

BROADSIDE

The Newsletter of the
American Revolution Round Table of New York
<http://www.arrrt-nyc.org>

April 2025

FEBRUARY SPEAKER:

WEDDLE ON SARATOGA

Sixteen Round Tablers Zoomed in to a talk by Kevin Weddle, author of the award-winning *THE COMPLEAT VICTORY: SARATOGA AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION* (one of 28 books in the Oxford U. Press series *PIVOTAL MOMENTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY*) on Tuesday, February 4. Mr. Weddle brought thirty years of Army experience, and years of teaching, to bear on the story of how the Saratoga campaign changed the course of the Revolutionary War and made “Gentleman Johnny” Burgoyne’s name mud with King George.

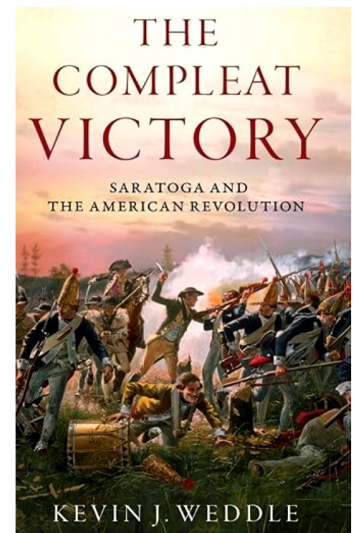
The meeting was chaired by Dr. Joanne Grasso, chairman Dave Jacobs being away on business, at an engineering conference in Fort Worth.

Mr. Weddle is a professor of military theory and strategy, and occupies the Elihu Root Chair of Military Studies at the US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Skillfully using animated maps on Zoom, Mr. Weddle showed how the campaign developed. Burgoyne marched south from Montreal into New York State, won one battle and lost another, then got trapped by surrounding militia and General Horatio Gates’s army at Freeman’s

Farm, and then again at Bemis Heights, and surrendered with his six thousand men (he had already lost one thousand at Bennington).

Then Mr. Weddle analyzed the British and American strategies. In upstate New York, as later in the south, the British generals hoped to rally large numbers of Loyalists to their cause, but failed to find as many as they had hoped. Secretary of State for the Colonies George Germain threw three attacks at Albany, but none reached it. Howe, in New York City, went to Philadelphia, rather than moving his whole force up the Hudson, and St. Leger was turned back at



Oriskany. Howe going the wrong way shows a lack of centralized command and strategy on the British side. Weddle finds the British leadership just fine from the colonels down, but not up at the top. Germain failed to build a team. Burgoyne failed to get the logistics right, from the early planning stage on. He suffered from Confirmation Bias: he interpreted incoming data to confirm what he already believed. His initial plan was not elastic. He failed to revise his plans

as needed. After the disaster, Burgoyne blamed everyone but himself.

On the American side, Weddle found a mix of good and bad thinking. He is “not impressed” with General Arthur St. Clair, who lost Fort Ticonderoga. General Schuyler understood logistics, but his replacement, General Gates, understood militia. General Washington understood “the Big Picture” better than his British opponents did.



Weddle has been denigrated by some colleagues as a Gates defender, and even as a “Gates lover.” But he finds Gates, and Schuyler and St. Clair, all partly responsible

for the loss of Fort Ticonderoga.

Burgoyne was already weakened when Gates replaced Schuyler. Gates and Schuyler were both good at defense – Schuyler’s felling of trees slowed Burgoyne down, allowing more militia to arrive. Gates’s skill set fit this situation.

Member Mike Wolf asked whether the 3,000-mile distance from Germain to Burgoyne hurt their efforts. Yes – and this was one of the American advantages in the whole war.

Dr. Grasso asked Mr. Weddle how long his research lasted. Ten years. Weddle spent time at the British records repository at Kew. He was hampered by the fact that their systems are still down, a year and a half after a cyber attack. He used the Clements Library in Michigan – On the Zoom screen, Dr. Andrea Meyer smiled and nodded at that. He used the resources of the school where he teaches: the US Army War College. Mr. Weddle mentioned that Richard Ketchum wrote the great book on Saratoga – and that was long before records were digitized. How do questions from military listeners differ

from those of historians? Military people ask more questions about logistics. When Mr. Weddle has spoken to British audiences, are they interested in the Revolutionary War? Yes. They asked good questions.

Andrea Meyer asked what Carl von Clausewitz would say about the Saratoga campaign. Mr. Weddle replied that if he were to turn his Zoom camera around, we would see a bust of von Clausewitz against his study wall. He is a fan. The famous Prussian general and war theorist would fault the King and his Secretary, Germain, for a lack of unity of command, bad logistics, failure to concentrate forces, and failure to define a main goal.

Mr. Weddle concluded with his plans for future books. His next will be on General Washington’s development as a Commander in Chief. It was his Saratoga book that got him interested in that subject. After that, he plans a book on Winston Churchill.

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

Our new Book Review Co-ordinator, Vic Miranda, was prevented, by technical difficulties, from reading a book review that night, so we will try again in April.

The book recommended by our speaker is: SARATOGA: TURNING POINT OF AMERICA’S REVOLUTIONARY WAR, by Richard M. Ketchum, Henry Holt and Company, 1997, winner of the Fraunces Tavern Museum Book Award.

Member Lea Bishop writes:

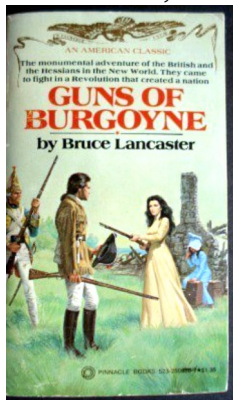
In the latest newsletter, you ask for book suggestions. I have one that is my very favorite book on the Revolutionary War. It is TO THE END OF THE WORLD: NATHANAEL

GREENE, CHARLES CORNWALLIS, AND THE RACE TO THE DAN, by Andrew Waters.

Mr. Waters encapsulates in well-written detail the harrowing journey of Greene's race to the Dan, from Morgan's victory at Cowpens on January 17, 1781, to Greene's crossing of the Dan River in Virginia on February 14, 1781. Easy to read, this book includes the fights along the fords of the Catawba and Yadkin, Greene's solo journey across South and North Carolina to direct his troops, the especially harrowing decoy march of Otho Holland Williams to deflect Cornwallis away from Greene and the main army on their march to the Dan.

I loved this book, and it opened my eyes to the fact that the Rev War was not only about Boston or Saratoga, but there was some major fighting in the south. Greene's southern strategy forced Cornwallis up to Virginia and the rest is history.

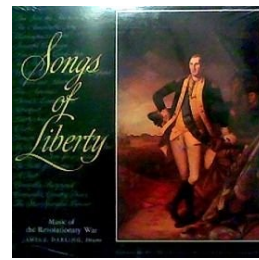
Your editor finds, gathering dust on his bookshelves, a 1939 novel by Bruce Lancaster,



called GUNS OF BURGOYNE. It was published by Grosset & Dunlap. Lancaster (1896-1963) wrote sixteen historical novels, four histories, and numerous magazine articles. To make the actions of Burgoyne's invasion of New York State easier for the reader to follow on maps,

Lancaster has used some place names that were not in use till after the war. Like Walter D. Edmonds, in his novel DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK, Lancaster's fiction mostly follows historical events. Sometimes, history is a better

plotter than a fiction writer is. The author can let Cleo do his plotting for him.



If we may expand our definition of books to include music recordings, your editor has found, and blown the dust off of, an LP (remember those?) called SONGS OF LIBERTY: MUSIC OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, produced in 1975 by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Music Director for the project, James S. Darling, writes, in the liner notes,

George Washington was no musician. In a letter to Francis Hopkinson, he wrote: "... I can neither sing... nor raise a single note on any instrument." Yet he knew the value of music to an army that functioned by duty calls of fifes and drums.

"GENERAL ORDERS – Head Quarters, Middle-Brook, June 4, 1777: The music of the army being in general very bad, it is expected that the drum and fife Majors exert themselves to improve it, or they will be reduced, and their extraordinary pay taken from them."

IN THE NEWS

The Ninth Congress of American Revolution Round Tables will convene in Camden, South Carolina from Friday, November 14th to Sunday, November 16. The 250th anniversary of the outbreak of the Revwar makes this a must! Besides meetings and lectures, there will be tours of Revwar sites in the Waxhaws and other nearby South Carolina locations. Contact David Paul Reuwer, davidreuwer3@aol.com.

Bob Wong, President of the New Jersey American Revolution Round Table, advises us that the Second Annual NJARRT Symposium

will be held at Drew University, in Madison, Morris County, on Saturday, May 3. The theme will be “American Revolutionary War Events in New Jersey.” Five speakers are scheduled. Lunch is included. Attendance is \$50. The registration form and details can be found at arrt.nj@gmail.com. Registration deadline is April 15. One of the speakers will be Richard Bell, on “William Franklin: Divided Loyalties.” William was the illegitimate son of Benjamin Franklin, and was the Loyalist Governor of New Jersey.

Dr. Peter Feinman, Institute of History, Archaeology and Education, has been reporting regularly on preparations for the 250th anniversary of all the Rev events of 1775. Sometimes he complains about the lack of such preparations in certain places. For the latest on the marking of a quarter millenium of the American Revolution, contact Dr. Feinman at: feinmanp@ihare.org.



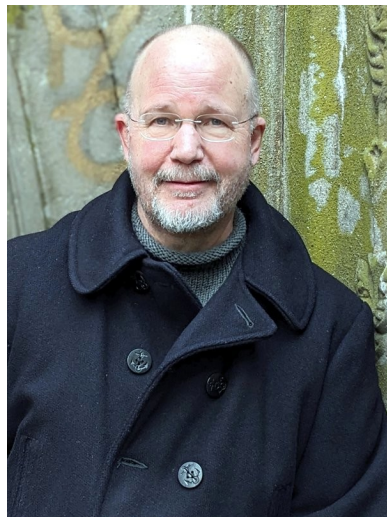
In my date book, I found this cryptic note: “[W3R – US](#).” This stands for “Washington - Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association – US.” This Association commemorates the march of the French army from its

landing place in Rhode Island all the way down to Yorktown, Virginia, where they, and GW’s army, won the siege of Yorktown, largely ending the Revwar. The Association holds events all along the route of that march. Contact: [@W3R_US](#) on Instagram.

APRIL SPEAKER

On April 1 (really – not an April Fool’s Day joke!), our Round Table speaker will be William Hogeland. He will tell us about his book *THE HAMILTON SCHEME: AN EPIC TALE OF*

MONEY AND POWER IN THE AMERICAN FOUNDING. This e-book was published in 2024 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.



Scheme is Mr. Hogeland’s sixth book. He is 70, and is an historian and commentator.

He began his career as a playwright and performer, and does one-man shows. His point of view is one of sharp dissent

from the mode sometimes called “founders’ chic.” His writing style is accessible for general readers. He has appeared on C-Span’s “Book TV.”

DEADLINE

Midnight Tuesday, May 13 is the deadline for submissions to the June Broadside. We need material! Any news relating to the American Revolution is welcome. And remember, by the “American Revolution” we do not mean just the battle history of the war itself, but the whole process of the Thirteen Colonies revolving from stable royal government to the chaos of war and civil upheaval and back to stable government again under the new Constitution. That’s what “revolution” means, after all: one full turn. If you hear about a cannonball being dug up somewhere, or Martha Washington’s cake recipes, or secret codes and cyphers, or 18th century clothing, customs and manners, or language, send it to the editor, Fred Cookinham, at fcookinham@juno.com.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

The Round Table needs a new Treasurer.

You can start as Assistant Treasurer and expect quick promotion to Treasurer. Our incumbent Lord High Treasurer, Jon Carriel, will be happy to train you in the light duties of this exalted position. You will not have much to do until and unless we have another live dinner. There are just a few duties Jon cannot perform from his present home in Panama City, Panama. Please contact the Editor: fcookinham@juno.com.

The next Round Table will meet by Zoom at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 1. No fooling! The link to the meeting is in the same email that this Broadside came in.

Yr most Obdt svt,
Dr. David W. Jacobs

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 Carriel](#). Past issues are available on our website: www.arrt-ny.org.