was not just running a medical practice, but a busy apothecary as well. One item he kept supplied with was penis syringes, suggesting the rampant extent of venereal disease in colonial Massachusetts. Don't let that Puritan façade fool you! I believe this was the first time the word "penis" has appeared in a Round Table talk.

ANNUAL BOOK AWARD

We will get the results of our Annual Book Award competition at or before the June dinner. Nominations are closed.

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

Our February meeting saw three book reviews by members. Jack Buchanan reviewed Holger Hook's: *Scars of Independence America's Violent Birth*. Jack's assessment concurs with that of your editor, who heard Hook speak on his book at Fraunces Tavern®. Hook is being fashionable in blaming things on America that are done by all sides in all wars, and commercial in getting the reader to buy a book with a sensational title and précis. And he is being "relevant" in trying to connect the Revolution with Kent State and other more recent events. "Tortured connections at best," says Jack. Eagle-Eye Buchanan also found a few mistakes.

Jim English reviewed Mark Moloy's *Victory or*

Death, a history of the battles of Trenton and Princeton. The book has the virtue of recent scholarship, which is useful from time to time, to clear up myths that have arisen over the years. The Hessians, it seems, were not drunk, and while surprised, did form up quickly, as would be expected of professionals. Good style, but no index, for some reason.

Jon Carriel reviewed Nick Bunker's *Young Benjamin Franklin: The Birth of Ingenuity*. Bunker tackles the nearly impossible task of finding anything new to say about Franklin by setting up a theme – Ingenuity – and tracing that theme not only through Ben's life, but back into his English ancestors' lives too. It seems that Ingenuity – Dr. Franklin's favorite word – was a family trait.

This one has an index, and notes, and a bibliographical essay. There are audible and electronic editions. No paperback edition, though. (Jon reports that members who missed the February meeting can read a slightly revised version of his review on the [Journal of the American Revolution](#) website.)

You have seen the Arcadia books, no doubt. They are paperbacks filled with old photos, often from old post cards, of a city or a neighborhood. The Arcadia Publishing Company is putting out more all the time. In addition to James Renner's Arcadia book on Washington Heights and Inwood, there is now one just on the Morris-Jumel Mansion. The author, or compiler, is Carol S. Ward, until last year Director of the Mansion and an art historian. In this book you can see photos from 1976 of none other than 'er Majesty the Queen, and Prince Philip, visiting the Mansion. With them in the photo is John Henry Thomas, who still gives docent tours of the Mansion to this day.

James Renner has been the official historian of northern Manhattan for some years. You can always see Jim showing his vast collection of photos, post cards, maps and paintings of northern Manhattan at the annual commemoration of the Battle of Fort Washington in Fort Tryon Park on the Sunday closest to each November 16. You can, naturally, find both books for sale at the Mansion gift shop.

Your editor recently found, in the Strand Used Book Store, a tattered paperback called *Bride of Liberty*, by Frank Yerby. It was published by Pyramid Books, 444 Madison Avenue, in 1954. This copy

was marked "Rare mass/ rare pulp, Out of print" by the Strand. A New York City girl follows a soldier to Bunker Hill, and then on to Yorktown. Nice to see a novel from 1954 that shows that the author connects New York to the Revolution at all. Some history books from those decades reported "New York took little part in the Revolutionary War." (I have seen that!)

IN THE NEWS

In March, the New-York Historical Society (don't forget the hyphen!) hosted a talk on "Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, and Daniel Webster, who set out to continue the work of Washington, Jefferson, and Adams." That is what your editor likes to see: tracing the *continuation* of the Revolutionary project down to not only the antebellum period, but to the 21st Century.

On July 4, kids coming to the Society can meet General Washington in his very own tent! This is being done in partnership with Philadelphia's Museum of the American Revolution.

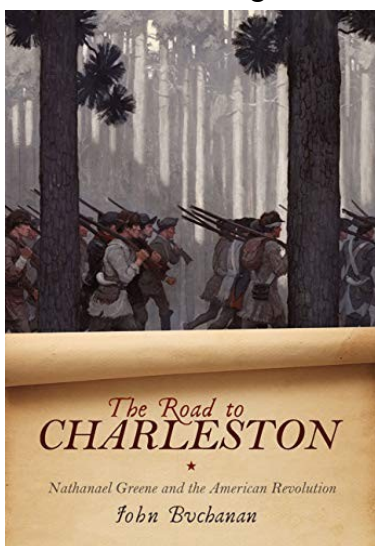
In the February 11th edition of *The New Republic*, you will find an article by James Bamford called "The Spy Who Wasn't." This line caught your editor's eye: "The May dinner was held in the Washington Room at the Army Navy Club, not far from the White House. A dozen people were seated beneath a copy of George Washington's yellowed parchment commission naming him Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army."

On Saturday and Sunday, April 13 and 14, Fraunces Tavern Museum® will sponsor its eighth annual "A Rebellious Brew: New York's Tea Party of 1774" walking tour. 11:00 a.m. Two hours. Led by a reputable, licensed New York City tour guide. To reserve a spot, go to www.frauncestavern-museum.org.

APRIL SPEAKER – JACK BUCHANAN

At our April dinner, we will hear long-time Round Tabler John Buchanan speak about his 2019 book *The Road To Charleston: Nathanael Greene and the American Revolution*. The book will be published this month by the University of Virginia Press. It

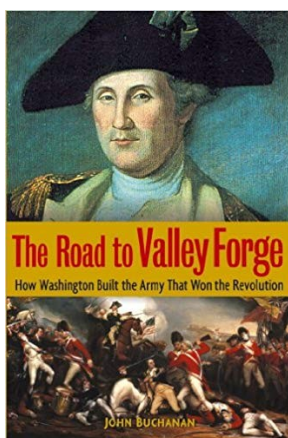
serves as the long-awaited sequel to Jack's 1999



success *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The American Revolution in the Carolinas*. Jack continued this “road” theme with his 2004 *The Road to Valley Forge: How Washington Built the Army that Won the Revolution*, but now he returns to the Carolinas to complete the saga of Cornwallis's southern strategy. His Lordship had taken

Charleston and rampaged through the Carolinas only to be captured with his army at Yorktown, Virginia. The American southern army under the Fighting Quaker General Nathanael Greene finally marched into occupied Charleston in December 1782, after a British occupation of the city of two and a half years.

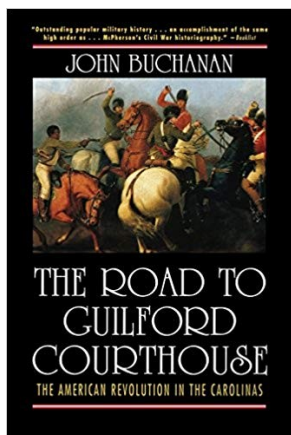
The University of Virginia Press calls *Guilford*: “...one of the most acclaimed military histories of the Revolutionary War ever written.”



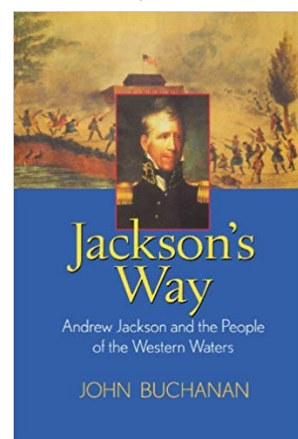
Booklist adds: “...superlative clarity and considerable wit, providing character sketches better than many novelists’, while maintaining balance in judgment and thoroughness in research...”

Our December 2018 speaker, Mark Edward Lender, author of *Fatal Sunday*, calls

Charleston “easily the best in the literature on the subject.”



John Buchanan was born in Glens Falls, New York in 1931. He is the former Chief Registrar and Archivist of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where he was on staff for thirty years. He retired in 1993. Since then he has written, along with his Road histories (talk about a Road Scholar!) a book called *Jackson's Way: Andrew Jackson and the People of the Western Waters*, in 2001, and a 2010 novel, *The Rise of Stefan Gregorovic*. And that's not to mention Jack's short stories. See Jack's website, www.jackbuchanan.net.



GEORGE WYTHE

By Lynne Saginaw

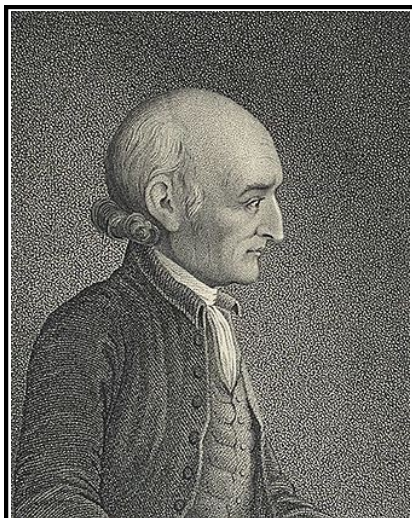
(This is Part One of a series of articles about Revolutionary personalities everyone should know, but probably don't.)

When the day arrived to sign the Declaration of Independence, the signers stepped up as a delegation. The Virginia group insisted on leaving space at the top of their section for a man who wasn't there. His name was George Wythe (pronounced “With”).

What was so important about a fifty-something lawyer and teacher? Wythe's importance was in the second word. Many of us have teachers we remember with respect and fondness. George Wythe was such a teacher. A list of his pupils makes up a substantial portion of the roster of distinguished revolutionary Americans.

Evidence of Wythe's early life is scanty. We know that he was born in 1726 or 27 to a family of planters in Elizabeth City County, northwest of the city of Hampton. (The plantation, Chesterville, no longer exists.) His father died when he was a toddler. Wythe was apprenticed to his uncle, an attorney. He found him a poor teacher, but Wythe learned enough to practice. He soon qualified in several counties and began the life of a backcountry lawyer. Contemporary histories indicate that he was quiet, competent and well thought of. A contemporary described him as “the only honest lawyer I ever knew.”

George Wythe married Anne Lewis in 1747; she died less than six months later. He left his practice and returned to coastal Virginia. His good reputation earned him a clerkship in the House of Burgesses. He advanced swiftly to positions of greater responsibility. Wythe served temporarily as Royal Attorney General at age 28, and then, as a Burgess, on several major committees. He remarried, to Elizabeth Taliaferro, daughter of Richard Taliaferro, a wealthy planter. The house he built for the couple still stands in Williamsburg.



George Wythe (1726-1806)
[Courtesy of Wikipedia]

An affable gentleman, Wythe maintained friendships on both sides despite the growing divide between Whigs and Tories. One of those friends, college professor William Small, suggested that Wythe supervise the education of a promising student, Thomas Jefferson.

Wythe shepherded Jefferson to the bar in 1767. The future president assisted his mentor's flourishing legal practice and followed him into politics. By 1771, Virginia had a new governor, Lord Dunmore, whose uncompromising actions fueled the appetite for self-rule. Wythe attended the Second Virginia Convention, representing Williamsburg.

When the Second Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia, Wythe was elected to replace George Washington, who resigned to take command of the Continental Army. It was Wythe who moved the resolution for independence. He left Philadelphia to attend to public business in Virginia, assisting in the establishment of the new state government. He designed the state's official seal, and coined its' motto, "Sic Semper Tyrannis." (Sound familiar?)

Wythe returned to Philadelphia in September of 1776 to finally sign the Declaration in his prominent reserved space.

Next time: Revolutionary, Teacher, Murder Victim

DEADLINE

Send us anything you can find about the American Revolution for inclusion in the BROADSIDE! All the news that fits, we print! Since the June Round Table will be on Tuesday, June 4, the BROADSIDE should appear in your inbox two weeks previous, on or about Tuesday, May 21. So get your literary masterpieces in to the editor by midnight, Tuesday, May 14! Send them to Fred Cookinham, fcookinham@juno.com. Thanks!

DINNER PLAN

Our Coffee House chef, Irene Semerjak, has promised us her ever-popular broiled salmon entrée for



Jim English and Anna Wheatley sample the *hors d'oeuvres* during the February social hour.

the next meeting, along with a mixed greens salad, and chocolate cake with vanilla ice cream.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

The next Round Table will convene on Tuesday, April 2, 2019 at the Coffee House Club, General Society Library Building, 20 West 44th Street, 6th floor, at 6:00 pm.

Your most obdt. Svt.,
Dr. David W. Jacobs