

BROADSIDE

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

April 2024

FEBRUARY SPEAKER:

QUEENS AGAINST KINGS

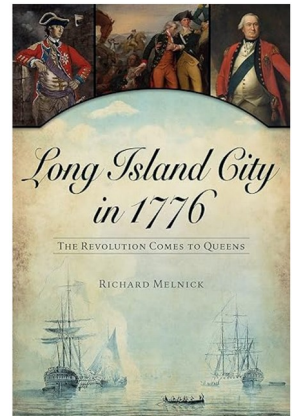
Round Table member Richard Melnick spoke on February 6th to 26 Round Tablers on his new book, *LONG ISLAND CITY IN 1776: THE REVOLUTION COMES TO QUEENS*. The book was published by The History Press, Charleston, SC in 2023.

Rich showed excellent slides with his talk. The maps were clear and the paintings were vivid and colorful. He showed some of the many connections between the Dutch settlement of what is now northwestern Queens, the prominent people of the area in colonial and revolutionary times whose names are preserved in geographical features like Hallet's Cove, and early photos of houses that survived into the photography era. Except for the Bowne House in Flushing, those houses are all gone now. Many were demolished for the Long Island Railroad yards.

One of the Revolutionary Astorians was Dr. John Berrien Riker, who fought at Princeton. In the painting of Hessian Colonel Rall's surrender to Generals Washington and Greene, you can see Riker holding the wounded James Monroe, a future President. Riker's name is now all too well-known for the NYC prison on Riker's Island.

Rich explained the popular misconception of the Hessians as "mercenaries." They were conscripts into the armies of Hesse and other German principalities, and were rented to King George to help put down this rebellion in his American colonies, so they should properly be called "auxiliaries." A mercenary is a professional soldier who rents himself out; these men were draftees who were rented out by the Count of Hesse. He pocketed the profits.

Rich himself has helped in the preservation of the few bits of houses left from that era in Long Island City and adjoining neighborhood. He and his colleagues in the Greater Astoria Historical Society located a Dutch door from a house in Queens that had somehow ended up in the warehouse of the Brooklyn Historical Society. They repatriated the door to Astoria, where their Society will preserve it in its native habitat. You can tell a Dutch door because it is a half-door. Farmhouses had half-doors so you could, in the hot summer months, open the top half of the door for ventilation, while keeping the lower half closed, to keep the chickens out of the house.



Rich engaged a French acquaintance to translate a French map of Astoria. This was quite a find, since the map showed the positions of the US and British armies in 1776, as the batteries on either side of the East River had an artillery duel at Hell Gate. The Brits held Astoria at that point, while the Americans still held upper Manhattan.

The History Press wants Rich to write a sequel. It will carry the story of Long Island City forward from the Revolution to the present day.



In the Q & A, we heard a comment from an attendee from the newly-formed Princeton ARRT, Roger Williams (no, not the one who founded the colony of Connecticut). Mr. Williams explained that the “Grand Union Flag” was the first flag of the US Army, but not of the United States. It was used by the Continental Army in 1775 and 1776, after which it was replaced by the so-called “Betsy Ross Flag.” The story of Betsy Ross designing that flag seems to have been spread by her grandson. There is no surviving evidence that Betsy herself ever designed a flag. When you hear a canard coming at you, duck!

LETTER FROM RICHARD MELNICK

March 13, 2024

Dear American Revolution Round Table of New York Board of Directors, and members:

It is my great honor to thank you for your support and kind words regarding my February 6, 2024 Zoom book talk with ARRT-NY.

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Thanks to David, Joanne, and Andrea for the heavy groundwork in getting this book talk to happen. Thanks to Maria and Jon and Fred and Lynne for their help along the way. Hey, Victor.

...

The Feb. 6 book talk on *Long Island City in 1776, The Revolution Comes to Queens* (The History Press, 2023) was my pleasure to present and a colorful feather in my historical cap.

I was honored to grace the stage that American Revolution history greats such as John Buchanan, Tom Fleming, Joanne Grasso, Jon Carriel, Patrick K. O’Donnell, and authors by the names of McBurney, Harris, Herrera, Minty, Carp, Becker, Lender, Di Spigna, Steele, and Lefkowitz have reported from. This 63-year-old rookie was completely within his element talking LIC in 1776.

While displeased that we couldn’t have a live book talk, I had received from ARRT-NY members very kind and constructive criticism and commentary regarding the book and presentation. Thanks to Father Jim Sheehan for his kind remarks. JAR and NYMAS have reviewed the book. [*Journal of the American Revolution and New York Military Affairs Symposium*. – Editor]

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The book took me five and a half years to write, from signed contract to book in hand. After these many good years I have finally joined the ranks of Author, and have stepped beyond being merely a participant.

ARRT-NY, your smart membership, filled with scholars, authors, and enthusiasts, had greatly motivated me on this long slog of a book-writing journey.

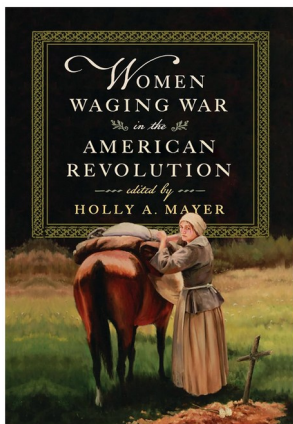
Salty East River Regards. *Huzzah!!!*
Richard Melnick

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

Review of *WOMEN WAGING WAR IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION*,
edited by Holly A. Mayer

By Andrea Meyer

Women Waging War in the American Revolution selected a series of important topics, but the essays are a very mixed bag in terms of quality of writing and research. And many of them really stretch the concept of “waging war.” The collection would probably make more sense if it was titled “Women’s Experiences During the Revolutionary War.”



Many of the chapters are simply too broad for the scale of the topic that’s attempted—such as Barbara Alice Mann’s essay on “Eastern Woodlands War Women,” which actually discussed women waging war, but tried to cover the experiences of in-

digenuous female warriors in under 20 pages with notes. Also at least somewhat related to “waging war” is the well-done essay by Benjamin Carp arguing that one of the 1776 Manhattan incendiaries was female.

However, it’s a big stretch to argue women dealing with passing armies trying to protect their homes and farms were “waging war,” and anyone with passing familiarity of the infamous Mrs. Loring would find Elizabeth Lloyd Loring

as a stretch for “women waging war.” Similarly, Mercy Otis Warren, Kitty Greene and Eliza Lucas Pinckney’s wartime experiences are interesting and important, but it’s hard to view them as anything other than “non-combatants.”

Sean Heuvel’s essay on Betsy Loring reveals details about her life that are rarely discussed—such as Patriots who kidnapped her sons, or the childhood abandonment she seems to have experienced by her mother and stepfather, following her father’s death. Many of the essays have stories that deserve more exploration, especially Lauren Duval’s well-done piece on sexual assault cases.

Fundamentally, most of these essays try to cover too much ground for the approximately 20 pages they each get, which includes notes. The collection’s focus vacillates between the stories of individual civilian women and groups of non-combatants, but there are brief flashes that hint at deeper stories deserving more exploration, such as the enslaved Lucy Banbury’s freedom-seeking flight to Loyalist troops.

The collection needs a lot more editing and perhaps a better title, but it does capture the variety of dangers and violence encountered by women of all walks of life, ranging from Catherine Livingston’s account of the plundering armies at her family’s estate in Elizabeth, NJ or the British soldier who shot his nurse-wife at point-blank range because she wanted a separation. Mayer’s contributors provide a good collection of examples for the more traditional accounts of women’s wartime experiences—as survivors, property owners or caretakers, refugees, and camp followers—leaving a large collection of stories to be explored and researched further.

**REVIEW A BOOK AND YOU GET TO
KEEP THE BOOK!**

Book Review Editrix Lynne Saginaw would like some member to review *King Hancock*, by our April speaker Brooke Barbier, and *Cornwallis: Soldier and Statesman in a Revolutionary World*, by Richard Middleton. Surprise! Maybe the loser at Yorktown was neither a fool nor a monster, but an actual reformer, trying to rule justly. Contact Lynne at lynne-saginaw@gmail.com.

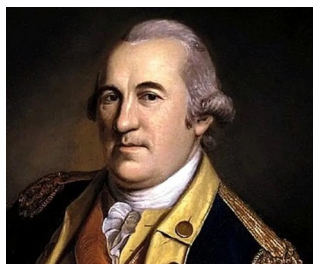
IN THE NEWS

Your Editor has just discovered, online, that Tommy Lee Jones starred in a movie version of *April Morning*, a novel by Howard Fast, in 1988. The novel was published in 1961. The movie was a TV adaptation for the series *Hallmark Hall of Fame*. It is about a boy who comes of age during the Battle of Lexington. Jones plays his father. You can watch the movie online for free.

Baden-Durlach grants von Steuben a Barony

Your Editor and Frau Editor traveled to Karlsruhe, Germany in 2022. My immigrant ancestor, Johan Georg Kuckenheim, came to Dutchess County, New York, as a boy, in 1737, from the Duchy of Baden-Durlach, now the city of Karlsruhe and vicinity.

The small, medieval city of Durlach, capital of the Duchy, has now been absorbed into the big, modern city of Karlsruhe. It turns out that the Duke of Baden-Durlach was the one who granted the title of *Freiherr* – Free Lord – to his friend Friedrich von Steuben, visiting from Prussia and looking for a job. What the position of “Free Lord” was free of was, unfortunately, any land or income. It was just an empty title,



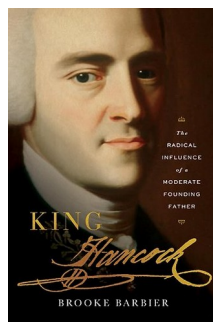
but in those days, even empty titles were greatly valued. Steuben, a Captain in the army of Frederick the Great of Prussia, had just been laid off. After stopping in Durlach and getting his title, Steuben went on to Paris, hoping for a position in the French army. Instead, he was introduced to Dr. Franklin, who sent him to America as a volunteer in the Revolutionary army, and the rest is history.

Durlach has lots of plaques on its houses, telling the history and geography of the town, whose streets are curved, so you can see where the town walls once were. It does not look much different from how it must have looked to the visiting Captain von Steuben.

The on-line store THEHISTORYLIST.COM is offering for sale a genuine lapel button from the inauguration of General Washington as President, April 30, 1789. The button reads LONG LIVE THE PRESIDENT around the edge, and GW in the middle. It can be yours for the low, low price of only \$9,895.00.

APRIL SPEAKER

Our April speaker will be Brooke Barbier, on the subject “Huzzah! Drinking with John Hancock and the American Revolutionaries.”



Dr. Barbier is a public historian with a PhD. in American History from Boston College. She is the author of *King Hancock: The Radical Influence of a Moderate Founding Father*, and *Boston in the American Revolution: A Town versus an Empire* (the subject of her previous address to ARRT-NY six years ago). Because she believes that beer makes history even better, she founded *Ye Olde Tavern Tours* in 2013, a popular guided outing along Boston’s renowned Freedom Trail.

WE STILL NEED AN ASSISTANT 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. Please contact Editor Fred Cookinham at fcookinham@juno.com.

DEADLINE

Midnight, Tuesday, May 14 is the deadline for anything you would like to contribute to the June Broadside. Have you found a Rev cannonball or other artifact in your back yard? Know of any Rev-related movies, poems, neckties, stained glass windows, tattoos, anything? Please email your editor, Fred Cookinham, at fcookinham@juno.com.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Our April meeting will be another Zoom. It will convene on Tuesday, April 2, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. The Zoom link is in the email you got, from Jon Carriel, that also contains the link to this Broadside.

Yr most obdt svt,
Dr. David W. Jacobs