

BROADSIDE

The Newsletter of the
American Revolution Round Table

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

October 2019

REMINDER: NEXT MEETING — **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3**

JEFFERSON BOUNCES BACK!

Kevin R. C. Gutzman begs to differ with recent negative views of Thomas Jefferson. TJ has been up and down before this. He was up until David McCullough found Adams more profound and worthy of respect. Then Lin-Manuel Miranda took the Man from Monticello out of Adams's shadow and into Hamilton's. But now, the Round Table has heard from Jefferson's latest Lancelot. Our speaker's book came out in 2017, and was called THOMAS JEFFERSON, REVOLUTIONARY: A RADICAL'S STRUGGLE TO REMAKE AMERICA.

Dr. Gutzman teaches at Western Connecticut State University. He has previously published two books on the Constitution, and one on Madison and one on Virginia in the Revolution.

The presentation was unillustrated by slides, unusual for a Round Table talk. Not such a bad idea, either: the slide projectors are sometimes more trouble than they are worth, and the humming and the darkened room and the fuzziness of the images can be distracting as well as enlightening. As it is, we had to give up on the ornery microphone.

The talk was structured as the book it is based on is structured. This is not a biography. This is an analysis of Jefferson's principles. Dr. Gutzman gives the Jefferson philosophy five bullet points, each a chapter in the book: federalism, freedom of conscience, colonization of freed slaves, assimilation of the Native Americans, and education, especially Jefferson's founding of the University of Virginia.

New to this reviewer was Jefferson's abolition of Virginia's medieval laws of primogeniture and entail. If a landowner died without a will, his lands



Kevin Gutzman tests the weight of Richard Melnick's cannonball wearing the work gloves Richard thoughtfully provided.

must now be divided equally among his heirs – both male and female!

Virginia, under Jefferson's plan, would now offer free education to all children – free or slave!

And while Jefferson believed Blacks to be biologically inferior to Whites, he did not believe the same about Native Americans, and hoped to see them become landowning farmers.

An autographed copy of Dr. Gutzman's book now graces the library shelves of your editor. At a reduced Round Table price! All Round Tablers should take advantage of this inducement to attend our dinners!

ROUND TABLE DINNER STUDENT DISCOUNT!

Our Board of Governors has voted to offer students greater access to our dinner meetings by discounting the cost of their attendance. Full-time students (of any subject) are now invited to attend meetings for only 25 dollars! Tell any students you know!

JACK BUCHANAN ON THE AIR!

Jack is the subject of a *Journal of the American Revolution* weekly phone interview podcast. This is not the Hamilton-Burr kind of “interview.” It can be heard at: <https://jardispatches.podbean.com/e/e30-john-buchanan-the-road-to-charleston/>.

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

Your editor is currently reading *DUEL WITH THE DEVIL*, by Paul Collins, published by Broadway Books. The book is about the trial of Levi Weeks for murder in New York City in 1800. He was successfully defended by Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, and Henry Brockholst Livingston – a rare case of Hamilton and Burr working together on a case. The book was published in 2013, so we can’t call this one of the recent books rushed into print to ride the wave of Lin-Manuel Miranda’s “Hamilton, The Musical” phenomenon. It tells a fascinating and entertaining story. It also shows a lot of mistakes. Chief among them, and one every student of New York City’s colonial and revolutionary history should be on the *qui vivre* for, is Collins’s repeated mistaking of the name “Manhattan” for “New York City.” To wit: “Manhattan was the infant country’s new capital.” “Manhattan was still small enough that Greenwich Village was indeed something of a separate village.” “...Lispenard’s Meadow, with Manhattan on one side and Greenwich Village on the other.” (!) Collins appears, from his Acknowledgments, to live in Portland, Oregon. He really thinks that Manhattan is or was the name of a city. This is a recently fashionable mistake. It may have been Russell Shorto who popularized it, in his 2004 book *THE ISLAND AT THE CENTER OF THE WORLD*. Manhattan Island was neither the Dutch colony (Nieuw Neder-

landt) nor the colony’s capital and main port (Nieuw Amsterdam). Needless confusion.

Collins also says “country” when he means “nation.” Very common confusion. And yes, Greenwich Village really was a village in New York County (Manhattan, Roosevelt, Governor’s, and Randall’s Islands), a mile or two from New York City.

Another book of recent vintage is *THE FIRST CONSPIRACY: THE SECRET PLOT TO KILL GEORGE WASHINGTON*, by Brad Meltzer and Josh Mensch. Bob Crothers reviewed this one for the June Roundtable. Bob explained that Meltzer is a newcomer to the history field. His background is in thriller writing, and Mensch’s is in documentary production. In February, the book was Number 12 on the *New York Times* list of non-fiction best sellers. It has endorsements from two ex-presidents. It has five pages of bibliography and 28 pages of footnotes. Bob cautions us to take this book for what it is: a thriller. It is written in the present tense – like John Updike’s *RABBIT RUN*. The authors do not have a lot of experience in the Rev history field. Bob believes that Barnet Schechter (*THE BATTLE FOR NEW YORK*) may have done a lot of the research, but not the proofreading. So you might want to do some digging of your own in those biblio references.

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, is hot off the press. The author has written books on Hamilton before. He spoke at Fraunces Tavern in July. He explained that as recently as February he was reading records from the formerly Danish island of St. Croix in the Danish archives in Copenhagen. He had to hire someone who could not only translate Danish, but 18th Century Danish. He found evidence that Hamilton was born in 1754. So far, the betting has been about evenly divided between 1755 and 1757. If the 1754 date is correct, then Hamilton at least made it to fifty before he stopped Burr’s musket ball.

At the June Round Table, your editor read a review of the first ever full-length biography of Eliza Hamilton, *ELIZA HAMILTON: THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE AND TIMES OF THE WIFE OF*

ALEXANDER HAMILTON, by Tilar J. Mazzeo. The author's variety of sources was interesting – the fact that all three Schuyler sisters played the “English Guittar” comes from the American Musical Research Center Journal. Mazzeo gives a vivid look at a lady who lived a long and active life for the fifty years after her husband's death – even taking a trip out west when she was eighty! And this biographer comes to the eye-popping conclusion that Alexander's affair with Maria Reynolds never happened!

Member Jim English, who reviewed a book on the battles of Trenton and Princeton in February, was back with a review of LIGHT HORSE HARRY LEE: THE RISE AND FALL OF A REVOLUTIONARY HERO, by Ryan Cole. Jim found the book a good read, but with the usual few flaws here and there. Jim found Lee himself to be like that, too – a hero, but a man who later made some bad business decisions. Lee left Virginia to seek his fortune in the West Indies, not unlike Alexander Hamilton's father, and like him was unsuccessful. Lee never got back to Virginia to raise his son – the future Confederate General Robert E. Lee.

Finally, Dr. Joanne Grasso reviewed REVOLUTION SONG: A STORY OF AMERICAN FREEDOM, by Russell Shorto, author of THE ISLAND AT THE CENTER OF THE WORLD. Dr. Grasso explained that this book follows six characters through the Revolution. One of them is George Washington, and our reviewer thinks you might read many other biographies of His Excellency rather than this one and be just as far ahead. The other stories, though, are about persons you may not know so well, and you might sometimes exclaim “I didn't know that!” These include a slave, a woman, a loyalist, and a Native American. The common theme weaving these characters together is freedom: some won it, and some lost it.

At the December meeting, Bob Crothers will review THE BRITISH ARE COMING: THE WAR FOR AMERICA, LEXINGTON TO PRINCETON, 1775-1777, by Rick Atkinson.

SHOW AND TELL

Richard Melnick made good on his April promise to come to the June Round Table armed. He brought a

12-pound British cannonball he said was dug up in Yorktown, Virginia in the 1940s. The ball readily sheds rust, so if you steal this relic, you will indeed be caught red-handed. Then you will be in the iron and steal business.

Andrea Meyer won the Valley Forge trivia contest, and went home with a paper cutout as the prize. Cutouts were a way of sending secret messages in the Revwar, as you will remember from John Nagy's talk on his book INVISIBLE INK. You write a seemingly innocuous letter, and you send its recipient a paper with a figure 8-shaped section cut out of the middle. He lays the cutout over the letter, and the words he can see through the cutout are the secret message. Paper cutouts were also a folk art among the German settlers of the Valley Forge region. (The German term would be *Papiermitaholindermittel-schnitzen*.)

FIELD TRIP

On July 17, Lynne Saginaw succeeded in bringing together several Round Tablers at the New-York Historical Society. The occasion was a Revwar exhibit, and a rare visit from Jim Davis, our quondam treasurer, who moved to Fredericksburg, Virginia and founded a Round Table there. The exhibit was on the festivities put on by General Washington and the New Windsor Cantonment for General Rochambeau and the arriving French army.

Lynne reminds us of some Fall events at the N-YHS. Author Barnet Schechter will lead a Revwar walking tour for the Society on Sunday, October 6. Architectural historian Barry Lewis will give a talk Tuesday, November 26 on colonial and federal styles of building in New York City. There will be an exhibit on Paul Revere (1735-1818) running from September 6 to January 12. Over 150 objects from Revere's life will be on display. The exhibit is called “Beyond Midnight,” for all those whose knowledge of the Boston silversmith begins and ends with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1861 poem.

IN THE NEWS

New York History Blog, August 16, 2019: “A Benedict Arnold Letter that Changed History.” Google

“Eric Schnitz/Benedict Arnold.” Eric Schnitz is a Saratoga National Parks Service Ranger. The story we have all been repeating these 200 years – about General Gates dithering in his tent while Arnold took command and won the Battle of Bemis Heights – may not be true. That story came from Jamie Wilkinson – and that alone should have tipped us off. A letter written by a participant, though, shortly after the battle, shows that Arnold and Gates were planning the coming battle harmoniously and professionally.

Wilkinson went on to be the US Army Senior Officer – while secretly taking money from the King of Spain!

From October 3 to October 5, the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia will host an academic conference called the International Conference on the American Revolution. Ireland, Scotland, England and the US will be both the subjects of, and supply the speakers for, the lectures at this conference. Themes will include the military, political, social, and even the *artistic* aspects of our revolution. The ad does not say whether this conference is the first in an annual tradition, but it would be great if it did become so. Perhaps in the future the connection of many other countries to the Revolution will be explored – particularly the effects of our Revolution on the subsequent ones in Latin America and elsewhere. Look at the flags of modern Greece and Malaysia. Look familiar?

This year’s Congress of American Revolution Round Tables will be held on Saturday, November 9 in Philadelphia, also hosted by the Museum of the American Revolution.

On August 19, the Paulus Hook Neighborhood Association in Jersey City celebrated the anniversary of the Battle of Paulus Hook in 1779. The New Jersey Fife and Drums of Trenton performed.

Our Treasurer, e-publisher of the Broadside, and webmaster Jon Carriel is currently profiling New York’s Revolutionary heroines on our website, www.arrrt-ny.org. That includes Sybil Luddington, Margaret Corbin, Catherine van Rensselaer Schuyler, and the mysterious spy “355.”

Veteran New York City tour guide Justin Ferate advises us that you can see a short video about General Washington’s hippopotamus and human teeth by googling Atlas Obscura, Objects of Intrigue. The New York Academy of Medicine has sets of His Excellency’s dentures, and also his last natural tooth. Both were preserved by the General’s New York dentist, John Greenwood.

BATTLE OF BROOKLYN RE-ENACTMENT

Speaking of Greenwood, the “Green-Wood” Cemetery (as they spell it) in Brooklyn was the site of the 243rd anniversary re-enactment and tour of the Battle of Brooklyn (also known as the Battle of Long Island). The event was held on Sunday, August 25. The actual battle date was August 27, 1776. Our Roving Reporter, Richard Melnick, was there.

\$30 got Richard onto the trolley tour of the cemetery, narrated by cemetery historian Jeff Richman. Polly Guérin attended, and Ambrose Richardson III, of the Sons of the Revolution, carried a flag up the hill. Mr. Melnick also carried a flag – the Moultrie Flag, which flew over Charleston, South Carolina when that city repulsed a British attack in 1776. Well-known George Washington re-enactor Michael Grillo appeared as His Excellency. Michael Crowder, a Thomas Paine scholar at Iona College, spoke on the significance of this battle.

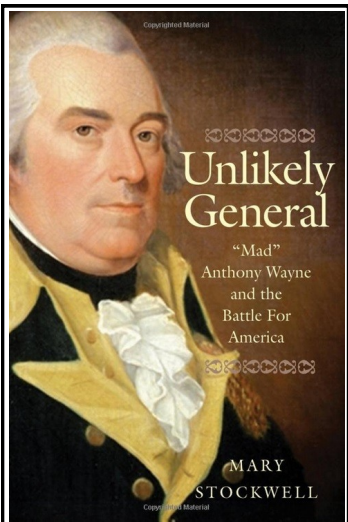
The hill in the cemetery is topped with a statue of Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom and patriotism. She waves a greeting to the Statue of Liberty, clearly visible from the hilltop on Liberty Island in the harbor. Here were gathered re-enactors of dragoons, grenadiers, a female scout on horseback, Highlanders in their kilts, Royal Provincials (Loyalist militia), African troops, the Huntington, Long Island militia, and women, perhaps camp followers. Powder cartridges made loud bangs, but propelled no musket balls. The Navy Band played, and a folk singer sang a ballad about the Maryland 400, who took the Stone House at Gowanus from the Redcoats repeatedly in this battle, suffering heavy casualties.

OCTOBER SPEAKER: MARY STOCKWELL ON “MAD” ANTHONY WAYNE!

Dr. Mary Stockwell will tell us, at our October 3rd meeting, all about General Anthony Wayne of the Continental Army. For a colorful historical figure, you can't beat a general who got the nickname Mad Anthony in his lifetime.

Dr. Stockwell is the author of *UNLIKELY GENERAL: “MAD” ANTHONY WAYNE AND THE BATTLE FOR AMERICA*. It was published last year.

Dr. Stockwell has lived most of her life on the 12 by 12 mile tract in northwestern Ohio purchased by Wayne from the Miami tribe in 1795. The tract surrounds Fort Miamis, on the Maumee River. Her Irish ancestors settled in that part of Ohio to work on canals there. Her father passed on his interest in local history, while her mother sparked her interest in storytelling, being an actress, poet, stage director and acting teacher.



Our speaker has written several books and essays on American History. She has written for the Mount Vernon Estate website. 2018 saw the publication of the Wayne book in April and one on General Grant and the Indians in September.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS DUE OCTOBER 3rd!

Also linked to the e-mail that conveyed this issue of the *BROADSIDE* to you is a .PDF file of the ARRT Annual Dues Form for our 2019–20 season. This single page can be printed out on any laser printer. (Copies will of course be available at all meetings.)

If you do not expect to attend the October 3rd meeting (or prefer to handle matters in advance), please print and fill out the form, then mail it to our treasurer—address on the form—with payment enclosed.

Dues may be combined with other payments (e.g., dinner charges, guest costs, contributions) in a single check, but please clearly indicate what the total represents. If paying in cash at the meeting, please be patient while your account is updated.

KEEP THOSE CARDS AND LETTERS COMING IN!

Any Rev-related news items, fan mail, Whig pamphlets, and such, should be sent to the Broadside editor, Fred Cookinham, at fcookinham@juno.com.



Madelaine and Jonathan Piel enjoy refreshments with Bob Crothers (*ctr.*) during the June social hour.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

The October Round Table will be held on THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3 – NOT THE USUAL FIRST TUESDAY! – at the Coffee House Club, 20 West 44th Street, 6th floor, at 6:00 p.m. The *December* dinner, on *Tuesday*, December 3, will be preceded by our semi-annual Board of Governors meeting.

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