

BROADSIDE

The Newsletter of the American Revolution Round Table

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

June 2019

WARNING, WILL ROBINSON!
WARNING! THE OCTOBER
ROUND TABLE WILL MEET
ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3
--instead of the usual first Tuesday.

JACK BUCHANAN ON THE ROAD TO CHARLESTON

Jack Buchanan has been a member of the American Revolution Round Table since shortly before the American Revolution. He already has two plaques on his wall signifying his previous service as a main speaker, and now he has a third. His new offering is called *The Road to Charleston: Nathanael Greene and the American Revolution*, which was published this year. This continues his saga of General Cornwallis's southern campaign begun in *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The American Revolution in the Carolinas*, which was not made into a movie with Bob Hope and Bing Crosby (more's the pity).

Jack read a manuscript speech. This had been Tom Fleming's style, and your editor was struck by how much Jack's reading and writing sounded like Tom's – and that is a compliment. With pithy quotes, dramatically read, Jack took us through the British strategy of putting most their army on ships in New York and sailing down the coast to take Savannah and Charleston. The Americans lost, at Charleston, the entire southern army. General Washington sent his most able go-to man, General Nathanael Greene, to the Carolinas with the few troops he could spare, to try to stem the redcoated tide.

London made one fatal mistake in planning this of-

fensive. They thought the Carolina back country was solidly Loyalist. It wasn't. And the expected Indian allies never showed up. As Cornwallis drove deeper into the piedmont, he began losing so many men that, even though he won most of the battles against Greene and the local militia, he finally had to limp into winter quarters at Yorktown, Virginia, and there he was trapped and captured.

Like many speakers, Jack put in comparisons between 18th Century life and warfare and concepts



Jack with his guests: Marilyn Campbell (his copy editor), her brother Bruce Campbell and his wife Helen.

from more recent and familiar history. He explained that Loyalist civilian refugees in British-held areas were put in what after World War II would be called "D.P. camps." Displaced Persons.

Another surprise, to your editor, was that many of the back-country Carolinians were migrants from the north – from Pennsylvania. Most people in those centuries "westered." They moved straight west to the local frontier. A big migration from north to south was unusual.

Jack called his book *The Road to Charleston* because the Brits continued to hold that port city until long after Yorktown. It was the last place in the south to be liberated after the king declared a cease-fire. General Greene, having lost all four of his battles with Cornwallis, nevertheless rode into Charleston in triumph in the end.

All the copies of *The Road to Charleston* that Jack brought with him were sold out before we even sat down for dinner. So Treasurer Jon Carriel announced that the Round Table will give an eight dollar rebate on the June dinner to any reader who buys Jack's book between now and the June meeting.

Richard Melnick passed around two show and tell items at the April dinner. One was an ad from M. S. Rau Antiques of New Orleans for a portrait of Martha Washington. The other was some documentation on a cannonball of twelve pounds that was dug up in the Yorktown, Virginia vicinity in the 1940s. Richard says it is British. He promises to bring it to the June meeting.

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

Steven Weiner, a recent addition to the Round Table, gave his maiden speech at the April meeting, reviewing *Light Horse Harry Lee: The Rise and Fall of a Revolutionary Hero*, by Ryan Cole.

Bob Crothers, another recent Round Tabler and retired advertising man, reviewed Brad Meltzer's *First Conspiracy: The Secret Plot to Kill George Washington*. Bob finds that, although the book has five pages of bibliography and 28 pages of footnotes, it has some mistakes, and the author, a thriller writer, probably did little of the research. Barnet Schechter, who has spoken to the Round Table, is in the acknowledgments and may have done much of the research – that is Bob's guess. The book is a New York Times best-seller. Bob predicts that it will become a movie. And it all happened here in New York City, in 1776, as Loyalist conspirators plotted to either kill or kidnap the Commander-in-chief. One of the plotters was a member of GW's own corps of bodyguards, the Life Guard, and was hanged for his treachery at the Collect Pond, where the Civic Center is now, at Foley Square. Cloak and dagger stuff that really did happen!

It was good to see two members giving their first Round Table book reviews last night. It shows we are growing.

Your editor agreed to review *Eliza Hamilton: The Extraordinary Life and Times of the Wife of Alexander Hamilton*, by Tilar J. Mazzeo, just out.

Book Review Chairperson Lynne Saginaw asked for a reviewer for a new biography of Dr. Benjamin Rush, but found no takers. Is there a doctor in the house who would like to review this life of a great revolutionary medic? In the TV series *John Adams*, there is a harrowing scene where Rush and a young assistant perform a mastectomy on Abby Adams, without anesthetic or antiseptic, except whiskey. Curiosity about the state of surgery circa 1800 ought, alone, to drive someone to review this book.

GEORGE WYTHE

By Lynne Saginaw
(Part Two)

George Wythe began his teaching career at the College of William and Mary in 1761. His profound knowledge of classical languages (Greek, Latin and Hebrew) and legal theory made him the most respected scholar of his day. His students included James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, John Marshall, Henry Clay, Bushrod Washington (Associate Justice of the Supreme Court) and many other prominent politicians and jurists.

An avid collector, Wythe assembled a library of renown, which he allowed students and lawyers to consult at will. He also opened his home to promising young men, and family members, especially after the death of Elizabeth Wythe in 1787. Wythe spent the ensuing years teaching and sitting on state courts at several levels, confronting the issue of slavery more than once. On several occasions, he ruled in favor of manumission, always trying to balance the rule of current law with the aspirations of plaintiffs. In his own life, he returned his wife's slaves to her family after her death. He freed his housekeeper. Then he hired her to continue her work.

While never again serving at the federal level, Wythe's influence was felt through the profound effect he had on his distinguished students.

In 1805, Wythe opened his home to his sister's 17-year-old grandson, George Wythe Sweeney. The following spring, Wythe discovered that the boy had stolen and sold several valuable volumes from the library, to pay gambling debts and support a reckless



The George Wythe House in [Colonial Williamsburg](#), Williamsburg, Virginia [Courtesy of Wikipedia]

lifestyle. The old man changed his will to leave his library to Jefferson, and to insure that Jefferson would look after a young servant of the household. Not long after, Wythe, his housekeeper and the youngster, Michael Brown, all fell ill.

Doctors initially suspected cholera, but Wythe himself suggested they might have been poisoned; in fact, he had his doctors promise an autopsy in the event of his death. Two days later, Sweeney tried to cash a \$100 check on Wythe's account. The local bankers, familiar with the details of the beloved scholar's illness, refused to honor it.

Michael Brown died on June 1, 1806. Wythe disinherited George Sweeney before he died on June 8. The housekeeper, Mrs. Broadnax, survived. She told investigators that she had seen Sweeney put a powdered substance into a coffeepot, but her testimony was discounted because of her race. The autopsy George Wythe requested was botched; testing for arsenic was inconclusive. The bank filed fraud charges against Sweeney, but they were dismissed on a technicality. George Wythe Sweeney left Virginia for Tennessee, where he was arrested and jailed for stealing a horse. He disappears from history at that point.

The library Wythe left to Jefferson was part of the collection later sold to provide the basis for the Library of Congress. His lecture notes and legal papers

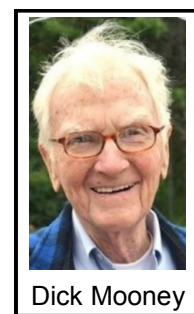
went to the state of Virginia; they disappeared in the 1830s. (It's probable they were destroyed.)

George Wythe's funeral was the largest in Virginia to that time. All businesses in Richmond closed for the day; the funeral was moved to the state capitol to accommodate the crowds who wished to honor him. The law school at William and Mary is named for him (and John Marshall, his student), as are several schools, streets, towns and a county. Colonial Williamsburg owns his home, which is a museum in his honor.

Signer of the Declaration, inspiration of presidents, true gentleman of the Revolution; George Wythe was the first law professor in America and one of its great early scholars. We should know him better.

IN THE NEWS

Long-time member and benefactor of the Round Table Richard Mooney, who wrote the Nathan Hale plaque on Third Avenue at East 65th Street, died January 9th, aged 91. There will be a memorial service for Mr. Mooney on Friday, June 14th, at 4:30 p.m. at the Century Club, 7 West 43rd Street.



On April 13 and 14, Fraunces Tavern® Museum offered its eighth annual walking tour "A Rebellious Brew: New York's Tea Party of 1774." Another few New Yorkers were thus freed from the assumption that tea parties were a Boston monopoly.

Actor and Round Tabler Joseph Smith will be performing his one-man show on Philip Freneau at the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia. Dates to be announced. Freneau (1752-1832), "the poet of the revolution," was the subject of Joseph's show in 2011 at Matawan, New Jersey, the poet's last home and resting place.

This *just in*: Influential New York City tour guide Justin Ferate (jferatetours@earthlink.net) sent the February Broadside to his vast email list. Thanks, Justin! We may have to move the next dinner to Yankee Stadium.

Your editor recently found a movie online that every Revwar fan should like: "Sons of Liberty," a 1939 Warner Bros. short, stars Claude Rains as patriot financier Haym Solomon. Donald Crisp also appears. It is twenty minutes long and can be viewed online for free. Michael Curtiz was the director.

SITE CITES SIGHTS – King Manor, Jamaica, Queens

Rufus King (1755-1827) was a signer of the Constitution. In 1805 he bought a farmhouse in Jamaica in



The King Manor, Jamaica, Queens
[All photos courtesy of Wikipedia]

today's borough of Queens, and greatly enlarged it. The house is now open to visitors in Rufus King Park, on Jamaica Avenue at 150th Street in Jamaica. You can take the E, J or Z subway line to Jamaica Center and walk one block north on Parsons to Jamaica Avenue, then about three minutes west on Jamaica Avenue. Get there early, though. The house is open only for tours, which start every half hour, and only from noon to two, Monday through Friday, and from one to five on Saturday and Sunday. It is closed on holidays.

King was raised in Massachusetts, went to Harvard Law, served in the Continental Army, served in the Confederation Congress, was a member of the Constitutional Convention and signed the Constitution, and served in the Senate and as US Minister to Great Britain. He introduced in the Senate a plan to prevent slavery in the Northwest Territory. He led the Senate fight against the admission of Missouri as a slave state. He lost the presidential vote as a Federalist to Monroe in 1816.

Eleven and a half acres of King's 122 now make up Rufus King Park. King's granddaughter died in 1896 and the house and grounds became a New York City park in 1898. On the park fence you will find the



The King Manor entrance

words of the Preamble to the Constitution. Sadly, the author of those words, and Secretary to the Convention, Gouverneur Morris, does not leave a preserved mansion. His manor, Morrisania, was along the Har-



The "Clock Room" at the King Manor

lem River in the Bronx, but leaves not a trace, except for St. Ann's Episcopal Church, where Gouverneur and Lewis Morris are buried.

The house is Federalist in style, which is about the same as "Georgian" in Britain. The roof is of the Gambrel style: the lower half of the roof is steeper than the top half. There are no basement windows, and no belvedere on the roof, so King missed an opportunity for what we would today call "passive air conditioning." Unlike the Morris-Jumel Mansion,

this house has a fresh coat of paint and shutters flanking each window.

In the library you will see built-in floor-to-ceiling bookcases. These contain King's Senate records as well as books. You will also see a very lifelike, full-sized, ghostly white sculpture of King himself sitting in a chair reading a book. You can tell it is King by the goofy hairdo you will also see in his portrait on the wall.

AUSTIN AND MARGARET CORBIN

By Lynne Saginaw

Some time ago, I was told an interesting story about Margaret Corbin.

There's a smallish street in south Brooklyn called Corbin Place. It's in the area of Sheepshead Bay; Emmons Avenue on one side and Manhattan Beach on the other. Initially it was named for Austin Corbin, the man who developed the area. Unfortunately, it turned out he was a vicious anti-Semite, a fact that didn't appeal to Manhattan Beach's largely Jewish population, which included a substantial number of Holocaust survivors.

What to do?

It turned out one of the locals was a history buff, and had an idea. Instead of changing the signs, they switched the honors to Margaret Corbin, Revolutionary heroine, and assigned the rancid Mr. Corbin to the obscurity he deserved. (He was too dead to object.) And piling on, they built a small, tasteful Holocaust memorial there as well.

Sometimes I really love history!

GET READY FOR 2025!

The New York State History Blog reported in April that the New York State Office of History and other bodies are having conferences around the state to plan the 250th anniversary of "the American Revolution." The year 2025 will be 250 years from the Battle of Lexington, so as usual people are confusing the Revolutionary War with the American Revolution, which should be considered underway in 1765,

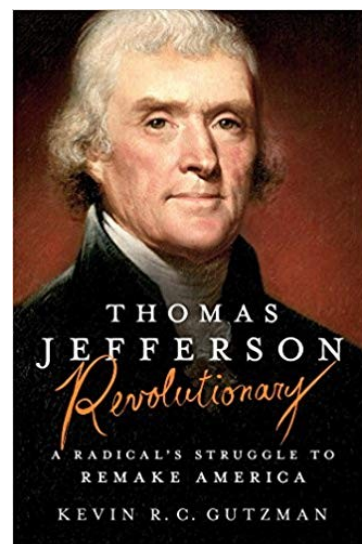
the year of the Stamp Act Crisis.

After the Continental Congress declared independence, each state legislature issued its own declaration, and then adopted a state constitution. New York State adopted its new constitution on April 20, 1777, so the manuscript of that document was put on rare public display from April 15 to 20, 2019 at the Cultural Education Center in Albany.

JUNE SPEAKER

Our June speaker will be Dr. Kevin R. C. Gutzman, who teaches history at Western Connecticut State University at Danbury.

Gutzman, 55, will be speaking on his 2017 book *Thomas Jefferson - Revolutionary: A Radical's Struggle to Remake America*, published by St. Martin's Press. Dr. Gutzman will tell us about the overlooked ways in which Jefferson shaped America.



This is his fifth book. His *The Politically Incorrect Guide to the Constitution* was a 2007 New York Times best seller. In 2009 Dr. Gutzman wrote *Who Killed the Constitution?*, and in 2012, *James Madison and the Making of America*.

Our speaker is a Texas native. His BA is from the University of Texas, his JD from U. of Texas Law, and his MA and PhD from the University of Virginia. He has written for Canada's National Post, the San Antonio Express-News, the Richmond Times-Dispatch, and other publications. He has been featured on NPR, CSPAN 2's Book TV, and other broadcast outlets. He is happy to be a former attorney.

DEADLINE

Since our October meeting has been pushed back from Tuesday the 1st to Thursday the 3rd, you have

an even longer summer than usual to keep those cards and letters comin' in. Any news for the Broadside should reach the editor, Fred Cookinham, fcookinham@juno.com, by midnight, Thursday, September 19. Anything at all relating to the American Revolution, but especially BOOKS! Recommend or disrecommend books about the Rev! No one has the time to read them all, so we need to spread the reading around the whole membership, so we can generate some recommendations for our 2019 Annual Book Award. Have a great summer!

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

The next meeting of the Round Table will be held on Tuesday, June 4, 2019 at the Coffee House, 20 West 44th Street, 6th floor, at 6:00 p.m.



Eugene Zuk makes a point, while conferring with Joseph Smith (l.) and Joseph Joyce (r.) during the April social hour at the Coffee House.

Dinner will feature a mixed-greens salad, broiled chicken breast, and vanilla ice cream.

The semi-annual meeting of the Round Table's Board of Governors will be held before the June dinner. Meeting time will be 5:00, in the same room as the dinner, the Coffee House Club.

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