

BROADSIDE

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

October 2024

JUNE SPEAKER:

PEG EGGS BENEDICT ON

Fourteen Round Tablers Zoomed in to hear Jack Kelly speak and show slides from his latest book, *GOD SAVE BENEDICT ARNOLD: THE TRUE STORY OF AMERICA'S MOST HATED MAN*.



Mr. Kelly's internet connection broke twice momentarily, but otherwise his message came through loud and clear. Arnold achieved great things for American independence, and then

he changed his mind.

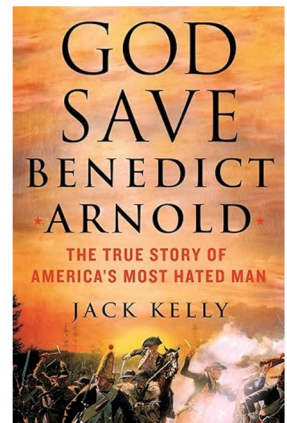
Mr. Kelly outlined three big achievements of Arnold's: his victories at Fort Ticonderoga, Valcour Island, and Saratoga. Valcour was not exactly a victory – Arnold had to burn his fleet to prevent its use by the enemy after the battle – but it took away the chance the British had to advance further south on Lake Champlain.

And then, inexplicably, Arnold defected. Why? Unlike so many other authors and historians, Mr. Kelly admits that he just does not know. Not for lack of trying, but he says he does not find sufficient motivation for Arnold to make

such a monumental decision in any of the causes other historians have proffered. Congress failing to promote him? Money? His wife Peggy? No single one of them sounds like enough of a reason for Arnold to do a 180 on what had been a belief in American independence so strong that he marched away to fight within three days of hearing the news from Lexington and Concord, he took charge of an army he wasn't even technically in charge of, he charged the enemy and lost the use of his leg, and he made a record for himself as America's action hero.

Other points: David McCullough does not even mention Arnold's Champlain campaign in his book *1776*. He concentrates on General Washington. Arnold was an excellent battlefield strategist, always preparing contingency plans. (Perhaps that explains

his treason: The British Empire was his Plan B all along.) Arnold has been neglected and misunderstood for two hundred years. "Arnold's treason bends history as a black hole bends the light around it." Neat metaphor! Brigadier General James Wilkinson told some lies about Arnold that stuck for many years.



In 2016, a letter came to light that made historians see Arnold as the big hero of Saratoga. The letter appeared on Ebay. It was written by one Nathaniel Bacheller.

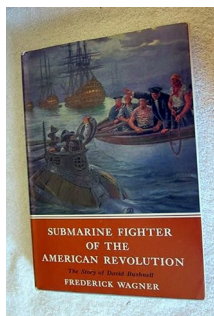
In the Q and A, Mr. Kelly was asked whether it was Peggy's goading that did the trick. No, says he, the low standing of women in those days make it unlikely that his wife wanting to go shopping in London turned this patriot against the nation he had worked so hard to create.

Jack Buchanan asked Mr. Kelly about Arnold's children. He fathered five sons by Peggy Shippen Arnold, and two more by a previous wife, also named Peggy. Dr. Joanne Grasso asked: Did Arnold know of Peggy Shippen's loyalism when he married her? Yes, the Shippens, like other wealthy Philadelphia families, leaned more toward the King than to Congress.

New London, Connecticut, Arnold's home town, burns him in effigy annually, but the effigy lacks the leg he lost at Saratoga. That leg remained loyal to American independence.

Mr. Kelly was briefly a member of the New York Round Table some years ago, when he wrote BAND OF GIANTS. He writes novels as well as history. He lives in Dutchess County, in the township of Milan, which is pronounced "MY-lan" locally.

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

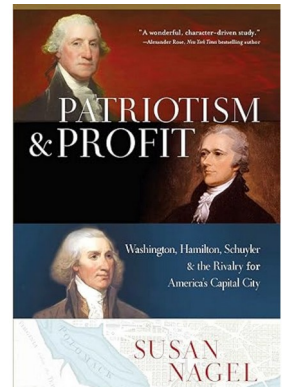


Our Facebook page manager Maria Dering now features book recommendations on the Round Table's page. Not new books, but Golden Oldies. Here's one from Chairman Jacobs: SUBMARINE FIGHTER OF THE AMERI-

CAN REVOLUTION: THE STORY OF DAVID BUSHNELL, Frederick Wagner, 1963. Both Jack Buchanan and your editor recommend Gordon Wood's THE RADICALISM OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, 1991.

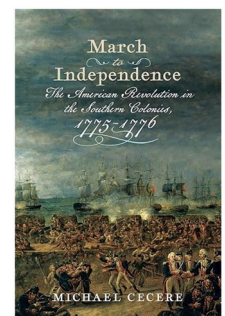
Also recommending books are Peter Feinman, of the Institute of History, Archeology and Education, and Round Table docent Michael Wolf. Feinman likes 1774: THE LONG YEAR OF REVOLUTION, by Mary Beth Norton (Vintage, 2020). Instead of focusing on Samuel Adams and the Sons of Liberty and the Tea Parties, Norton puts her spotlight on the Loyalists and the moderates like John Dickinson of Pennsylvania.

Michael Wolf, a docent at Fraunces Tavern Museum and the New-York Historical Society, finds merit in Susan Nagel's PATRIOTISM AND PROFIT: WASHINGTON, HAMILTON, SCHUYLER AND THE RIVALRY FOR AMERICA'S CAPITAL CITY



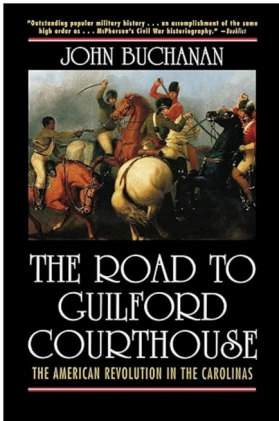
(Pegasus Books, 2021). Nagel claims that GW "coerced his way into masterminding" the siting of the Federal City. Wolf says Nagel debunks the "Room where it happened" story used by Lin-Manuel Miranda in his *Hamilton* musical, and used by certain Rev tour guides. But see, below, our October speaker's view of the same story.

At the June Zoom, the prolific author Jack Buchanan read his review of MARCH TO INDEPENDENCE: THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION IN THE SOUTHERN AMERICAN COLONIES, by Michael Cecere. To wit:



The author teaches history at Gloucester High School in Virginia. He has written several books on Virginia and Virginians during the war.

He maintains that there is a “dearth of writing of the Revolutionary War in the South prior to 1778.” And he’s generally right, although he fails to mention a widely known and still briskly-selling book published 24 years before his that thoroughly covers events in the Carolinas during that period. I refer to THE



ROAD TO GUILFORD COURTHOUSE: THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION IN THE CAROLINAS (1997), the first volume of my study of the war in the South. But to return to Mr. Cecere, his purpose is to address that “lack of attention.” And he succeeds, even though a claim in his introduction

does not initially lend confidence to his judgments, when he states that “most colonists desired reconciliation.” I disagree.

But in support of the author, how many readers have heard of the Battle of Great Bridge, fought in Virginia on 9 December 1775, a decisive victory by the Rebels against British regulars, Tories, and escaped slaves? I expect few. Or the Royal Governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, sending his wife to safety aboard a British warship, and that later *he* also fled to a warship. Or Royal Governor Josiah Martin in North Carolina so besieged by Rebels that he sent his family to New York City. He fails to mention Governor Martin’s claim in 1775 that he could raise 20,000 men to support George III, or that a year later Martin reduced that number to 9,000. And rightly so. The Tories, or Loyalists, were a minority in the South, especially in the Back Country. That is a key point that should have been emphasized.

There are two actions and one campaign with good coverage that bear notice: the Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge in North Carolina on

27 February 1775, in which Scottish Highlanders supporting the Crown were decisively defeated; The Battle of Sullivan’s Island in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina on 28 June 1776, another overwhelming Rebel victory; and the 1776 scorched earth campaign by the militia of both Carolinas and Virginia against the Cherokee. All three were described in detail in THE ROAD TO GUILFORD COURTHOUSE. In fact, the Battle of Sullivan’s Island was the first chapter in that book. The author does not mention that the Cherokee campaign knocked the Cherokee out of the war for the next four years. And it would have been helpful to readers if a letter had been quoted which tells why the southeastern Indians, unlike the Iroquois in New York, were an insignificant factor in the war in the South from beginning to end. On 23 August 1776, John Stuart, the excellent British Agent for Indian Affairs in the South, wrote to Lord Germain, who ran the war from London, “all the Southern Tribes are greatly dispirited by the unopposed successes of the Rebels, and no appearance of any Support from Government to his Majesty’s distressed subjects in the interior parts of the Provinces, or to the Indians who have engaged in His Majesty’s cause.”

Mr. Cecere, however, describes conditions and events in detail in a southern British province either not covered or barely covered by other writers, including me, East Florida. The people there were heavily dependent economically on Britain and were overwhelmingly pro-British. It was also a relatively isolated province and counted on British troops to protect them from Indians.

Overall, despite my few reservations, Mr. Cecere does a good job describing events in the South in 1775 and 1776. I recommend the book to readers.

INTRODUCING

BARBARA R. BLAKESLEE



Barbara is our new Book Review Coordinator. She stepped up, with refreshing alacrity, very soon after the untimely death of Lynne Saginaw, who had held the

position for many years. Here is Barbara in her own words:

As an American History aficionado, not an expert, I am so happy to be joining the Round Table and serving as your new Book Review Coordinator. In January of this year, I reconnected with my cousin Lynne Saginaw through a Zoom-based family circle. When we discovered our shared passion for American History (especially the Revolutionary Era), Lynne invited me to join ARRT-NY and I happily accepted. Soon afterward, we were all shocked to learn of Lynne's passing, and I found myself accepting the relaying of her baton and taking on this new role.

I grew up in NYC (Parkchester – the Bronx), spent 27 years in Boston, and have lived in Florida for the past 22 years. I turned 76 in July – so appropriate for this renewed devotion to the Spirit of '76. I majored in English and earned several graduate degrees in Public Policy and related fields, but never formally studied history. Then, in my mid 50s, I began an 11 year “encore career” teaching various subjects including US and World History to middle school students here in Florida. It was a bracing

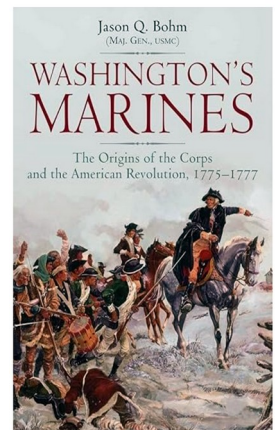
and exhilarating experience as I strove to stay “one step ahead of the posse,” immersing myself in furious bouts of reading and participating in many fabulous professional development courses for teachers of US History and Government. It is not true that you can stay one chapter ahead of the class and be fine. When the questions start coming (and they do!) you'd better be able to reach deep in your pocket if you hope to survive.

Now, in retirement, I am so happy to return to this great love, together with ARRT-NY's merry band. I've learned so much and have so much left to learn!

We have three alluring new books in search of reviewers. First come first served and, as always, if you review the book, you keep it. Contact Book Review Coordinator Barbara R. Blakeslee at brblakeslee@gmail.com to stake your claim.

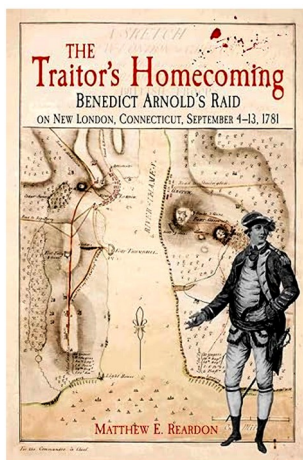
1. WASHINGTON'S MARINES: THE ORIGIN OF THE CORPS AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, 1774-1777, by Jason Q. Bohm (Maj. Gen., USMC). (Savas Beatie 2023).

Focuses on the birth of the Marines as a fighting force needed to fight the British on both land and sea and examines what really happened in its historical past vs myths and legends, and on the role of the Marines in pivotal campaigns of the Revolutionary War. James W. Lukeman, Major General, USMC, Ret. and President of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation, writes that “Through extensive research and engaging storytelling, [Jason Q.



Bohm] reveals that the multipurpose role the Marine Corps plays in our national defense today began with Washington's Marines in the Revolutionary War. Every Marine and student of the Revolutionary War will enjoy, and learn from, this book."

2. THE TRAITOR'S HOMECOMING: BENEDICT ARNOLD'S RAID ON NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT, SEPTEMBER 4-12, 1781, by Matthew E. Reardon. (Savas Beatie 2024).



It seems that America's most despised traitor, Benedict Arnold, is having a moment! Contrary to the belief of many (including your Book Review Coordinator), Arnold did not slink off to England and wither away in ignominy. In fact, he led a picture-perfect

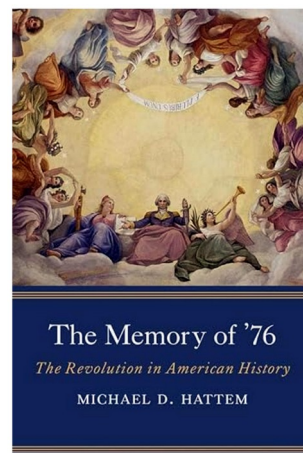
and successful attack on Fort Griswold, one which has ever since been ignored or mischaracterized here in the States. Advance praise includes a statement from historian John U. Rees, who says that this book "gives us a long-needed and well-sourced account of Arnold's... operation... and the atrocities... supposedly committed there. Reardon's careful research and narrative provide a discriminating and harrowing view of the entire affair... [S]eparates fact from myth... a compelling read."

3. THE MEMORY OF '76: THE REVOLUTION IN AMERICAN HISTORY, by Michael D. Hattem. ((Yale University Press 2024).

We are living through extraordinarily polarizing times here in America, but when we examine

American history, we discover that the country has frequently experienced equally polarizing times. And the meaning and role of the Revolution are often at the heart of this polarization. Exactly what did the Founders and the Framers of the Constitution mean? What are the true meanings of our founding documents? There has never really been consensus on these important questions and there is an urgent need to examine how the meaning and myths surrounding them affect us today.

Douglas Bradburn, president and CEO of George Washington's Mount Vernon, writes (in advance praise for this book) that "Describing the changing public memory of the American Revolution from the death of George Washington to the present, Hattem serves as an excellent guide to



making sense of the many ways the loud, raucous, and increasingly democratic people of the United States have fought over the role of the past in justifying their various political movements, commitments, and beliefs."

MELNICK ON BOARD

On the Round Table Board of Governors, that is. Long-time Round Tabler and author of LONG ISLAND CITY IN 1776, Richard Melnick, has accepted the Board's invitation to join that august body. Richard writes: "I am honored to be voted on to the ARRT-NY Board of Governors. I will give my very best to promote our events and goals. Now, when a person with a rich English Cockney accent says to me "Good evenin', Guvnah!" I can now say, since I am a Governor, "Yes, yes it is."

Speaking of the Board of Governors, it met on June 24th. No big changes. Treasurer Jon Carriel reports that we have 120 real members and 19 virtual ones. The Civil War Round Table of New York is doing all virtual meetings now; no dinners. Maria Dering reports that our Facebook page has 1,034 followers, up two to three hundred from last year. Possible future meeting places were discussed, such as public libraries.

IN THE NEWS

On Facebook, on May 28, someone wrote that “minute” (noun) and “minute” (adjective) should not be spelled the same way, to avoid confusion. Your editor replied “I have always wondered about those little, tiny New England militiamen who fell out in 60 seconds to fight the Redcoats.”

Peter Feinman, of the Institute of History, Archeology and Education, reminds us – with some urgency – that we are in the era of the SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL – the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. Feinman urges us to pressure elected officials to get moving on this. New York City does not have a committee on the Sem., and none of the boroughs has one either. New York State has such a committee, but it has no money and is doing nothing. New York City does plan a Tall Ships parade for early July, 2026, but that has nothing to do directly with the Revolution. Feinman recommends a list of goals for the Sem., including “seeking a shared national narrative” and striving for inclusivity.

2024 through 2026 is also the 200th anniversary of General Lafayette’s triumphant tour of the US in 1824-26.

ANNALS OF THE ROUND TABLE

Frederick Cookinham’s personal log, star date October 2, 2007:

Round Table: Tom Fleming gave an electrifying talk on his new book, THE PERILS OF PEACE. Jon Carriel gave his first book review, on BEN FRANKLIN AND HIS ELECTRIC KITE HOAX. Also electrifying.

OCTOBER SPEAKER

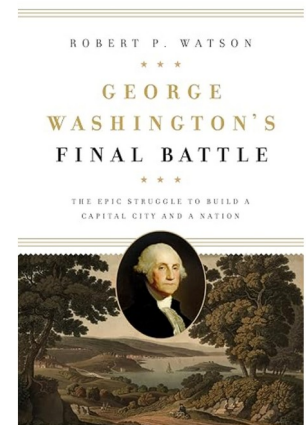
On Tuesday, October 1, at 7:30 p.m., Round Tablers will Zoom into a talk by Robert P.



Watson on his new book GEORGE WASHINGTON’S FINAL BATTLE: THE EPIC STRUGGLE TO BUILD A CAPITAL CITY AND A NATION. Our speaker is Distinguished Professor of

American History at Lynn University, and the author or editor of more than forty books. He is a frequent media commenter and activist who has founded three nonprofit think tanks (I’ve never found thinking very profitable either) dedicated to civic education, political reform, and fact-checking political campaigns.

General Washington had a direct role in planning the city that only he (out of modesty) called “the Federal City.” The little-known story of founding intrigue throws Washington’s political acumen into sharp relief and provides a historical lesson in leadership and consensus building that remains relevant today. See the review, above, of PATRIOTISM AND PROFIT for a different slant on the same story.



DEADLINE

Midnight, Tuesday, November 19 is the deadline for submissions for the December Broadside. Any news item related to the Rev is welcome, along with book recommendations, speaker recommendations, turtle soup recipes, the plans to the fort at West Point, or you name it. All members are urged to recommend, or disrecommend, books on the Rev, old books as well as new ones. Send in two boxtops and 25 cents in coins or stamps for your Dick Tracy Secret Decoder Ring!

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

The October Zoom meeting of the Round Table will start at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, October 1. The link that will get you into 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 Route Table of New York. Editor: [Frederick Cookinham](#). Electronic Publisher: [Jonathan Carriel](#). Past issues are available on our website: www.arrt-ny.org.