

# BROADSIDE

The Newsletter of the  
American Revolution Round Table

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

February 2020

***FEBRUARY 4 MEETING WILL START AT 5:30 INSTEAD OF 6:00!***

## THE MAN – OR WOMAN? – WHO TURNED BENEDICT ARNOLD

Our December speaker was Dr. Douglas A. B. Ronald, who lives in King Arthur country in south-western England, with his American wife and 23 sheep. This was the first time our Round Table (not King Arthur's) has been addressed by a real live British author. Your editor sat with Dr. Ronald at dinner. I pointed to my rack of lamb and said "I hope this wasn't one of your employees!"



Dave Jacobs presents Douglas A.B. Ronald with the ARRT's certificate of appreciation for his talk.

Dr. Ronald's topic was Major John André. He took us through André's entire life with his slides, starting with André's Huguenot ancestry, his joining the army through financial necessity, his capture and

exchange in the early part of the war, his supervision of the Meshianza, the three-day celebration in Philadelphia held as a grand send-off for the relieved (in both senses) General Howe – but which served to mask preparations for the British army's quick march from Philadelphia home to New York. André emerged as the intelligence mastermind on the British side – and that is a crucial point: some historians have wrongly judged André reckless or naïve and incompetent because of his actions that resulted in his capture and hanging.

The slides showed portraits of André and his parents and three sisters, which adds another important point: André came from a bit of money and education and culture. Dr. Ronald also showed slides of maps and pictures sufficient almost to serve as a movie of André's wartime movements.

Enter Peggy Shippen, who was close to André before marrying Major General Benedict Arnold. Did she talk her husband, and maybe André too, into the plot to turn over the fortress at West Point to the Redcoats? Shucks! That's just when our speaker ran out of time. We will just have to read his book.

## BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

Your editor just finished reading *Discovering Hamilton: New Discoveries in the Lives of Alexander Hamilton, His Family, Friends, and Colleagues, From Various Archives Around the World*, by Michael E. Newton. I met Mr. Newton in May at Fraunces Tavern, where he explained that his book reflected research he had done as recently as February. Now *that* is history hot off the press!

Mr. Newton describes himself as an historian and author, not as a professor. He has no PhD after his name and his website does not say that he teaches. He does claim to be “a foremost authority on Hamilton.” Not *the* foremost authority, just *a* foremost authority. Can there be more than one “foremost” authority?

Well, whatever this international man of mystery is, we can say one thing for sure: he is thorough. A survivor of Hamilton’s hurricane described a “tenfold” darkness after the storm. Newton went to the trouble of finding the phase of the moon that night. It was a crescent, and it set three hours after sunset. Pretty dark night. Newton brings the same exhaustive exactitude to his examination of every tiny scrap of data he and others have found concerning Hamilton. He has found every flaw in every previous authority on the subject.

What was keeping Newton busy in February, 2019 was the examination of documents in the Danish imperial archives in Copenhagen. Apparently, no one has ever done that before. He first had to find someone who could translate Danish into English, and 18<sup>th</sup> Century Danish at that, written in a Gothic handwriting that few can read today. Armed with this and other original source material, he shoots down many old stories about Hamilton. The jibe about Martha Washington naming her tomcat “Hamilton,” implying Hamilton’s notorious skirt chasing? No evidence. It began as a British joke. Of course, there is no evidence that Martha did *not* have a tomcat, or that Hamilton was *not* a skirt chaser, but that story has no support in primary sources. So we can’t in good conscience repeat it as fact, say, on a walking tour. Darn.

*Discovering Hamilton*, then, is the latest and most convincing word on the subject. Until someone finds even *more* newly-discovered documents.

## IN THE NEWS

June 23, 2012: “A book that once belonged to George Washington was found to contain his own copy of the Constitution, with his signature *and his notes!* It sold for ten million dollars.” I did not get the source. TV news, I think.

Polly Guérin sends us this intelligence: According to the Presidential Pet Museum...well, first of all, the big news is that there IS such a thing as the Presidential Pet Museum. Now, according to Andrew Hager, Historian-in-Residence of the Presidential Pet Museum (!), President Washington was a big, systematic dog breeder. This is mainly because he was a really serious fox hunter. He bred his own Virginia fox hounds with some French ones sent across the pond for the purpose by his friend the Marquis de Lafayette. This resulted in dogs with longer legs, the object being greater speed. The foxes wouldn’t stand a chance. George seems to have had a lot of fun naming his dogs. Among them were Venus, Trulove, Taster, Tippler, Drunkard, and Madame Moose. Some showed singing talent: Droner, Harkwell, Music, Singer, and the diva of the house, Sweet Lips. All this comes from the dogged research of Lesley Kennedy, of the History Channel website.

## SIXTH ARRT NATIONAL CONGRESS MINUTES

Bill Welsch, co-founder of the Congress of ARRTs and Chairman of the Richmond ARRT, sends this message: The minutes of the Sixth Continental Congress of ARRTs, held at Philadelphia in November, 2019, are available online. Mr. Welsch says: “Please let us know of any questions or concerns. We are attempting to reach as many ARRT people as possible, so please share these with your members. Thanks and see you in 2021 at the next Congress.”

The Broadside summarized these minutes last ish, but to read the whole six single-spaced pages, follow [this link](#) to the ARRT-NY website.

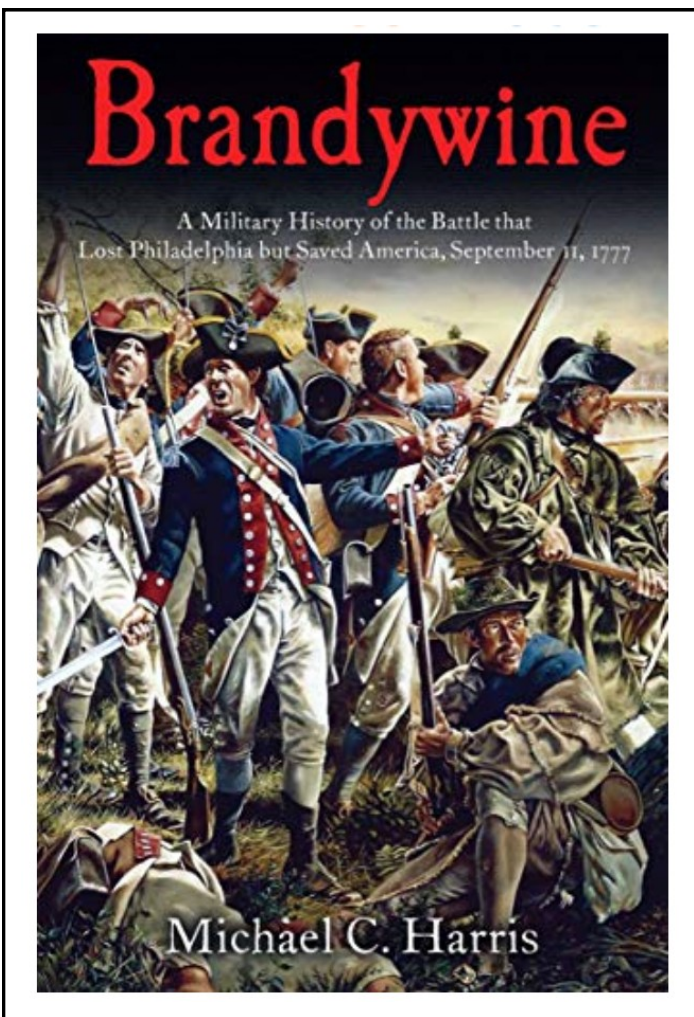
## FEBRUARY SPEAKERS

February’s meeting will start at 5:30 instead of the usual 6 p.m. The April meeting, though, will return to the usual 6:00. Our Social Hour will begin at 5:30 in order to make time for a special presentation at 6:20: Treasurer Jon Carriel will give a 15-minute talk on THE BATTLE OF GOLDEN HILL, the subject of an article Jon is writing. This battle took place six weeks *before* Boston’s better-known Massacre. January 19<sup>th</sup> of this year marked the battle’s

250<sup>th</sup> anniversary. (Your editor shows the site of the incident on his annual walking tour “A REBELLIOUS BREW: NEW YORK’S TEA PARTY OF 1774”, sponsored by Fraunces Tavern Museum® every April. [www.frauncestavernmuseum.org](http://www.frauncestavernmuseum.org))

After the special presentation, we will sit down for our usual hearty repast. Repast is but reproglogue to our main speaker, Michael C. Harris, who will start his talk around the usual time, 8:00.

Mr. Harris will tell us about his book BRANDYWINE: A MILITARY HISTORY OF THE BATTLE THAT LOST PHILADELPHIA BUT SAVED



AMERICA, SEPTEMBER 11, 1777. The book was published in 2014 by Savas Beatie. ARRT member Arthur S. Lefkowitz calls Harris’s book “an impressive interpretation of the battle. Little has been written about this complex campaign.” (Mr. Lefkowitz is the author of *Benedict Arnold’s Army*.) Bill Welsch, of the Richmond ARRT and co-founder of the Congress of ARRTs, writes “...well-balanced...original sources...carefully researched, engagingly written.”

Rich Rosenthal, of the North Jersey ARRT, writes “Having worked for years at Brandywine, the author has credentials that make this book the definitive source on the battle.” And the *Journal of America’s Military Past* adds “Harris does a brilliant job busting myths and refereeing disagreements between other authors.”

Amazon shows 68 customer reviews averaging four and a half stars. The first reviewer says “This book covers not only the battle, but the Brandywine, Pennsylvania area during the Revolution and the habits and inclinations of the locals. The second reviewer compares the Harris book favorably to two other recent books on the battle: one book has no in-text citations, while the other is over-crowded with first-hand sources without proper interpretation. Normally a lot of first-hand sources would be seen as a plus for any history book, but this reviewer would be willing to see fewer eye-witness accounts and more of the author’s conclusions. Well, you can’t please everyone. He does explain, though, that this author *intended* his book to be almost all eye-witness accounts, apparently wishing to allow the reader to draw his own interpretations from them. But that is why all these reviewers prefer the Harris book: it has more balance.

Michael C. Harris is a graduate of the University of Mary Washington and the American Military University. He has worked for the National Parks Service in Fredericksburg, Virginia, Fort Mott State Park, New Jersey, and the Pennsylvania History and Museum Commission at Brandywine Battlefield. He has conducted tours and staff rides of many east coast battlefields. He is certified in Secondary Education and currently teaches in the Philadelphia area. He lives in Pennsylvania with his wife Michelle and his son Nathanael.

Savas Beatie LLC Publishing, of El Dorado Hills, California, was established in 2004. It publishes books in military and general history, specializing in the Civil War. It has now expanded its history line into the Revolution, and is starting to publish in the sports field too. It offers a list of 120 titles. It does some of its own distribution and also distributes through Casemate Publishing of Philadelphia. Savas Beatie also published Arthur Lefkowitz’s *Benedict Arnold’s Army*.

## AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

The Board would like to thank all the donors to the Speakers Fund, and especially those contributors at the Benefactors Level.

The February meeting will convene on Tuesday, February 4, 2020, beginning at 5:30. The dinner menu will be a mixed greens salad, shepherd's pie, and chocolate ice cream.

The April meeting will be on Tuesday, April 7, 2020. We will return to our regular time: 6:00 p.m. Same familiar place – the Coffee House Club, on the sixth floor of the General Society Library, 20 West 44<sup>th</sup> Street. Please email our Treasurer, Jon Carriel, by noon Monday, April 6 (and in the case of February, by noon, Monday, February 3), and let him know how many to expect for dinner. If the chef does not know in advance how many to expect, late-comers may get the Valley Forge Special: roasted shoe leather, if you bring your own shoe. Send that information to Jon at [joncarriel@protonmail.com](mailto:joncarriel@protonmail.com).

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



December guest Eva Dorrepaal made instant friends with ARRT's affable Dave Jacobs.

## DEADLINE

The Broadside welcomes contributions of any item of interest to students of America's Revolutionary era. Please send all such to Editor Fred Cookinham, [fcookinham@juno.com](mailto:fcookinham@juno.com). Remember! There is no G in "Cookinham." Thanks!

The deadline for contributions to the April Broadside is midnight, March 23<sup>rd</sup>.



ARRT's new Student Member, Christopher Thuilot, engages Carl Ellman in conversation during the social hour preceding the December meeting.