

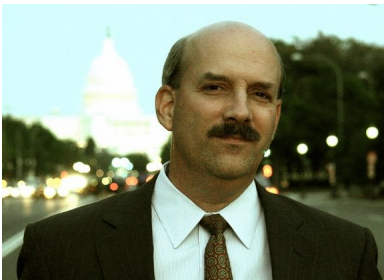
BROADSIDE

The Newsletter of the
American Revolution Round Table
<http://www.arrrt-ny.org>

February 2021

CHARLES LEE: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

Christian McBurney has graced our stage (or would have, if we had a stage) four times now. One more and we will have start a Five Times Club, like the frequent hosts of Saturday Night Live. He addressed the Round Table in February 2014, October 2015, and June 2018 and last night, December 1 of the Plague Year.



Christian McBurney

The Round Table is starting to get the hang of this Zoom business! Last night's soiree went smoothly. No pirates boarded us. We had 19 attendees in October and 26 last night, so attendance is going up. Even the slides, so troublesome at the Coffee House Club, worked fine. All who tuned in had to be vetted and muted. Chairman Jacobs convened the meeting at 7:35.

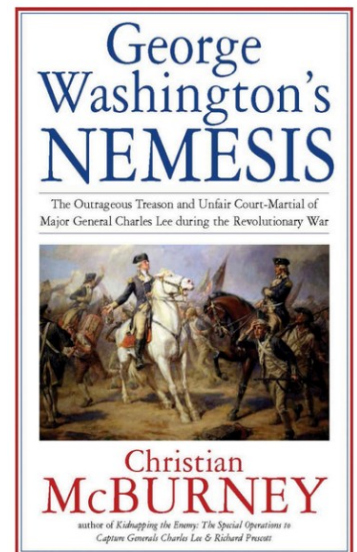
After Lynne Saginaw's book review (see below), the Chair recognized Mr. McBurney. Our speaker is an attorney in Washington, but hails from Rhode Island and has written about his home state in the RevWar and World War II. He publishes the Rhode Island Historical Review online.

The subject of Mr. McBurney's book and talk was General Charles Lee. His title is GEORGE WASHINGTON'S NEMESIS. The problem with Lee, he said, is that biographers have given Lee too much Lee-way on the topic of his captivity by the

British, and not enough on his performance on the Monmouth battlefield. Mr. McBurney is a lawyer, and both Lee controversies are legal in nature, so that is our author's approach.

Lee was hot for revolution and republicanism until he was captured by the British. After three months in the klink, he decided that the cause of American independence was hopeless. Why? Because HE had been captured, and he believed himself to be America's only hope. So he wrote the Brits a plan by which they could quickly crush the rebellion. Our speaker showed a slide of the plan, so we could read it ourselves. Providing the enemy with a knowledgeable plan for your own side's defeat is pretty obviously treason, and so legally, Lee should have been hanged. But his treason was not discovered for 75 years, luckily for him. Meanwhile, he was exchanged and was given, by the Commander in Chief, command of the first wave of the attack at Monmouth, New Jersey.

Some historians have dismissed Lee's treason as a momentary, unimportant lapse, and have brushed over it with little attention. One writer has even suggested that Lee was offering his plan to General Howe as a trick. If so, it succeeded, because Howe decided to take Philadelphia. If instead he had stuck to his original plan, he would have moved his army up the



Hudson from New York City to Albany to link up with Burgoyne, coming down from Montreal. Howe might have won the war.

At Monmouth, Lee found two of his commanders abandoning the field. Those two, then, should be blamed for Lee's retreat and not Lee. McBurney finds that Lee did a competent, and even a brilliant, job of holding the line with what forces he had left. He should be remembered as a hero of the battle. Instead, Lee was blamed and court martialed, and said some intemperate things against his popular Commander in Chief. Lee was already hated by others anyway, and most people among both the army and later historians have been prejudiced against Lee just because he grated on everyone. McBurney hopes to redress both of these popular misjudgments of Lee with his book.

One coup that McBurney pulled off in his book was the publishing of a memo on Lee by General Sir Harry Clinton, Howe's successor as British Commander in Chief. Our speaker says he is the first author to go into this much detail about Lee's court martial. He showed us some of the six new battle maps that he had drawn just for this book. He pointed out the inaccurate view of the Monmouth battle written by Lin-Manuel Miranda for a number in his "Hamilton – The Musical."

Member Joe Joyce asked (by Zoom's Chat facility): What did Lee's men think of him? Did he inspire his men the way Arnold did? The answer was: no. Lee's abrasive nature worked its way down the ranks as well as up.

Lee was better read than any other American general, and probably any British one.

Dr. Joanne Grasso asked: What do you like about Lee? Answer: His pen, and the fact that he did a good job at Monmouth.

What is next for our author? – asked Chairman Jacobs. A book on slavery during the Rev, but from a new and different angle.

Our Zoom meeting wrapped up at 8:46, after announcements and thanks to our speaker.

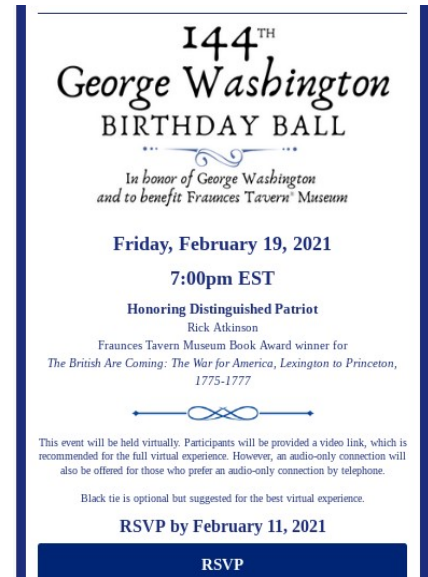
IN THE NEWS

Polly Guérin reminds us of the impending annual George Washington's Birthday Ball, held at Fraunces Tavern by the Tavern and Museum's owner, the SRs: the Sons of the Revolution in the State of New York. This year, of course, it will be a virtual

ball. Not sure how that is supposed to work, but to find out, just go to: www.frauncestavern-museum.org. The event will be Zoomed on Friday, February 19.

Vic Miranda reports a website called www.historyauthortalks.com. It hosts online author talks on American History topics. The proceeds benefit the Sons of the American Revolution Genealogical Research Library. If you are a publisher or agent, send the website a proposal for a talk. You can also buy books through this site. You can see the talks on YouTube. You can learn how to write historical fiction.

Vic also recommends a 1933 movie called "Berkeley Square," starring Leslie Howard. An American lives in a house on Berkeley Square, London. It had belonged to an ancestor of the same name, Peter Standish. Peter, reading his ancestor's diary from 1784, becomes convinced that he and his ancestor somehow switched places for a few days. Sure enough, 1933 Peter finds himself suddenly in 1784. His ancestor had just come from New York, so perhaps he was a Loyalist fleeing the Revolution. There is also a 1951 version called "I'll Never Forget You," with Tyrone Power. Peter thinks the Eighteenth Century was just peachy until he finds himself transported thither, and learns about body lice and the lack of bathing. Both movies are based



loosely on an unfinished 1917 novel by Henry James, *THE SENSE OF THE PAST*.

In the December 2020 *Smithsonian Magazine*, Erick Trickey profiles Mary Katharine Goddard



(1738-1816), a Baltimore printer and postmaster. She was one of the first printers of the Declaration of Independence and led a very active life.

Deserves more attention.

This from relatively new member David Nelson: There is now a Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association – “W3R.” Its mission is to provide site markers, statues and commemorative events to raise awareness of the route taken by the two generals and their armies from Rhode Island through Connecticut and down to Yorktown, Virginia, where they finished the war by defeating Lord Cornwallis. Go to www.w3r-us.org.

Tom McAndrew, of the Congress of Round Tables, advises us that the Gotham Center for New York City History is offering an online course called “New York City’s American Revolution.” There will be eight sessions of ninety minutes between May 3 and May 26. The course costs \$350.00. The instructor is Christopher F. Minty, the managing editor of The John Dickinson Writings Project of the University of Virginia. He is a former assistant editor of the Adams Papers of the Massachusetts Historical Society. He is the author of *AMERICAN DEMAGOGUES: THE REVOLUTIONARY ORIGINS OF LOYALISM IN NEW YORK CITY* (Cornell U. Press, forthcoming), and the co-editor of *THE CAUSE OF LOYALTY: THE REVOLUTIONARY WORLDS OF MYLES COOPER*. To register for this course, go to: www.eventbrite.com/e/gothamed/new-york-citys-american-revolution-registration-135778867247.

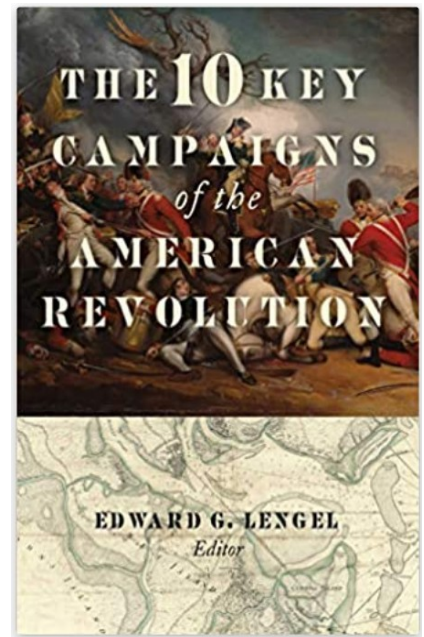
And one more item from Polly Guérin: Expanding our purview by one war, Polly recommends an online video presentation on the battle of New Orleans by Bill Wiemuth, the keynote history and entertainment speaker on American Cruise Lines, and in other venues nationwide. Go to bill@historyhighlights.com.

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE A BOOK REVIEW! THE ROUND TABLE IS MORE FUN IF WE ALL PITCH IN WITH A BOOK REVIEW!

CONTACT LYNNE SAGINAW THROUGH THE BROADSIDE OR THE WEBSITE! THANK YOU!

Our Book Review Editrix, Lynne Saginaw, recommends *THE 10 KEY CAMPAIGNS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION*. It covers the war from Lexington to Yorktown. Our February, April and June speakers all wrote chapters in this book. Editor Edward G. Lengel was for many years the keeper of the George Washington Papers at the University of Virginia. He has mustered an all-star team of experts to write the chapters.



Lynne likes shorter, lighter books. “While authors like Robert Caro and Ron Chernow write compellingly at considerable

length, for most authors words should be rationed with care.” Lengel keeps it down to ten chapters and barely 200 pages of crisp, cogent text, very

handsome, accessible maps, and details that amuse and instruct. The writing is often brilliant. The Carolina back country fighters were “people who, in the blackest time for the cause, would bend but never break; they were accustomed to privation, travail their normal lot, and mercy to an enemy was never uppermost in their thoughts.” One sentence tells you all you need to know.

Regnery History charges \$29.99 for the book. Try Amazon or Barnes & Noble for a deal. “Get a copy and you’ll have no problem following our speakers for the next three meetings, and your wrists won’t hurt a bit.”

Lynne has assigned three books for review: GERMANTOWN: A MILITARY HISTORY OF THE BATTLE FOR THE CONTROL OF PHILADELPHIA, by Michael C. Harris; A HANDSOME FLOGGING: THE BATTLE OF MONMOUTH, JUNE 28, 1778, by William R. Griffith IV; and YOU NEVER FORGET YOUR FIRST, A BIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON, by Alexis Coe.

Your editor just finished reading the Monmouth book. Perfect introduction to the battle for the non-specialist. The maps were drawn especially for this book, so the references on the maps match the references in the text, for once.

The New York Almanack reports two new books. PIONEERS AND THEIR FIGHT FOR FREEDOM is a 2020 reprint of a 1901 Scribner’s book by Francis Whiting Halsey (1851-1919). His original title was THE OLD NEW YORK FRONTIER: ITS WARS WITH INDIANS AND TORIES, ITS MISSIONARY SCHOOLS, PIONEERS AND LAND TITLES, 1614-1800. As you can see, book titles with endless sub-titles are nothing new.

Another new title is: PATIENCE WRIGHT: ARTIST AND SPY IN GEORGE III’S LONDON, by Charles Coleman Sellers.

The New York Almanack says: “Book orders on this Amazon link support the New York Almanack’s mission to report new publications relevant to New York State.”

MENCKEN REMEMBERS THE PRISON SHIPS

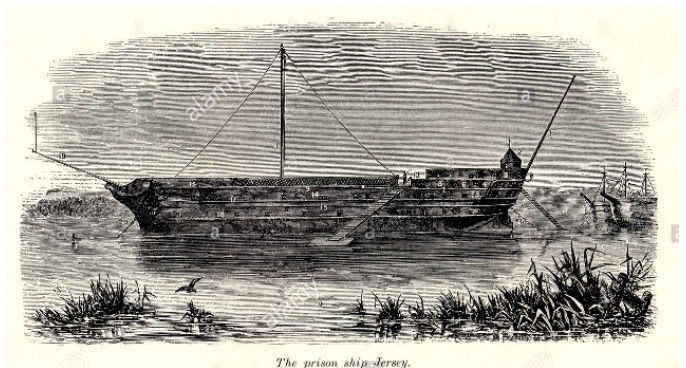
Your editor recently read THE DAYS OF H. L. MENCKEN, an autobiography by the great curmudgeonly reporter and social critic. The chapter “Inquisition,” written in 1943, recounts the famous “Monkey Trial” of 1925, which Mencken covered. This line jumped out at me:



H. L. Mencken

“Inasmuch as his main aim in defending Scopes was to plaster Bryan before the country as a jackass, he hoped that his ostensible client would be condemned to the hulks, for that would enable him to appeal to the Supreme Court of Tennessee, and maybe even to the Supreme Court of the United States, and so keep the searing spotlight upon Bryan.”

Now, there may have been other hulks used as prisons in other wars, but I would like to think that



The prison ship, Jersey.

The Jersey "hulk"

Mencken was referring to the Jersey and the other British ships anchored in Wallabout Bay, Kings County, during our War for Independence. It is always a pleasure, and a fascination, to find the memory of that war and those Prison Ship Martyrs lingering in popular references up to 1943 and, with any luck, to 2020 and beyond.

FEBRUARY SPEAKER

Our next Zoom meeting will take place on Groundhog Day! Tuesday, February 2 will see our group addressed by Glenn F. Williams Ph.D. on the topic of the northern campaign of the Revolutionary War.

For the first time, the Round Table will hold a series of talks on a single book. Three different contributors to the 2020 book THE 10 KEY CAMPAIGNS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION will be our speakers at our February, April and June Zooms.

The book has the name of an editor, Edward G. Lengel, on the front cover, rather than an author. Oddly, the Table of Contents does not list the separate authors of the chapters, but in the Editorial Note the editor introduces the reader to the authors. Dr. Williams's talk will be based on his chapter on Lexington and Concord. In April, Professor Mark Lender, who addressed the Round Table in February of 2019, will return to his topic of the Battle of Monmouth. Our meeting year will conclude in June with a talk by our own Jack Buchanan on his favorite subject, the southern campaign.

Dr. Williams is a historian at the U.S. Army Center of Military History at Fort McNair, Washington



D.C. He has served as the historian of the National Museum of the U.S. Army Project, the U.S. Army Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commemoration, and the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program. He is the author of a number of books and articles, including the award-winning YEAR OF THE HANGMAN: GEORGE WASHINGTON'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE IROQUOIS and DUNMORE'S WAR: THE LAST CONFLICT OF

AMERICA'S COLONIAL ERA. He holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Maryland.

DEADLINE

Please submit articles, book reviews, news items, wanted posters, etc. by midnight, March 16, 2021 for inclusion in the April BROADSIDE.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

The full membership meeting with speaker will start by Zoom at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, February 2, 2021. The Zoom connection link is included in the e-mail members received linking them to this newsletter. Guests are welcome, but are asked to [register by e-mail with the undersigned](#) at least 24 hours in advance.

Your most obdt. Svt.,

Dr. David W. Jacobs