

BROADSIDE

The Newsletter of the American Revolution Round Table

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

June 2021

THE MIDDLE STATES: THE DECISIVE THEATER

The April 6, 2021 Round Table convened by Zoom at 7:30 pm with 25 attendees.

Main speaker Mark Lender, co-author of the Monmouth chapter of Lengel's THE 10 KEY CAMPAIGNS OF THE AMERICAN



REVOLUTION, and of FATAL SUNDAY, on the Monmouth battle, widened his scope Tuesday evening to

cover the whole Middle States theater of war, or phase of the war. At the last Round Table, as you recall, Glenn F. Williams spoke on Lexington and Concord in the first phase of the war, in New England. Now we have heard expert opinion on the second phase, and in June Jack Buchanan will tell us about the third phase: the Southern campaigns. Two down, one to go. Our Speaker Getter, Dr. Joanne Grasso, planned these three talks to cover the phases of the war in chronological order.

Mark Lender is Professor Emeritus at Kean University, Union, New Jersey. His Ph.D. in History is from Rutgers.

Here are some of Dr. Lender's main points about the Middle States and the war there. General Washington spent almost the whole war in the Middle States. Only at the start was he in New England, and only at the end, at Yorktown, was he

in the south. The British, except at the beginning, were headquartered in New York City.

The British had some advantages in the Middle States. They had good ports, mainly New York, to bring in troops and supplies. The country was much like Europe: not too cold, not too hot, and covered with farms and with better roads than the North or South. So it was the kind of terrain a European army was used to fighting in. The King had sent, in General Howe and Admiral Howe, his varsity team, not a junior varsity team. They were the best commanders the King had to throw at the rebels.

The Yankee advantages were that in 1775 and 1776 it was the Whigs who were in charge in the Middle States. Congress was there.

General Howe made three big mistakes in this theater:

- After defeating Washington at Brooklyn, he did not storm the American lines at Brooklyn Heights.
- On December 13, 1776, he went into winter quarters and did not cross the Delaware and chase Washington into Pennsylvania.
- At the Second Battle of Trenton, Cornwallis ignored a warning that GW would slip away during the night. He slipped away, all right, but not over the Delaware to safety in Pennsylvania, but forward to Princeton to attack another British position, winning his third victory in eight days, Howe then pulled back from the Delaware to New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Of the three, Lender says that the second mistake was the most important. It would have been easy for Howe to cross the Delaware, but he chose not to bother. Lender goes as far as to say that December 13th should be celebrated as another Independence Day.

Other points to ponder:

It was at Valley Forge and at Morristown that GW built his new army, and got it trained by Steuben. It was his new army that won the war.

GW's approach to war was not Fabian, as has often been said. He was aggressive, and turned Fabian only when he had to for lack of troops.

Historians are still not clear on why Howe chose to attack Philadelphia and not move his army up the Hudson to join Burgoyne at Albany, as planned.

Gates was right to let Burgoyne come to him. But he could not have won at Saratoga if GW had not sent troops north.

GW's intelligence was centralized in the Middle States. In New England and in the South, he had to rely on local intelligence, such as from Sumter and Marion in South Carolina.

Dr. Lender fielded five questions from the floor, and it sounded as though he could have gone on for hours with fine points and new perspectives on the Middle States Phase.

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

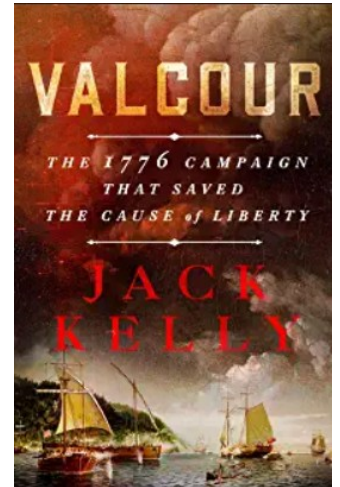
Book Review Editrix Lynne Saginaw led off on our three book reviews for April with *VALCOUR: THE 1776 CAMPAIGN THAT SAVED THE CAUSE OF LIBERTY*, Jack Kelly. St. Martin's Press, 2021. 285 pages. \$28.99.

Lynne began: "When I received this book, I felt considerable excitement. The Valcour campaign has been neglected and I'm not aware of a recent publication one could call comprehensive about how a combination of guile and luck saved the new

Continental army in the north. It's such an important, intriguing topic. I couldn't wait to start the book.

"It's an elegantly designed volume, with a gorgeous cover, nice maps, and fine sketches of the various types of craft used by Continental and British forces.

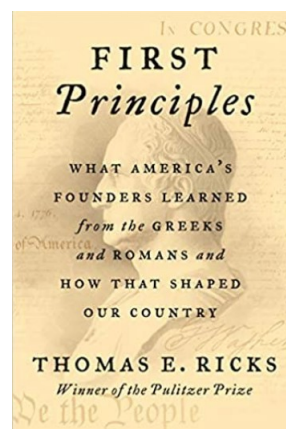
"Now we come to the text. The book opens with an overheated description of the retreat from St. Johns, Quebec, after the disastrous defeat of the Continentals' expeditionary force. Here's a sample: 'The riverside smelled of desolation, of woodsmoke and smoldering pitch and animal carcasses.' Sounds like the beginning of a less-than-stellar History Channel offering, doesn't it?



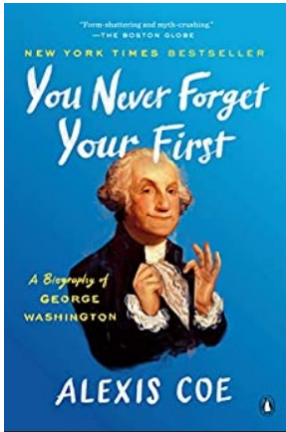
"Still, there is plenty of good stuff here..."

"Better drama than history," Lynne concludes. End notes (Lynne prefers footnotes) lack numbers and explanations. The book is more junior oriented than Round Tablers might like. Three and a half stars out of five.

Our second reviewer was Fred Cookinham, reviewing *FIRST PRINCIPLES: WHAT AMERICA'S FOUNDERS LEARNED FROM THE GREEKS AND ROMANS AND HOW THAT SHAPED OUR COUNTRY*. Thomas E. Ricks, Harper Collins, 2020. The author wisely focuses on just four individuals, the first four presidents, and shows how each was influenced by Greek, Roman, and also Scottish thought. General Washington tried all his



life to live up to the classic ideal of the “disinterested” patriot. Madison, in helping to design the Constitution, looked for ways of pitting one interest against another, not to have to rely on finding more Washingtons into the indefinite future. Unlike Lynne’s and Andrea’s books, this one is not too “pop” or juvenile for our sophisticated group.



Andrea Meyer read the third review of the evening. YOU NEVER FORGET YOUR FIRST: A BIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON, by Alexis Coe. Andrea finds the book easy to recommend to readers from about 20 to 30 years old, but it is too “pop” for Round Tablers.

The author is a curator. She writes good sound bites, but she has a curious fondness for lists.

Extending our field to include the War of 1812, we might mention the publication, in January, 2021, of NEW YORK’S WAR OF 1812: POLITICS, SOCIETY AND COMBAT, by Richard V. Barbuto. Your editor has never seen a book before on this exact focus. The study of the American Revolution really ought to include the 1812 war – “America’s Second War For Independence” – as an almost immediate result of the first, with some of the same actors, thirty years older. Not for nothing did someone write a single book covering the Seven Years’ War, the War for Independence, and the War of 1812 as parts of a single story: Britain’s wars for empire in North America. (I can’t seem to find the title or author.)

The New York Almanack has advertised C. Bradley Thompson’s AMERICA’S REVOLUTIONARY MIND: A MORAL HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND THE DECLARATION THAT DEFINED IT. This 2019 book spotlights John Locke’s moral teachings.

Out in 2020 is 1774: THE LONG YEAR OF REVOLUTION, by Mary Beth Norton. This book draws on the pamphlets, newspapers and personal correspondence of the Tea Party year.

Another book mentioned in the New York Almanack is 2019’s THE ONLY UNAVOIDABLE SUBJECT OF REGRET: GEORGE WASHINGTON, SLAVERY, AND THE ENSLAVED COMMUNITY AT MOUNT VERNON, by Mary Thompson, Research Historian at Mount Vernon. University of Virginia Press. This was the first comprehensive account of the slaves at Mount Vernon.

PLEASE CONTACT LYNNE SAGINAW AT lynneess@juno.com AND VOLUNTEER TO REVIEW A BOOK. WHEN READING YOUR REVIEW AT THE ZOOM MEETING, PLEASE KEEP IT UNDER FIVE MINUTES. AND YOU GET TO KEEP THE BOOK!

IN THE NEWS

Google “Columbus, Ohio” and you will find that Ohio’s capital city is built in part on land set aside by Congress for Canadians who had fled to the US because they had opposed Crown policies during the Revolution. The flight of Loyalists to Canada had its counterpart, it seems, though with a much smaller number. News to me!

Fraunces Tavern® Museum is not the only organization offering an Evacuation Day walking tour in November. Karen Quinones’s Patriot Tours does likewise, and also offers a video tour of Evacuation Day.

John Holt’s *New York Journal* of November 30, 1775 advises us that Captain Henry Livingston (who some believe was the *real* author of the poem “A Visit From St. Nicholas”) has passed through New York on his way to report to Congress in Philadelphia that General Montgomery took Montreal on November 13. –Polly Guerin

When Aaron Burr read Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, his was the *only* copy of the book in New York City. Any other reader had to borrow it from Burr. In those days, people had too little access to information. Today we have too much.

The 7th Congress of American Revolution Round Tables is still on. Covid permitting, it will be held at George Washington's Mount Vernon, in the library, from Friday, November 19 to Sunday, November 21. All Round Table members are welcome, not just Board members. Reserve now!

www.thenmusa.org

www.mtvernon.org

Polly Guerin passes along this welcome calming note from Smithsonian Magazine: Despite the recent rioting, Lord Dartmouth reassures us that the Sons of Liberty "could not be very formidable."

On April 7, the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia hosted a zoom panel on the subject of Deborah Sampson, who disguised herself as a man and enlisted in the revolutionary army. The panelists included a costume designer and an author of historical fiction. The panel was followed by a virtual tour of the Museum's exhibit on revolutionary women. They showed Deborah Sampson's own wedding dress. – Polly Guerin

Lynne Saginaw says that the Wyckoff-Bennett House, 1669 E. 22nd Street off Kings Highway, Brooklyn, is still in private hands and casual visitors are not welcome. But if you can wangle an invitation, the current owners could show you a message, in German, etched into a windowpane in the house by a Hessian soldier.

REPORT FROM CHARLESTON

By Christopher Thuiot

In the fall of 1775, a Scotsman serving as British Governor of South Carolina, Lord William Campbell, fled from his mansion on Meeting Street in Charleston. Rushing down the cobblestoned streets, lined with Spanish moss-covered oak and palmetto trees, he reached the wharf and was rowed out to the ship Tamar, abandoning the colony to the rebels. Perhaps, as he climbed aboard, under the moon and amidst the salt sea air, he wished that he had stayed on as Governor of Nova Scotia, a colony that had not rebelled.



The British army retook Charleston and the colony in 1780. Commander in Chief for North America Sir Harry Clinton sailed from New

York after Christmas of 1779 and captured the town from General Benjamin Lincoln. Clinton's fleet worked its way through the barrier islands south of Charleston and landed, moving north to cut off Lincoln's supply lines to the city. The Redcoats laid siege. Banastre Tarleton and his cavalry scoured the countryside and became legendary.

By early May, 1780, the British were dug in where Spring Street is now, north of the city. Lincoln had no path to victory for the Continentals. With hot cannonballs flying and British cavalry unleashed, Lincoln was forced to surrender. Many of the Loyalist Provincials brought to help the Redcoats secure South Carolina came from New York City.

When Clinton learned that Rochambeau was soon to land his French force at Newport, Rhode Island, he sailed back to New York with Major John Andre, leaving Lords Cornwallis and Rawdon, Tarleton, Brigadier Alexander Leslie and eight thousand troops to conquer the southern states.

This Georgian mansion was British Headquarters in Charleston, hosting Clinton, Cornwallis, Rawdon and Tarleton. Stroll



past at night and you can almost see their shadows lingering behind the windows discussing strategy over sprawled maps illuminated by candlelight.

Tarleton's Legion galloped across the Carolinas. At Middleton Plantation, you can get a feel for the land

today from horseback. You can smell the rich cotton, peach and corn-bearing soil, and watch the farm animals graze. Ride south along the Ashley River and feel the refreshing sea breeze and smell the salt air along the beaches and strings of islands off the coast of the low country.

At Mepkin Abbey, monks grow mushrooms and a broad selection of vibrant flowers. The Abbey is built on the ruins of the Laurens Plantation, and both father Henry and son John Laurens are buried there. Henry sold slaves and John tried to free them. He might have succeeded someday if he had lived, but this promising young man was killed in a skirmish near Beaufort nearly a year after Yorktown (reminding us that Yorktown was not the end of the war).

The British evacuated Charleston and Savannah in December of 1782. These two cities have preserved more than New York has of their Revolutionary Era streets and houses.

JUNE SPEAKER: JACK BUCHANAN

At our June zoom meeting, we will hear long-time Round Tabler Jack Buchanan speak about his contribution to the 2020 book *THE 10 KEY CAMPAIGNS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION*. Mr. Buchanan's chapter is called "Charleston to King's Mountain: The Southern Partisan Campaign." The book's editor, Edward G. Lengel, writes in his Editorial Note: "John "Jack" Buchanan, author of the first – and what remain the best – full studies of the southern campaigns, shows how American fortunes in this theater swung from what seemed total defeat at the surrender of Charleston, South Carolina, in May, 1780, to smashing victory at the Battle of King's Mountain in October of that same year."

(I still say that verb should be conjugated Swing – Swang – Had Swung.)

Mr. Buchanan's talk completes our spring trilogy: In February, we heard Glenn F. Williams Ph.D. speak on the northern campaigns – Phase I of the war, in

April we heard Mark Lender speak on the middle states campaigns – Phase II of the war, and now we wind up the war with Phase III, the south.

The University of Virginia Press called Mr. Buchanan's *THE ROAD TO GUILFORD COURTHOUSE* "... one of the most acclaimed military histories of the Revolutionary War ever written." Booklist the book's "... superlative clarity and considerable wit, providing character sketches better than many novelists', while maintaining balance in judgment and thoroughness in research."

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 (starring Bob Hope and Bing Crosby), *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

DEADLINE

The deadline for submissions to the October Broadside will be midnight, Tuesday, September 14, three weeks before the October zoom meeting. Maybe we will get lucky and be able to meet and dine in person by October, but we are planning for another zoom just in case. Maybe in person by December?

BOARD MEETING

The Board of the ARRT-NYC will have its semi-annual meeting by zoom at 7:30 pm, Monday, May 24, 2021. It will be combined with a standard trial run for the June speaker.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

7:30 p.m., Tuesday, June 1, 2021 will see us all glued to our computer screens for the last Round Table of the 2020-2021 season. The zoom connection link will be included in the same email members received that linked them to this newsletter. Guests are welcome, but are asked to register by [email with Ms. Andrea Meyer](#) at least 24 hours in advance.

Save the date: The first meeting of our 2021-2022 season will be Tuesday, October 5. Although we hope to resume regular “dinner” meetings as soon as possible, we do not yet anticipate that for October.

Yr most obdt svt,
Dr. David W. Jacobs

The ARRT is seeking a member willing to accept the position of Treasurer. The Treasurer is a member of the Board of Governors, and is responsible for all financial transactions and record keeping of the Round Table.x