

BROADSIDE

The Newsletter of the
American Revolution Round Table

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

December 2021

FRENCH INVADE RHODE ISLAND!

Chairman David Jacobs called the October 2021 zoom meeting to order at 7:30, Tuesday, October 5, 2021. Hope was already fading for an in-person December meeting, and who knows whether even February will see actual dinners for the Round Table as of old.

Lynne Saginaw, our Book Review Editrix, introduced two reviewers. The first was Dr. Joanne Grasso, who read her review of *GERMANTOWN: A MILITARY HISTORY OF THE BATTLE FOR PHILADELPHIA, OCTOBER 4, 1777*, by Michael C. Harris. We will summarize Dr. Grasso's review in the February Broadside.

Our second reviewer for the evening was John DiNuzzo, reviewing *THE CABINET*. More on this below.

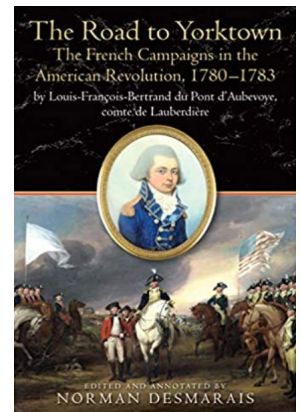
In introducing our main speaker, Chairman Jacobs suggested a Q and A for each of three sections of the talk instead of one at the end of the whole talk. This seemed to work pretty well.



Our speaker was Norman Desmarais. Professor, author, and re-enactor. As you can see from his family name, Mr. Desmarais

is of French extraction, and that and the fact that he lives and teaches in Rhode Island gives you a clue to his topic: The French army under Rochambeau in Newport. They did march, with Washington's army, down to Yorktown, but most of the talk was about the detective work done by Mr. Desmarais and his Rhode Island colleagues on the unanswered questions of the Newport encampment.

Where exactly was the encampment? Where exactly was the landing? You would think that these facts had been recorded, but apparently they were not, not reliably, at least. Our speaker's book, *THE ROAD TO YORKTOWN: THE FRENCH CAMPAIGNS IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, 1780-1783*, published by Savas Beatie in May, relies on one diary, of a French officer, which gives clues to these questions. There are not many other clues to be found on this campaign.



Here's a tip for anyone setting sail on these murky waters: French books list individuals by their family names, not their titles. So look up Rochambeau under D for Donatien, and Lafayette under G for Gilbert.

The French troops were at sea for 71 days. They were not told where they were going. Even Rochambeau, the Commander-in-Chief, did not know. He was given sealed orders, not to be opened until the fleet had gotten past the Azores. One third of their time in America was spent in Newport. They brought their own press and published a newspaper in Newport. That gave them something to do during the winter. Very few issues survive.

Newporters did not come out to greet the French. They were afraid of the French as their traditional enemy, as Catholics, and as ogres, as described in British propaganda. And after all, they were an



Le projet de donner une Gazette Française, ne m'a paru possible que par la facilité d'y introduire la Traduction des différens Nouvelles que les Partis Américains produisent: c'est pour ce point de vue que j'en ai accablé les rédacteurs & les souscritteurs avec de MM. les Officiers & autres Particuliers qui ne font pas familiers avec la langue du pays, & qui s'occupent avec étonnement politique de ces Nouvelles étrangères, j'en ai cherché de pouvoir s'en instruire, sans avoir recours au travail de la traduction. Je ne m'occupais donc avant la Parole, qu'à répéter en Français, ce que les Américains avoient dit dans leur langue. D'ailleurs, j'entrevois à me faire imprimer, j'ai besoin dans cette entreprise, de votre indulgence de mes Lecteurs. Je vous supplie donc Messieurs, si cet Ouvrage peut toucher votre curiosité de le prescrire de votre bourse. Je me ferai un devoir de recevoir les avis de ceux qui ne feront l'honneur de s'y intéresser, & d'agir conformément à leurs souhaits.

PROCLAMATION de Brigadier Général Goussier, & au nombre de Soldats Amis, ci-devant Major Général au service de l'Amérique, à présent Chef d'une Bande, au service de la Grande Bretagne;

A tous les Officiers & Soldats de l'Armée Américaine qu'il prend plaisir.

Je crois que les principes dont j'ai fait mention dans mon adresse, du 7 de ce mois, au Public, ont mérité le plus grand des vertueux Habitans de ce Continent, le fait avec une exactitude honorable que je préfère, de vous inviter à joindre les armes de Sa Majesté.

Par les ordres du Chevalier Clinton, je forme un corps composé de Cavaliers, & qui sera habillé, habillé, payé au sein des autres troupes Anglaises, dans lequel, chaque bon Officier ou Soldat, recevra 3 grandes dragées, & ce qui s'y rendent armés ou montés, le prix de la valeur de son accoutrement, & s'il n'aient mis en disposition, & de ce qu'il a plus à son Excellence de m'écouter la Nomination des Officiers, & me ferai un plaisir & un devoir d'avancer que dans l'appréhension de la valeur, & de donner les principes font honorables à l'union de tous Peuples aux fondations des Français, & de la même manière de

the newcomers were on our side, the Rhode Islanders were told, but capable of having their way with the small population of Newport. Some Iroquois and other native nations sent delegates to Newport to assure the French of their allegiance to the French king (not to Congress?) and to ask for charity and a priest.

Since Rhode Island had no Catholic churches at that time, historians have also wondered where Rochambeau attended mass. It would have been in a private house, Mr. Desmarais thinks. Today, Rhode Island has a higher percentage of Catholics than any other state.

Newport has no marker for the landing or the French camp, which held five thousand men.

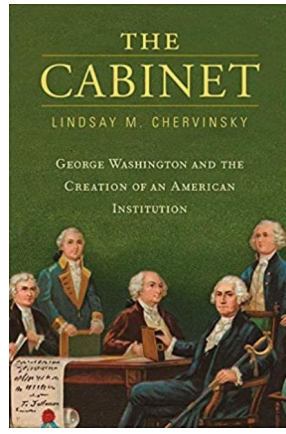
BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

Round Table member John DiNuzzo reviewed THE CABINET, by Lindsay M. Chervinsky. I believe this review is the best organized and polished of any this editor has heard at the Round Table. So I will lift three paragraphs from it, to wit:

Unlike many devotees of American Revolution studies, my interest in the history of the conflict that created our nation is less about the battles and strategies that went into them, and more regarding the personalities and debates that occurred in the political arena. As such I welcomed the opportunity to learn more about how Washington, a magnificent leader who also seemed to benefit from a fair amount of good luck throughout the war, transitioned his skills to peacetime.

I readily admit to an expectation that this book would be a late 18th Century version of Doris Kearns

Goodwin's classic *Team of Rivals* about the Lincoln cabinet that followed Washington's 70 years later. This instinct was reinforced when I saw the title of Chapter 2 in Dr. Chervinsky's book: "The Original Team of Rivals". However, notwithstanding the obvious parallels of harnessing the talents (and foibles) of strong-willed men during a tumultuous period of American history, "Cabinet" focuses appropriately on the newness of the republic and the conscious choices that were made with precedent-setting usually in the forefront of the President's mind.



"Cabinet" is a well written and well-edited 323 pages, with a Notes section at the end (containing citations, but few elaborations) and no bibliography. It is also free of factual errors, as far as I could tell, providing the history enthusiast with a highly readable and informative experience. Because the United States Constitution, freshly passed when Washington took office, did not provide for a cabinet, what developed organically was a reflection of the first President's military experience and leadership style. It can be said the first cabinet was Washington's response to what he needed that the Constitution didn't furnish—or prohibit.

Mr. DiNuzzo goes on to say that GW never used the word "cabinet" during his presidency. Chervinsky goes through all the crises of the Washington presidency: the Citizen Genet affair, the Whiskey Rebellion, the war between the UK and revolutionary France, and the rest. "I highly recommend the book to those interested in the formulation of the Executive Branch of government." Dr. Chervinsky emailed Mr. DiNuzzo that her next project will be a book on the presidency of John Adams.

Member and Speakers Coordinator Dr. Joanne Grasso has also reviewed THE CABINET, on "H-Net Reviews in the Humanities and Social Sciences," an academic website, on July 21. Her review can be read at:

<http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=56188>.

Lynne Saginaw, Book Review Coordinator, would like to remind us of the rules for book reviewers for the Round Table: When reading your review at the meeting, keep it under five minutes. You must read your review within two meetings after Lynne gives you the book. You must give the Editor a copy of your review for summarizing in the next Broadside (fcookinham@juno.com). All who attend a meeting will have a chance to volunteer to review a book, so Lynne will not give out a book before the meeting.

Two of the three books Lynne offered for review in October are still unclaimed: BATTLE TACTICS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, by Robbie Macniven, and THE HOWE DYNASTY, by Julie Flavell. Volunteer at the meeting!

IN THE NEWS

AN IMPOSTER IN MARGARET CORBIN'S GRAVE?

The Friends of Fort Tryon Park held, on Sunday, November 14, their annual commemoration of the battle of Fort Washington, November 16, 1776.



There was no commemoration in 2020 due to Covid. Erin McGurk, a local actress, gave her annual talk on Margaret Corbin, the heroine of the battle. But there was a twist this year. In 2017, workmen got too close to Margaret's

grave at West Point, and an Army forensics team examined the skeleton for damage. They report that it is that of a male! A male of Margaret's era, tall and middle-aged, and with evidence of injury to the left shoulder, as Margaret had, but they found that the injury was from the caving in of the old casket on the shoulder, before the bones were re-interred in a new casket for re-burial at West Point, and not from Hessian grapeshot.

A Highland Falls family had taken care of Margaret in her last years and buried her in the family graveyard. In 1926, the DAR, Reginald Pelham Bolton, the historian and archaeologist of Northern Manhattan, and other historians, dug up the remains shown them by the family and re-interred the body with full military honors at the Military Academy at West Point, just two miles away.

But if that's not Margaret, then where is she? And apparently the DAR has added nothing to this report since 2017. A mystery!

TRUXES ON SEA HISTORY

Jon Carriel found a great 3-page article on "*The British Customs Service in Colonial America*," by former member (and former speaker) Prof. Thomas M. Truxes, in the Autumn issue of *SEA HISTORY* magazine. He photo-ed the pages and would be happy to send copies by e-mail. Tom won ARRT's Annual Best Book award in 2008 for **Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York**. His newest book, **The Overseas Trade of British America: A Narrative History**, is to be published by Yale University Press on November 30th.

CHRISTOPHER THUILOT VISITS LAKE GEORGE AND FORT TICONDEROGA

Here is just a sample of Round Tabler Chris's article on Diamond Island, in Lake George:

Hacking their way through the deep shade of dense green foliage, the sight of Lake George was a relief. While the main force, including Burgoyne, would march away from the lake via Whitehall and Fort Ann, the provision train with heavy artillery and wagons would cruise down Lake George. The still extant ruins of Fort George on the south end of the lake provided a base before the forces linked up at Fort Edward. A small number were left behind on Lake George, with a few hundred redcoats and Germans packed on Diamond Island.

The island is a tiny forest in the lake, pristine freshwater which perhaps in addition to cooling off in, served as ideal drinking water. When one anchors their boat near the rugged rocky shoreline of the island, sloping green mountains protrude in the backdrop on both sides of the lake, a backdrop that

assures pristine air along with the pristine water. This is among the best places to be towed in a tube. Buildings are now visible on the shoreline, but in 1777, there were none except the fort to the south. On dark nights especially, gazing up at the stars, the garrison here must have been ready for the rebels to surprise them.

The 400 redcoats on Diamond Island were commanded by Captain Thomas Aubrey. A young man whose resolve saw action at Bunker Hill, he was well prepared for attack. When around 500 rebels under Colonel John Brown circled Diamond Island on September 24th, they lobbed cannon fire at the garrison, but to no avail. Aubrey prepared his artillery and by nightfall, the raid was called off. Brown's crew scurried into the marshy woods near Warner Bay. When one scours the island today, it is always useful to keep an eye out for regimental buttons and to have an eye for cannonballs when snorkeling around the island. A few have been recovered and are in the town's museum.



CONGRESS IN PHILLY

Dr. Joanne Grasso was planning to attend the Congress of American Revolution Round Tables in Philadelphia, November 19 to 21. We will print her report in the February ish.

FIXING MORRIS-JUMEL, or, IT'S ABOUT TIME!

Shiloh Holley, Director of the Morris-Jumel Mansion, and the Historic House Trust, have announced a \$2.7 million restoration of Manhattan's oldest house (1765). The money comes from the NYC Parks Department. There will be a complete restoration of the roof, and the addition of ADA-compliant entry and restroom facilities. The last coat of paint on the house was applied thirty years ago. The green shutters on the windows were thrown out in the 1970s and never replaced. The Widow's Walk railings are rotting and falling off. Holes have rotted in the porch floor and the wooden columns holding up the portico roof. Even the ghosts are ashamed to be seen here. Completion date? The announcement

did not even venture a guess. I wouldn't hold my breath.

TJ, YOU'RE FIRED!

By Lynne Saginaw

The New York City Council has voted unanimously to remove the statue of Thomas Jefferson which has stood in the chamber since 1915. Members of the Council objected to Jefferson's history as a slaveholder. The New-York Historical Society has agreed to take the statue and display it with contextual signage.

The statue in question has an interesting history. It is a plaster model of the bronze original, which resides



in the Capitol Rotunda in Washington, DC. The original Jefferson statue is the only privately-commissioned

object in Statuary Hall. Commissioned in 1833 by Commodore Uriah Phillips Levy, the statue was created by Pierre-Jean David D'Angers, the noted French sculptor, to commemorate Jefferson's advocacy of religious liberty in the armed services. Levy was the first Jewish flag officer in the United States Navy, conqueror of the Barbary pirates and the man who banned flogging in the Navy. The Jewish chapel at the Naval Academy is named in his honor.

When the statue was delivered to New York, Levy exhibited it to the public, charging a modest fee, which he donated to feed the poor during the depression of the 1830s. He was also the third owner of Monticello, and the person responsible for saving Jefferson's estate from ruin. He willed Monticello to the U.S. government. In addition, he left income from his estate, valued at \$300,000 (millions in today's money) for the maintenance of the estate and the establishment and support of an agricultural school at Monticello for the orphaned sons of seamen and others.

The Confederacy confiscated and sold the property. The Commodore died in 1862, but his nephew,

Jefferson Monroe Levy, pursued litigation and won the property back. Uriah Levy seldom lived at Monticello, due to his service obligations. His mother managed the estate until her death. She is buried on the property; Levy is buried in New York. *Sounds like Levy deserves a statue! – Editor*

A ROUND TABLE DATABASE?

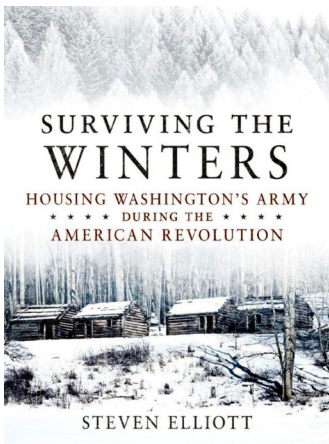
Member Richard Melnick suggests that we create a database for all of the books, articles, documentary films and other works by members of the Round Table. One-stop shopping and sharing. It would be impressive to see such a roll of honor, listing the Revolutionary contributions of this congeries of clever wordsmiths.

ELIZA HAMILTON WEBINAR

On November 18, member Elizabeth Kahn Kaplan will be delivering a Zoom webinar called “My Betsey: The Remarkable Wife of Alexander Hamilton,” at the Syosset Public Library (unfortunately before this Broadside goes out). Next ish, we will find out how it went.

DECEMBER SPEAKER

On December 7th – a date which will live in infamy if we still have to zoom and not meet and dine together – we will hear Steven Elliott speak about his new book, SURVIVING THE WINTERS: HOUSING WASHINGTON’S ARMY DURING THE



AMERICAN REVOLUTION. The book was published this year by the University of Oklahoma Press in Norman, OK, as Book #72 of their Campaigns and Commanders Series. Amazon says this book is “the first to show how camp construction and administration played a crucial role in Patriot strategy during the war.”

Steven Elliott has a PhD. In American military history from Temple University. He has received awards and fellowships from the Order of the Cincinnati, the David Library of the American Revolution, the Fred W. Smith Library at Mount Vernon, the North Jersey Heritage Trail, and the New Jersey Historical Commission. He teaches at Rutgers-Newark. He has worked as a park guide and volunteer for the National Park Service at Morristown National Historical Park.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR REV FANS!

Lynne Saginaw had a great idea (and not for the first time): Let’s all try to think of the perfect Christmas gift for Rev fans! Any suggestions? Send them to the editor: fcookinham@juno.com. Lynne’s own suggestion: The multimedia “Founding Fathers” from “The Great Courses,” or children’s books. You can find many of those at the Morris-Jumel Mansion historic site gift shop. Manhattan’s Oldest House. General Washington’s HQ in Washington Heights. Lin-Manuel Miranda Land!

For younger readers on your Christmas list, there is always JOHNNY TREMAIN, by Esther Forbes, 1943. This became a Disney movie. Know any gardeners? In 2011, Knopf published FOUNDING GARDENERS: THE REVOLUTIONARY GENERATION, NATURE AND THE SHAPING OF THE AMERICAN NATION, by Andrea Wulf. Also along those lines is Victoria Johnson’s 2018 book AMERICAN EDEN: DAVID HOSACK, BOTANY, AND MEDICINE IN THE GARDEN OF THE EARLY REPUBLIC. Hosack was Hamilton’s family doctor and was present at the duel. He founded the Elgin Botanic Garden, where Rockefeller Center is now.

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.

DEADLINE

Midnight, Tuesday, January 11 is your deadline to submit articles, photos, secret coded messages, newly discovered love letters from George to Martha, et cetera, to the editor for inclusion in the February Broadside. Otherwise, it will wait for the April ish. By January 25 the February Broadside will appear in your inbox.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

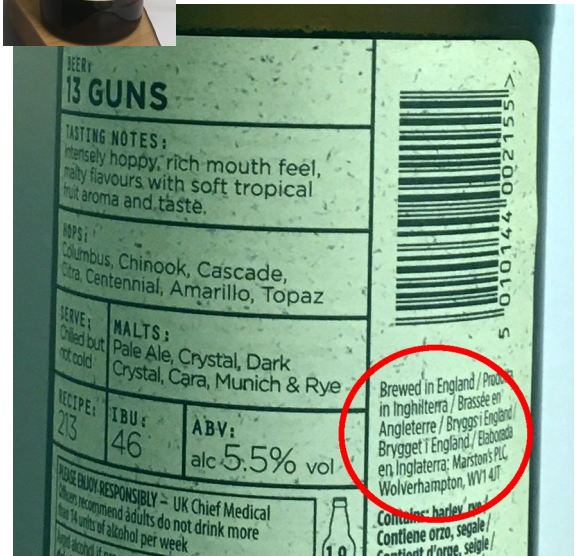
The December Round Table will Zoom its way into your heart at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, December 7, 2021.

Gung Hay Fat Choy! The February Round Table will meet on Tuesday, February 1, 2022 – Chinese New Year! 7:30 p.m.

Yr obdt svt,
Dr. David Jacobs, Chairman

RESURGENT INTEREST IN THE AM-REV?

Your publisher discovered this hyper-patriotic brewski, which calls itself “AMERICAN IPA,” and proclaims “A Salute to the Original 13 States of America” in ... a *supermercado* in Panama City, Panama. But, he thought, surely it must have been brewed back in USA, perhaps even somewhere in the eponymous revolutionary



thirteen? He had consumed the entire contents before it occurred to him to peruse the label on the back. *Oops!* Oh well, the beer itself was perfectly satisfactory. – *Jon Carriel*