

# BROADSIDE

The Newsletter of the  
American Revolution Round Table

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

December 2020

## ROUND TABLE ATTACKED BY PIRATES!

Our October Zoom meeting began at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, October 6, as planned. Our speaker was present and his audio worked fine. Chairman Jacobs welcomed all, and asked Lynne Saginaw for her Book Review Editor's report.

But no sooner had Lynne begun to speak than the good ship Round Table was boarded by virtual raiders. Three or four youthful voices, all male, began making loud and rude interjections. No faces; only voices. Thinking quickly, Lynne avoided giving out her email address, which could have been heard by the intruders, to those wishing to email her about volunteering to review a book for the next Round Table.

Our intrepid skipper, Cap'n John Paul Jacobs, and media mate Andrea Meyer, now took action. They fired a thunderous electronic broadside at the attackers, who soon retreated. The Board has since determined upon strategies for preventing any further attacks.

Lynne then introduced Polly Guérin, who read a book review that will be summarized below, and our main speaker gave his presentation.

Dr. John Gilbert McCurdy, who teaches at Eastern Michigan University, spoke about his new book, *QUARTERS: THE ACCOMMODATION OF THE BRITISH ARMY AND THE COMING OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION*. He had plenty of slides in his Power

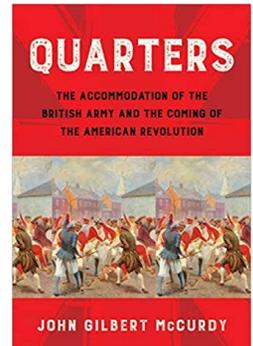
Point presentation, which were much easier to read than has been the case at the Coffee House Club, where the slides are projected on a screen far from the eyeballs of most of the members in the room.

Dr. McCurdy highlighted the point that the Quartering Acts of 1765 and 1774 did NOT force Americans to quarter soldiers in their homes during peacetime. On the contrary, both Acts forbade it. "If you remember nothing else from this talk," Professor McCurdy pleaded, "Remember this!" The American complaint was not the quartering of soldiers in private homes (during peacetime, but during the French and Indian War, there *was* quartering in homes), but the fact that the colonies were forced to pay for the building and maintaining of barracks in cities. Two-thirds of British soldiers in America were stationed in cities, not in frontier forts.

New York City's barrack building was on the town commons, today's City Hall Park, and was two stories tall and over four hundred feet long. One 21 by 21 foot room held twenty soldiers. Sometimes wives and children were in the bunks with the men. That must have been interesting.

Redcoats were quartered in private homes in Montreal and Quebec City because the Acts did not apply there.

Americans paid more for quartering soldiers than they paid in stamp or tea taxes.



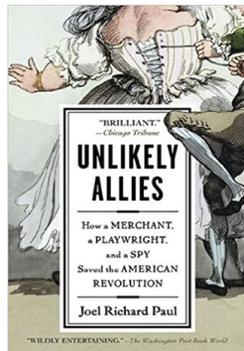
Of all the barrack buildings Americans were forced to pay for, the only one left today is in Trenton, New Jersey. It is a museum.

Ever since the Revolution, Americans have never known the problem of quartering. Barracks are just not built in cities.

After a few questions for our speaker, Chairman Jacobs signed off at 8:42. Eighteen members attended— plus, for four or five minutes, the hackers. The meeting went fine, but a Zoom meeting is a far cry from dinner, cocktail hour, and meeting people after the talk. Also, we cannot buy a book on the spot and get it autographed. And I miss the auctions!

## BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

At our October meeting, member Polly Guérin read her review of *UNLIKELY ALLIES*, by Joel Richard Paul. Silas Deane was a merchant, and a member of the Continental Congress. He was sent to Paris to persuade King Louis to help the United States. M. Beaumarchais was a Paris playwright. He wrote “The Barber of Seville.” He and Deane sent shiploads of arms to America, where they helped win the Saratoga campaign. Chevalier D’Eon was a spy, a diplomat—and a cross dresser. He was the one who got Louis to sign on to the American war. This is non-fiction. It would have to be, because you can’t make this stuff up.



Polly finds this book to be a page-turner, “full of fascinating characters, lavish with period detail and juicy commentary.” These three unsung heroes, “through guile, intrigue, espionage and pure luck, helped the American revolutionaries win the War for Independence.”

Polly also advises us of another new book called *A CRISIS OF PEACE: GEORGE WASHINGTON, THE NEWBURGH CONSPIRACY, AND THE FATE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION*, by

David Head. Author Head gave a Zoom presentation on his book at Fraunces Tavern on September 24<sup>th</sup>.

This Plague Year has yielded some new books on the Am Rev, in spite of everything. When was the last time you read a book about the war in the Adirondacks? Never, I’ll be bound. Now, that gap has been filled by Marie Danielle Annette Williams with her *THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR IN THE ADIRONDACKS: RAIDS IN THE WILDERNESS*, Arcadia Publishers, 2020. Ms. Williams has a blog called The Half-Pint Historian. She writes that there were raids in the mountain fastness throughout the war, not just during the Saratoga campaign.

## IN THE NEWS

The Evacuation Day tour is on! Fraunces Tavern® Museum is holding its eleventh annual Evacuation Day walking tour twice, on Saturday, November 21 and on Sunday, November 22, at 11 a.m. The tour guide will be the same old one. The tour meets at the southwest corner of Centre Street and Chambers Street, near the Tweed Courthouse and City Hall. Go to [www.frauncestavernmuseum.org](http://www.frauncestavernmuseum.org) to make reservations.

The Morris-Jumel Mansion is open, sort of. You must make a reservation for the guided tour of the park and the outside of the house, and you must make a reservation to take a self-guided tour inside the house. You must fill out a Covid form to enter the house. The staff much prefer that you fill this out electronically, but you can fill it out on paper once you get there. See the room the staff thinks General Washington used as his office during the five weeks he used the house as his HQ. See the front parlor, where the widow Jumel married Aaron Burr. See the Burr bedroom, and the armchair that Lin-Manuel Miranda used while writing the lines and songs he puts into the mouth of Burr in his musical “Hamilton.” Go to [www.morrisjumel.org](http://www.morrisjumel.org) for reservations.

Speaking of Alexander Hamilton, the [New York Almanack website](#) reports that Jessie Serfilippi, a

history interpreter at the Schuyler Mansion in Albany (a unit of the NYS Parks Department), has written a 28-page report for the Mansion on Hamilton's buying, selling, and holding of slaves. This is important just now because Ron Chernow, in his massive life of Hamilton, which Lin-Manuel Miranda used as the basis for the musical, says that Hamilton did not own slaves. Serfilippi uses as sources the US Census of 1810, Hamilton's Assignment of Debts to his brother-in-law John Barker Church, Harold C. Syrett's magisterial *Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, Alex's own Cash Book, Founders Online, family letters, the *General Philip Schuyler Papers*, and other sources. This will come as less of a shock for Round Tablers than for those whose knowledge of Hamilton goes back no farther, and no deeper, than Miranda and Chernow.

The New York Almanack also reports that the New York State Archives are making available online records pertaining to Loyalists in New York State, their prosecution and persecution. Go to [www.nysarchivestrust.org](http://www.nysarchivestrust.org): "Enemies of the State."

## BURIED IN BRITAIN

*By the BROADSIDE'S Chief Foreign Correspondent, Christopher Thuiot*

Are there any reminders of the Revolution's participants left in Britain? Many.

Most glaring is the Benjamin Franklin House on Craven Street, just steps away from vibrant bloom



Franklin's London home  
(All Photos by Christopher Thuiot)

at the Victoria Embankment Garden. The tall, dark brick townhouse was home to Franklin for 15 years when he assumed a variety of roles on behalf of Pennsylvania. Franklin entertained leading theorists and scientists, and women, and attended the coronation of George III with his son. His son, William, would

remain a staunch Loyalist. When Franklin fled England in 1775 as the revolution quickly spiraled from protest into a war, his break with the mother country proved to be as vast as the stretch of sea between the two. But his intellectual development in Britain certainly contributed to his many inventions, his heightened awareness, and his keen enjoyment of everything from the arts to the natural world, his passion for which carried him to the age of 90.

When the British evacuated New York, William Franklin retired to London and rests in St. Pancras Old Church.

In the Tower of London, an icon of the city since 1066, a prominent patriot, Henry Laurens, was incarcerated for some time. There is mention of this one-time president of Congress and peace negotiator on the grounds.

In the august Mayfair district of London, near the Franklin Roosevelt Memorial, is Upper Grosvenor Street. Prominent revolutionary participants who resided there include William Tryon and Archibald Campbell. Plaques identify the former residences of Thomas Gage, John Burgoyne, and Benedict Arnold.

In the National Portrait Gallery, one finds original paintings of notables such as Lord Cornwallis, George Washington (of all people), George III, and Banastre Tarleton. A short walk away is a marble, equestrian statue of George III that looks much like the one that stood on Bowling Green until revolutionaries tore it down during a night of demonstrations in July, 1776.



Curious juxtapositioning in the British National Portrait Gallery

Two hundred miles southwest of London, at Falmouth, on the charming coast of Cornwall, sits Pendennis Castle. Ethan Allen was held as a prisoner here for a month or two, eventually being

transferred to the main POW center in New York, which every student of the revolution knows is where more patriots died as prisoners than in combat.

In the crypt of St Mary's Church in Battersea rest Benedict and Peggy Arnold. The location is now a pre-k, quite a transformation. In the church, a stained glass window identifies the famous-- or infamous-- resident. One can't help but think how Arnold would have been an American hero had he perished at Saratoga. But his persuasion that he was mistreated, perhaps coupled with avarice and pride, changed his course even though it failed to change the course of the revolution. Arnold exemplified the "Fatal Flaw" so central to Shakespeare's characters, making them fascinating to readers through the centuries.

William Tryon and William Howe rest just a short walk away from each other in Twickenham. These two officials played a crucial role in New York at the beginning of the Revolution. Time changed the landscape for General Howe, as his slab is now inside a park while Governor Tryon is in a church yard.

The story of Tryon reminds us how vicious the revolution was before it broke out into war. Little did he know he would be the last Royal Governor of New York. In April, 1775, rebels seized control of New York City while British warships remained in the harbor. Tryon was forced to flee and reside on a ship until Howe recaptured the city in September, 1776. Tryon's hard line versus Howe's ostensible sympathy-- attempting to through persuasion rather than brute force-- is easy to understand when one understands what Tryon endured.



Tomb of New York's last royal governor, William Tryon

*Correspondent Thuilot will tell us more about his travels to far-flung AmRev sites in future issues of the BROADSIDE.*

## A BINTEL BRIEF

Member Richard Melnick, who showed us a Revolutionary cannonball he owns last time we met, has sent a letter to the Round Table. And so has Lynne! The BROADSIDE has never had a "Letters" section before – never needed one, since we all met in person five times a year. Here they are:

*I would like to send autumn greetings to all my friends and colleagues at ARRT-NY. I truly miss the smart and scholarly conversation and excellent lectures at our meetings and dinners. This esteemed group has a special place in my academic and historical life. I look forward to the day when we can all meet again and speak of America's great history and of its Revolution and War. ... A strong Huzzah! to all.*

—Richard Melnick

*Dear Fred:*

*Excellent editorial. All this tearing down of statues is a sad mistake. I'm tempted to ascribe it to the current "cancel culture" which insists that everything someone doesn't agree with be erased immediately. That's so very childish! And the worst thing about it is that it ignores an opportunity to educate. Leave the statue where it is, or put it in a museum for safekeeping, with explanatory material on the offender's place in history. Context is everything. "Presentism" is a pernicious aspect of modern historical study. And the reaction it causes is part of what's tearing the country apart.*

*Which brings me to this nonsensical proposal the President (May he soon be gone) makes to order the teaching of a whitewashed U.S. history. It's a pathetic overreaction. Calm and balance is what we need, not hysterical fools wrapping themselves in the flag. When I was in school, ages ago, the authorities had just dispensed with something called "Civics." It taught the mechanics of democracy, and with it naturally came an*

appreciation for the genius of the Founders. We should reinstate that, along with lessons in how to argue respectfully.

—Lynne Saginaw

“A Bintel Brief” was a letters and advice column in the Jewish Daily Forward a century ago. It means “A Bundle of Letters.”

## OUR DECEMBER SPEAKER

Christian McBurney will be making his fourth appearance at the Round Table in December. He will speak about his latest book, **GEORGE WASHINGTON’S NEMESIS: THE OUTRAGEOUS TREASON AND UNFAIR COURT-MARTIAL OF MAJOR GENERAL CHARLES LEE DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR**. This latest of Mr. McBurney’s five books on the Revolutionary War was published by Savas Beatie in January of this year. It is 336 pages long.

Charles Lee has always been an enigma and a colorful and controversial, not to mention eccentric, figure in the American Revolution. He was captured in 1776 and held in New York, in a house on the waterfront near Wall Street, for sixteen months. After his death and after the end of the war, it was discovered that during his captivity, he wrote for the British a detailed plan for defeating the revolutionary army and subjugating the thirteen colonies. Mr. McBurney finds that too little has been made, by historians, of this treason. Lee’s name should be remembered alongside Benedict Arnold’s and Vidkun Quisling’s.

On the other hand, Lee’s famous, or infamous, retreat at the Battle of Monmouth has been treated

too harshly by historians. Our speaker finds that Lee was court-martialed and convicted more because he was a political rival to the Commander in Chief than because he had commanded badly at Monmouth. Mr. McBurney has used some newly-discovered documents to prove his points.

Christian McBurney has published articles, including one in *MHQ: The Journal of Military History* on the British attempt to abduct General Washington. This article was nominated by the US Army Historical Foundation as the best magazine article of 2017.

Mr. McBurney is an attorney in Washington D.C. Note that our capital city did not end up being named “Lee D.C.”

## DEADLINE

Please submit articles, book reviews, news items, recipes, etc. by midnight, Tuesday, January 12, 2021 for inclusion in the February 2021 BROADSIDE.

## AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Reminder: The semi-annual meeting of the board of governors will be scheduled as needed. Since we will be meeting by Zoom and not in person, we do not have to schedule it on the same day as the “dinner” meeting. An agenda will be emailed several days before the next Board meeting.

The full membership meeting with speaker will start by Zoom at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, December 1, 2020. *The Zoom connection link is included in the e-mail members received linking them to this newsletter.* Guests are welcome, but are asked to [register by e-mail](#) with the undersigned at least 24 hours in advance.

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

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THE BROADSIDE is published five times a year to members of the American Revolution Round Table of New York. Editor: Frederick Cookinham. Electronic Publisher: Jonathan Carriell. Past issues are available on our website: [www.arrt-ny.org](http://www.arrt-ny.org).