

BROADSIDE

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

February 2024

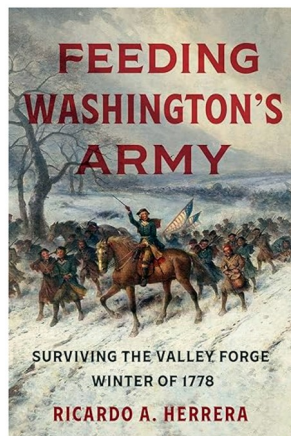
DECEMBER SPEAKER:

FORAGING AT THE FORGE

Dr. Ricardo A. Herrera (“please call me Rick”) Zoom-addressed seventeen Round Tablers on the subject of his latest book, FEEDING WASHINGTON’S ARMY: SURVIVING THE VALLEY FORGE WINTER OF 1778.

Dr. Herrera’s book was published by the University of North Carolina Press in June of 2022. Our speaker teaches military history at the School of Advanced Military Studies at the US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Armed with many good, clear maps and pictures, our speaker set the stage with a complete run-down on the whole Philadelphia campaign. General Washington wisely decided not to again assault the city after the British took it and held it at the Battle of Germantown. Instead, he established a camp at Valley Forge, a few miles west of the city as what the Army today would call an FOB: Forward Operating



Base. From there, his army could do what little it could, given its limited size, training and equipment. The army could patrol, gather intelligence, accumulate supplies, and harass. Although Washington did not have as many men as the British had, Valley Forge was the fourth largest city in British North America for the months it existed: December of 1777 to June of 1778. Then the Commander in Chief had the camp moved a mile or two away. Why? Because the officers could not get the men to stop relieving themselves in the trenches and all over the camp. The whole camp had become an open sewer.

Washington sent his most reliable field commander, Major General Nathanael Greene, out foraging for food for the troops. Greene did this politely and apologetically at first, giving farmers IOU’s from Congress for their cows, pigs, crops, and so on, but after many farmers began to hide their goods or take them into British-held Philly to sell, Greene began to take rather than ask for supplies, and he began to arrest and severely flog farmers who failed to willingly supply the army.

Dr. Herrera said that no one has ever written a full-length book on the foraging aspect of Valley Forge until now.

A few points our speaker made:

British General Howe was a good tactician but a bad strategist; GW was just the opposite.

Washington used his A Team at Philly and Howe used his B Team.

General “Mad Anthony” Wayne was anything but mad. He was arrogant, but on the battlefield, he was cautious as often as bold.



The Rector of Swede’s Church, Swedesboro, New Jersey recalled that the American soldiers were rough and ragged in appearance and equipment, but were disciplined. They did not steal from civilians. But the Redcoats,

though better dressed and equipped, did steal or destroy civilian property, just because they could. The Brits were not as badly off as the Americans food-wise, but they never had as much food on hand as they planned for (six months’ supply at all times), and they had to forage a lot too.

Here is a good line from Dr. Herrera: “The Revolutionary War was nested in the American Revolution.”

One question from the audience: When did Valley Forge gain protection as a historic site? The answer is: in 1876, when Philadelphia had an exposition on the centennial of American Independence.

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

Here is the book review read by Book Review Editrix Lynne Saginaw at our December Zoom meeting:

GOD SAVE BENEDICT ARNOLD: THE TRUE STORY OF AMERICA’S MOST HATED MAN, by Jack Kelly. Published by St. Martin’s Press, December 2023. 302 pages.

Before he committed treason, Benedict Arnold was a great man.

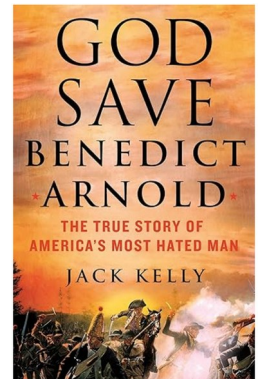
Freelance historian Jack Kelly tells that part of Arnold’s story with a combination of passion and precision. Wisely, he makes no effort to excuse or forgive his subject.

From 1775, for five years, Arnold fought for America nobly, even brilliantly. It is this period, a time most modern Americans know nothing about, that Kelly takes for his subject. At Ticonderoga and Valcour Island, among other battles, Arnold’s intelligence, ingenuity and bravery accomplished extraordinary things. These details are at the heart of this book.

What happened? What changed Arnold from patriot to traitor?

Kelly points out that the virtues that marked many Americans – confidence, restlessness, individualism “... can swell to egotism... and beget arrogance.” That theory makes absolute sense to this reviewer.

While he was celebrated throughout his earlier career, Arnold often felt underappreciated. His correspondence attests to that. He was prickly, easily offended and wont to complain of mistreatment and then resign.



The middle of a revolution is no time to pick up your marbles and go home. Apparently, Arnold gambled that switching sides might bring him greater acclaim. He was utterly wrong.

Benedict Arnold's thought process remains one of the great riddles of our history. Jack Kelly doesn't solve it, but he fills in the details exceptionally well and history-lovers now have a lot more to think about.

Our archeology department reports the unearthing of two Rev books from the Cookinham household: GUNS OF BURGOYNE, a 1939 novel by Bruce Lancaster, Grosset & Dunlap, inscribed "To Uncle Ned, Merry Christmas 1940, Love, Jim." Provenance unknown.

A boxed set of two volumes also came to light: THE WAR OF THE REVOLUTION, Christopher Ward, published by Macmillan in 1952. The editor, John Richard Alden, explains in his Preface that the book came about almost accidentally. The author had died, leaving a manuscript in which he did not intend to cover the entire war. About one half of the manuscript was an earlier monograph by Ward just on the history of the Delaware Line, but he had added many more chapters, covering most of the war, Delaware or not. But he had not written about the war west of the Alleghenies, so Alden had to write that part himself, focusing on General George Rogers Clark, to make this a complete chronicle of the war. Alden insists that the book remains, nevertheless, Ward's, in point of view and interpretation. He thanks Kenneth Roberts and Carl Van Doren for their advice on the writing.

IN THE NEWS

Richard Melnick, our February speaker, has been a member of ARRT-NY since 2014. He has attended observances of the Battle of Brooklyn since 2005. In 2021, Richard fired a musket there. In 2023, the August 27, 1776 battle was

commemorated as usual, and our reporter was there. At the Old Stone House at Gowanus, military men and women honored the Maryland dead and their great sacrifice. The names of the officers and troops were read by a score of descendants and dignitaries.

The Green-wood (they spell it with a hyphen) Cemetery events were excellent. The Cemetery offered superb trolley tours which explained Revolutionary actions in western Long Island.



Richard has also been busy promoting his book. He has given eight book talks in Queens, at bookstores, entertainment venues, cultural and political events, a flea market and a Christmas market. He has been featured in six Queens newspapers. His book has been reviewed by six scholarly entities and twenty colleagues. He has sold copies to family and friends in twelve states. Richard acknowledged nine ARRT-NY members in the book.

Richard lectured at Fraunces Tavern Museum on November 16, 2023. There were 25 people in the room and another 200 on Zoom. "The setting was perfect," says Richard, "and I was able to briefly discuss the November 16, 1776 fall and surrender of Fort Washington" in speaking on his main topic, Long Island City. There is a painting of the Fort Washington battle in the lecture hall. "I feel that I spoke well on a topic that I know very well, Long Island City in 1776, and I mentioned and represented the ARRT-NY honorably."

Richard notes the passing of the British actor Tom Wilkinson (1948-2023). "The versatile and twice Oscar-nominated actor played Lieutenant General Charles Lord Cornwallis in the movie *The Patriot*, released in 2000. Mel Gibson and Heath Ledger also starred in this acclaimed film. Wilkinson's excellence as an actor enabled him

to nearly recreate Benjamin Franklin as I would think he would be, in the 2008 series *John Adams*. Paul Giamatti and Laura Linney shared the screen with Wilkinson's Ben Franklin. Lord Cornwallis and Dr. Franklin served their opposing causes famously and heroically. Both great figures of the American Revolution were ably portrayed by Tom Wilkinson."

Lynne Saginaw reminds us that the New-York (another hyphen user) Historical Society will offer two lectures in March that may be of interest:

New York Before New York: The Dutch Impact. Wednesday, March 20, 6 to 7 p.m. Price: \$35, \$25 for members.

Privateers, Pirates and the American Revolution. Tuesday, March 26, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. \$35/\$25.

For details, visit www.nyhistory.org/programs, or call 212-485-9268, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Some programs are available on livestream for \$30/\$20. Thank you, Lynne-Saginaw!

FEBRUARY SPEAKER

Addressing the Round Table by Zoom on the first Tuesday in February will be our own Richard Melnick, on his new book *LONG ISLAND CITY IN 1776: THE REVOLUTION COMES TO QUEENS*. Richard was the president of the Greater Astoria Historical Society from 2006 to 2010, and a trustee from 2003 to 2018. He was a licensed New York City tour guide from 2011 to 2018.

Mr. Melnick was an airborne infantryman in the US Army from 1984 to 1992, rising to Staff Sergeant. He has a BA in political science from St. John's University.

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You can start as Assistant Treasurer and be assured of swift advancement. Light duties.

DEADLINE

Midnight Tuesday, March 12 is the deadline for any contributions you might like to make to the Broadside. Please send your editor (fcookinham@juno.com) any news pertaining to the Revolution. Maybe you have written a book or article. Maybe there is an item in the papers about someone digging up an old cannonball. Maybe you have reviewed a book. Maybe you have visited a battlefield or a haunted house. Inquiring minds want to know! Thank you!

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Our February meeting will be another Zoom. It will convene on Tuesday, February 6, 2024. The time will be 7:30 p.m. The Zoom link is in the email you got, from Jon Carriel, that also contains the link to this Broadside.

The plan, for now, is to do each year's February meeting live, starting next year, and the rest by Zoom.

Yr most obdt svt,
Dr. David W. Jacobs