

BROADSIDE

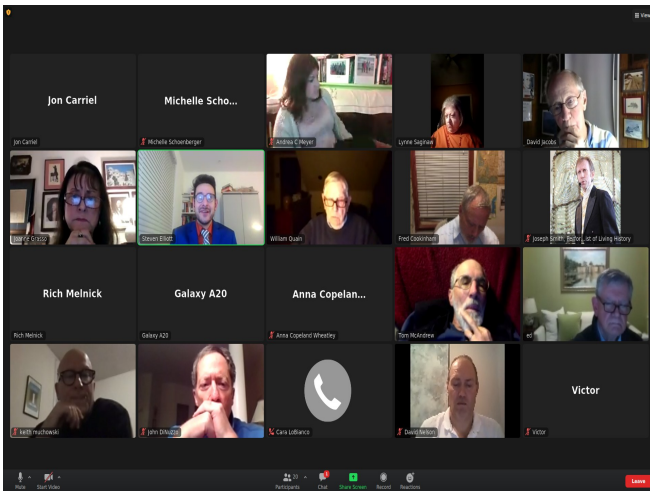
The Newsletter of the
American Revolution Round Table

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

February 2022

CASTRAMETATION!

Twenty attendees zoomed in for our Round Table on December 7. Eightieth anniversary of Pearl Harbor, but that's another war. Chairman Dave Jacobs called



the proceedings to order, and Book Review Coordinator Lynne Saginaw announced the books she is asking for reviews for. These included MARCH TO INDEPENDENCE, HERO OF TWO WORLDS, and THE HOWE DYNASTY. Those volunteering to review books, please contact Lynne at lynness@juno.com, and you get to keep the book!

After Dr. Joanne S. Grasso read her review of GERMANTOWN, we proceeded directly to the main speaker. Steven Elliott teaches at Rutgers-Newark. He has worked as a park guide and volunteer for the National Park Service at Morristown National Historical Park. He spoke to us about “castrametation,” the art and science of planning, building and maintaining army camps.

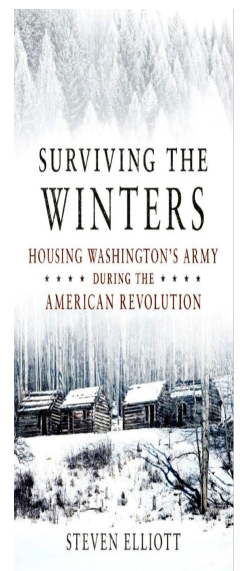
His 2021 book is called SURVIVING THE WINTER: WASHINGTON’S ARMY DURING

THE REVOLUTION. It was published by the University of Oklahoma Press, as offering Number 72 of their Campaigns and Commanders Series.

Elliott’s thesis is that castrametation has not gotten the attention it deserves from historians. Knowing how to build and maintain camps wins wars, because you can’t hope to win a war with 30% of your men sick, and many dying, because they don’t know enough to build “necessary rooms” downstream of where the men wash and draw their drinking water. This was the case at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777-1778. It was remedied by the time of the cantonments at Middlebrook and Morristown, New Jersey and New Windsor, New York later in the war. The Valley Forge huts were sited haphazardly. In the later camps, the huts were in neat rows.

Elliott explained that the permanent housing for soldiers is called a barracks and is usually found only in a nation’s capital city or other big cities. During a campaign, soldiers live in tents, making up an encampment, or in huts in the winter, making up a cantonment. If they move into already-existing houses, those are called billets.

Elliott does not entirely blame the managers of the Valley Forge camp. They had a nearly impossible job: their camp was the fifth biggest city in the United States. It consisted of some 2,000 huts. There was little housing to be found out in the farm land around Philadelphia, and that was already filled with refugees fleeing the British occupation of Philadelphia. The officers and men were little trained. They had lost their tents in the



New York campaign. General Washington had gained some experience in the French and Indian War, and he had access to two books on the subject of castrametation. But the whole army had to learn castrametation the hard way.

General Howe took Philadelphia in the summer of 1777, but both before that and after that, General Washington occupied New Jersey, setting his army in an arc around the state to act as a shield between the Redcoats in New York City and the patriot-held lands to the west and south. His victories at Trenton and Princeton had swept the Brits and Hessians out of New Jersey for the 1777 campaign, and after Monmouth in June 1778 the Royalist forces were out of Philadelphia and back in New York, and New Jersey once again became the shield.



But generals usually spread their troops all over a province. Washington decided not to do that, either at Valley Forge, surrounding Philadelphia, or in New Jersey, surrounding New York. His supply base was Trenton, NJ and spreading his camps all the way up to the top of the state would lengthen his supply lines too much. Hence the one big camp at Middlebrook, just like the one big camp at Valley Forge the year before.

A few other points: The winter of 1779-80 happened to be the worst in a century. Just bad luck. And Washington had sited that camp in the hills, for security against British raids. But hilly terrain meant that what he gained in security he lost in ease of transportation. Supply routes were harder to use in deep snow. Problems of camps included tool shortages – how do you saw logs for huts if you don't have enough saws? – leaky sod roofs: sod on top of planks – sunken floors that flooded every time it rained or snowed – and poor drainage. All these were

worst at Valley Forge and were made better in later camps. Interestingly, Black and Native American soldiers lived in the huts with white soldiers. The Valley Forge huts were 12 by 14 feet, and held either 12 enlisted men or an officer and his staff. By the summer of 1778, Washington abandoned the Valley Forge camp because it had become a big garbage and sewage dump. Army engineers were not used for the designing of the camps. They built forts. The planning of camps was left to the Quartermaster.

Question for Professor Elliott: Was castrametation taught at West Point? Yes, but of course that was long after the War for Independence. By the Civil War, West Point had its own textbooks on every military subject. Was the mutiny at Morristown due to bad castrametation? No, to the hard winter and slow pay. How do you build the chimney for a hut if it is cold? Mortar will freeze. We don't know. Little documentation on that point.

Elliott, in his time as a volunteer at Morristown, became interested in the whole subject of camps. He found that much had been written about Valley Forge and very little about the other camps.

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

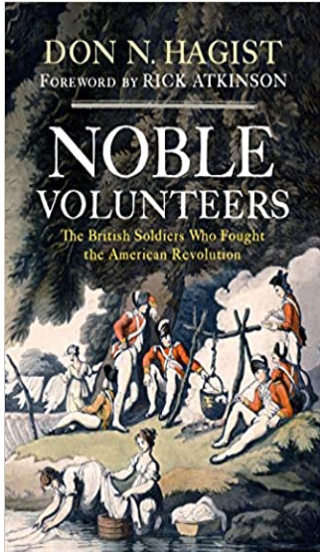
At the December Round Table, Dr. Joanne S. Grasso read her review of *GERMANTOWN*, by Michael C. Harris.

Dr. Grasso finds Harris's offering as detailed as a textbook. It covers the Philadelphia campaign from June to December 1777, as General Howe moves his army from New York City to the Head of Elk, defeats Washington at the Brandywine, and occupies the Quaker City, only to be rudely awakened by a surprise dawn attack through fog at Germantown. Harris paints vivid word pictures to re-create both overt fighting and covert acts of espionage. He provides images and short bios of the leaders on both sides. The level of detail in the book may be too great for the reader who wants to read this book like a novel, but that same level of detail will gratify the in-depth student. He will find extensive footnotes, an epilogue, appendices, and a bibliography.

So, since the author of this book will be the speaker at our February meeting, you can decide whether this

level of detail on this six-month period in the Revolutionary War is for you, or whether you, like Sgt. Joe Friday on “Dragnet,” want “Just the facts, Ma’am, just the facts.”

BOOK REVIEW BY CHRISTOPHER THUILOT
NOBLE VOLUNTEERS by Don Hagist eschews the “great man” theory of historical analysis to focus on the rank-and-file British troops fighting to stop the American rebellion. The book conveys the



extraordinary way in which these men—and their camp followers—had to adapt. The futility of holding land larger than their island home becomes apparent, even with the agility many forged. The privation of the rank and file was eased by the abundance of fruits and vegetables they could forage for, as who wouldn’t prefer fresh peaches to rationed salt pork? Hagist takes us through the soldier-made

thatched huts many regiments cantoned in upper Manhattan and Long Island, the constant quartermaster duties of procuring straw for horses and firewood for the garrison, bathing in rivers that we would now be reluctant to dip a finger in, and the miles upon miles of marching that kept them in great shape. The sources are extensive, ideal for anyone seeking sources for their own writing.

Member Richard Melnick was browsing the books at BJ’s Wholesale in Astoria when he found Nathaniel Philbrick’s book TRAVELS WITH GEORGE WASHINGTON. Richard found, in Philbrick’s Acknowledgments, Dr. Joanne Grasso’s GEORGE WASHINGTON’S 1790 GRAND TOUR OF LONG ISLAND. Joanne was very happy to hear this.

Richard also remarked “I am so pleased with the ARRT-NY lectures that I have not missed an in-person or Zoom lecture since joining in 2014. Great job by you (Joanne) and the Board, during these restrictive Covid-19 times.”

BOOKS ON OFFER FOR REVIEW – Lynne Saginaw
Please note the following two items are available for review:

- *MARCH TO INDEPENDENCE: THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION IN THE SOUTHERN COLONIES, 1775-1776*, by Michael Cecere. A look at the South in the first 18 months of the war, when it was far from a sure thing that those colonies would join the Revolution wholeheartedly.
- *HERO OF TWO WORLDS: THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE IN THE AGE OF REVOLUTION*, by Mike Duncan. Lafayette participated in TWO revolutions in the course of a long, adventurous life.

To qualify to review, you have to be an established member of the Round Table, and have no current review assignment.

IN THE NEWS

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar got into the Rev education business last year. The basketball star was the co-producer and narrator of a 2020 documentary on the History Channel called “BLACK PATRIOTS: HEROES OF THE REVOLUTION.” Abdul-Jabbar says that General Washington believed that African-Americans were pivotal to the winning of the Revolutionary War. The show was nominated for an Emmy. He was already a student of the life of Alexander Hamilton, and that interest in turn made him an avid coin collector.

John Steele Gordon, in COMMENTARY magazine, says that George III was *not* a tyrant!

Dr. Joanne Grasso was expecting to attend the Congress of American Revolution Round Tables in Philadelphia in November, but was unable to do so. Joanne sends along this communication from the host group, the George Washington District of Columbia American Revolution Round Table:

The 7th Congress of American Revolution Round Tables met at the library at Mount Vernon on Friday, November 26, 2021. Thirty-five attended. After meeting in the library lobby, the attendees broke up into groups of eight (pieces of eight?) for dinner at several Alexandria restaurants.

Saturday morning saw registration, a welcome by Christian McBurney (4-time speaker of ours!) of the DC RT, and others, and local reports. There followed workshops on: cultivating speakers, birthing and running an RT, Tech (Zooming, mainly), Rev 250 Anniversary planning, hot button issues, preservation projects, and 2023 planning. A group photo was taken. Dinner at Gadsby's.



A tour of Mount Vernon Plantation saw out the Congress on Sunday.

Lynne Saginaw reports:

Winter 2022 at the New-York Historical Society

In weather like this, there's nothing better than an interesting lecture in a nice warm hall. The Revolutionaries among us would certainly enjoy "Our First Civil War: Patriots and Loyalists in the American Revolution". Enjoy it on Wednesday, March 16 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. The price: \$44 (\$32 for members of the Society). For tickets, visit nyhistory.org/programs or call 212-485-9268. The office is open 9 am to 5 pm daily.

Please note: Livestream access is available for \$30 (\$20 for members). A day before the program, a member of the Museum staff will contact registered livestream attendees with information on how to access the program online.

Proof of vaccination and a matching photo ID are required, as are masks. All sales are final. Museum admission is extra.

The N-YHS is located at 170 Central Park West and 77th Street.

Peter Feinman, of the Institute for History, Archeology and Education in New York State,

reports frequently on these subjects. So frequently, in fact, that your editor will only give the titles of his latest notes:

- "Slave" or "Enslaved Person"?
- The Lafayette 1824-1825 Bicentennial: Is New York Ready?
- Newburgh Tavern Archeology Lecture (virtual)
- Redating the Iroquoian History through Archeology (virtual lecture)

Feinman and his Institute live in Purchase, New York and his reports can be found at feinmanp@ihare.org.

January 11 was Alexander Hamilton's birthday... maybe. And in which year? Historians still can't agree about the date or the year. But since January 11 was the birthday Hamilton himself claimed, ten or twenty scholars and students of AI's gathered by Zoom on that date to confer, converse and otherwise hobnob, including your Editor.

A few notes from this conference:

- It was FDR who put Jefferson on the nickel and otherwise elevated TJ into the top tier of the revolutionary pantheon.
- Lin-Manuel Miranda, in the Hamilton show, gives 1755 or 1756 as the birth year. 1755 is the most common guess.
- Doug Hamilton, a descendant, counters any who claim Caesarian ambitions for AI by pointing out his willing disbanding of the army President Adams hired him to organize for the Quasi-war with France in 1798. When the crisis had passed, AI had no problem with the order to disband his army. He did not "cross the Rubicon" with it, much as he hated Adams and TJ.
- AI agreed with the Roman slogan "Peace Through Strength."
- There was a case called *People v. Cromwell* in 1803 or -4 that helped the cause of freedom of the press. AI was involved and it set a precedent. Just in his legal work, apart from his roles in government, how many more precedents might AI have set if he had avoided "the fatal interview" and lived to a ripe old age?
- George Eacker, in his 1801 duel with young Philip Hamilton – did he "fire on 7" and fail to wait for the ten count, as suggested in the show? Doug Hamilton says no.

- Michael Newton, author of several of the latest and best-researched books on Hamilton, cast doubt on the “Room where it happened” story in the show. There has never come to light more than one account of the famous dinner on Maiden Lane where Hamilton and Jefferson reached the compromise that affirmed Hamilton’s financial plan in exchange for the South getting the new capital city. That account is in a letter TJ wrote to Lafayette twenty years later. 1790 to 1810. Newton, with gravity, asks why no one else ever mentioned this compromise. Who else was at that dinner? Discussions of such a compromise went on both before and after the dinner. So the story is suspect. Not impossible, just suspect. Maybe it *was* just the two principals dining and deal-making together, and they both kept the dinner a secret. Who knows?

To avoid confusion:

- “Revolution NYC” is a gym.
- “NYC Club Revolution” is a party planning website.
- “Revolution Club NYC” is Communist Bob Avakian’s latest organization.
- “American Revolution Round Table—NY” is ... well, *you* know!

Not to be confused further, the [Journal of the American Revolution](#) (JAR) reports that there will be another conference in March. The Ninth Conference of the American Revolution is scheduled for March 18-20, 2022, at Williamsburg, Virginia. The sponsor is America’s History, LLC. Michael Harris will be among the speakers.

FEBRUARY SPEAKER

On Tuesday, February 1, or “Groundhog Eve” if you like, the Round Table will gather electronically to hear author Michael C. Harris discuss his latest book, **GERMANTOWN: A MILITARY HISTORY OF THE BATTLE FOR PHILADELPHIA, OCTOBER 4, 1777.**

Mr. Harris teaches high school history. He is a graduate of the University of Mary Washington and

the National Parks Service, New Jersey State Parks, and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

The book was published in 2020 by Savas Beatie. It has maps, illustrations and modern photos. It is told largely through the words of those who fought there. It acts as a sequel to Mr. Harris’s *Brandywine* book. It has less background than *Brandywine*, because the *Brandywine* book fills that function. It has more maps, though, since the movements of the two armies were complicated at Germantown.

DEADLINE

Midnight, Tuesday, March 15 is the deadline for any submissions to the April BROADSIDE. Send such to the Editor at fcookinham@juno.com. Keep those cards and letters comin’ in, folks! Book reviews, travel reports, reports or opinions about new interpretations of the Am Rev, reports of some cannon ball or other artefact being dug up, and especially, references in popular culture to the Am Rev. Do people still call a traitor a “Benedict Arnold,” or has Benny now sunk into the common grave of those forgotten by *hoi polloi* and remembered only by us aficionados and the odd Broadway musical author?

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

The February Round Table will commence at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, February 1. The Zoom connection link will be included in the same email members received that linked them to this newsletter. Is the past tense of “link” “lunk”? Guests are welcome but are asked to register by email with [Ms. Andrea Meyer](#) at least 24 hours in advance.

Yr most obdt svt,

Dr. David W. Jacobs

NEXT ISH: 1619!