

BROADSIDE

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

December 2024

OCTOBER SPEAKER:

MR. WASHINGTON BUILDS HIS DREAM CITY

Dr. Robert P. Watson spoke to thirteen Round Tablers October 1st about his new book – the latest of over forty! – entitled *GEORGE WASHINGTON’S FINAL BATTLE: THE EPIC STRUGGLE TO BUILD A CAPITAL CITY AND A NATION*.

Watson’s lecture title was “Washington’s Washington.” His talk was a little shorter than most, and this left plenty of time for questions.



Salient points:

GW himself said that the debate over the Federal City had been the fiercest of any at the

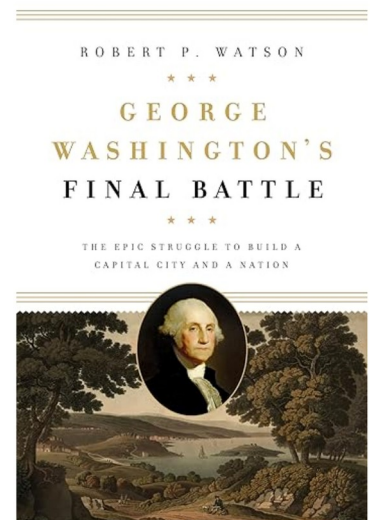
Constitutional Convention. It was even more contentious than the slavery debate. The Jeffersonians of the south wanted a federal *village*, not a city, foreseeing a very limited role for the federal government, and a greater role for the state and local governments. But when the federal city was sited in the south, and those southerners were making money leasing their

slaves for construction, then they wanted a big city.

The land for the city was cheap, because it was swamp land.

It was President Washington who rejected the idea of putting the federal government in any existing city. He wanted a city built from scratch, and one that would rival London, Paris and Rome. It was the President who chose the Commissioners

who would manage the city’s construction. It was the President who chose Pierre L’Enfant to lay out the streets, James Hoban to design the Presidential Palace, and William Thornton to design the Capitol. All three were immigrants. Watson says GW would have made a fine corporate headhunter. He knew talent when he saw it. L’Enfant agreed with the President about wanting a big city, but then L’Enfant was a diva and megalomaniac. Hoban designed an oval office because oval rooms were then an architectural fashion in Europe. The White



House has a flat roof only because Hoban ran out of money.

The new Federal City opened for business on November 1, 1800, so GW did not live to see it in operation. The city did not have complete acceptance by the American public until it was burned by the British in 1814. After that, it was seen as a martyr city.

Questions: What was Jefferson's role in the city's building? Jefferson was not above leaving fake news for historians to find. We have no corroboration from any other participant to back up TJ's account of the dinner at his rented quarters on Maiden Lane at which he claims to have made the deal with Hamilton to go along with the latter's Assumption plan in exchange for the new Federal City to be sited in the south.

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

Jack Buchanan has filed this report:

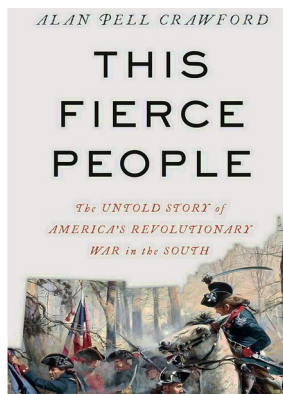
Alan Pell Crawford, *This Fierce People: The Untold Story of America's Revolutionary War in the South* (New York: Knopf, 2024)

"Untold Story?" On the contrary, Mr. Crawford is a Johnny-come-lately. His bibliography contains 20 important and widely known books focused directly on the War in the South, all but one published in the 21st century prior to his book.

After noting that many commanders and other ranks were filled with slaveholders, which is true, Mr. Crawford concludes, "It is not surprising that historians in our own time have had little inclination to chronicle the war in the South, much less to credit the contribution of white southerners to the establishment of the new nation." What arrant nonsense!

To mention only books on the southern campaign published over the last two decades, it didn't stop me from writing a

2-volume history (1987, 2019) of the southern campaign -- "in our own time." It didn't stop Rod Andrew from writing his excellent biography (2017) of the sterling partisan Andrew Pickens; or Larry Babits from producing his superb history of the game-changing Battle of Cowpens (1998); or Larry and Josh Howard from writing the definitive book on the Battle of Guilford Courthouse (2009), which sent Cornwallis to Yorktown; or John Beakes from bringing attention to two relatively unknown but important characters, Otho Holland Williams (2015) and Johann de Kalb (2019); or Carl Borick who described the siege of Charleston (2003); or Bert Dunkerly's works on King's Mountain (2007), Ninety Six (2006), and other places; or Walter Edgar's *Partisans and Redcoats* (2001); or Christian McBurney's *Dark Voyage* (2022); or Bobby Moss's *African American Patriots in the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War* (2004), or Jim Piecuch's *Three Peoples, One King* (2008); or the late Michael Scoggins' *The Day it Rained Militia* (2005); or Andrew Waters' book on Nathaniel Greene and Thomas Sumter; or Steve Smith's *Francis Marion and the Snow's Island Community* (2021), and Steve's expert excavations at Fort Motte, property of a slaveholder. I could go on . . . all "in our own time."



Nor does the author get off to an auspicious start when he states that at the Battle of Camden in 1780 a British army commanded by Cornwallis "annihilated the main Continental army under General Horatio Gates . . ." (p.10) Annihilated? No! Heavy casualties, yes, and routed, but enough got away to form the nucleus of the army that,

under another commander, won the southern campaign.

The author confuses (p.25) the failed British assault on Sullivan's Island in Charleston's harbor in 1776 with the successful British siege of Charleston in 1780.

British Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton, in his march to catch Colonel Abraham Buford's Virginia Continentals, was not also bent on capturing the "increasingly troublesome Thomas Sumter" (p.46), for Sumter at that point wasn't even troublesome. His house happened to be on Tarleton's route so he burned it.

Horatio Gates was not "a capable battlefield commander," (p.55), as he would demonstrate at the Battle of Camden. In the night skirmish prior to the following day's battle, the author has Gates riding "to the front of the line" and telling one of his aides "that it was his duty to be wherever it was most necessary to give orders." (he cites a secondary source.) Given Gates' record, that is dubious. At the battle the next day, Gates stayed 200 yards or more behind the front lines.

Crawford repeats (p.96) the old canard that at the Battle of Brandywine British Major Patrick Ferguson had General George Washington in the sights of his highly accurate rifle and could have killed him had he not resisted shooting him in the back. Ferguson went to his grave convinced he had spared the indispensable man. His source is not convincing. Two good sources refuted the story. Captain Alexander Graydon of 3rd Pennsylvania had seen Washington often and was adamant that "no one acquainted with the style of General Washington's costume during the war, or any time, can suppose it to have been him" The second source offers even harder evidence. The New York Tory James P. De Lancey, Ferguson's second in command and by his side during the incident, had conversed and dined with

Washington in 1774. De Lancey married James Fenimore Cooper's daughter, and Cooper wrote that his son-in-law "to whom the person of Washington was . . . well known, constantly affirmed that his commander was mistaken." (For an account of this incident, see John Buchanan, *The Road to Valley Forge*, pp.237-238, & citations.)

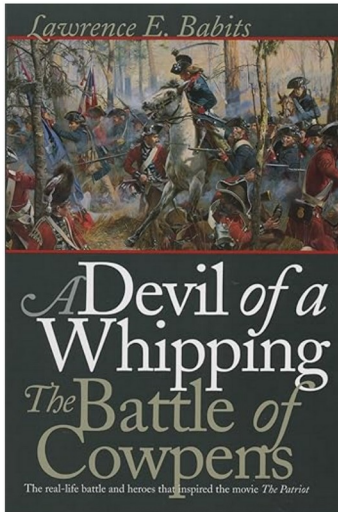
Prior to the Battle of King's Mountain, the North Carolina militia commander Colonel Benjamin Cleveland and his command did not, as the author alleges, meet the Overmountain Men in their territory west of the Appalachians (p.121). He met them east of the mountains, and in fact, on the next page Crawford has Cleveland meeting them in Morgantown, North Carolina, which is correct.

An example of careless citing of sources: Nathanael Greene to Samuel Huntington, 28 December 1780, in Showman, *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 9. Is that volume 9 – there are 13 volumes – or p.9. It turns out to be p.9 in volume 7. For multi-volume works one always cites volume and page. I learned that as an undergraduate 64-odd years ago.

Crawford claims that "Cornwallis had instructed his agents to bring the Indians into the war, which they did" (p.151) He does not cite a source for this statement and is obviously ignorant of Cornwallis' letter of 7/3/1780 to Lt. Col. Nisbet Balfour instructing him to "explain to Colonel [Thomas] Brown in the most positive manner that I wish to keep the Indians in good humour, but on no account whatever to bring them forward or employ them." After receiving a letter (6/28/1780) from Brown on the importance of the Indians, Cornwallis wrote directly to Brown (7/17/1780) that he desired the Indians "be kept in good humour . . . but I would on no account employ them on any operations of war." And he made it clear that was not only

his stand on the issue but also his superior's, Sir Henry Clinton: "it is not the intention of the Commander in Chief to make any military use of the Indians . . ."

The author does not do battles well.



At the Battle of Cowpens, Crawford has a British cavalry charge (p.177) on the American right leading to an American withdrawal. But he does not mention that the cavalry action was in concert with 71st Highland infantry. His short

description of this key battle would have benefited from a careful reading of Lawrence Babits definitive *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens*.

In his account of the Battle of Hobkirk's Hill, he states (p.241) that the "reasons . . . are still unclear" for the poor performance of the "ordinarily reliable Marylanders" when actually they are quite clear. And it was just 1st Maryland, 2nd Maryland stood fast.

Following Thomas Sumter's defeat at Quinby Plantation, Francis Marion and Light Horse Harry Lee, furious with Sumter over his tactics and their losses, gathered their respective commands and left. Crawford calls this "outright insubordination." (p.260) Not so. General Greene's orders to both men before they set out on Sumter's Dog Days expedition were, to Marion, "cooperate with him in any manner he may direct," but Marion commanded a force separate from Sumter's. And Greene gave Lee discretion to act as his "judgement may direct."

The important Battle of Eutaw Springs, the last battle in which the British

in the Carolinas could field an army, is told in a little over one page. (283-84)

The author wrote, "The idea that the American Revolution ended at Yorktown is a myth, and a recently minted one at that." (p.299) I don't know of any writer who claimed that the Revolution ended at Yorktown, for the Revolution went on after the war and one could argue is still going on. The Revolutionary War, however, is another matter. When Cornwallis lost his army at Yorktown he lost America, and that is not a myth. Politically the war was over. On 25 November 1781, over a month after the disaster, Lord Germain, Secretary of State for America, brought the news to the first minister, Lord North, and reported that North cried out, "Oh, God. It is All Over." North was right, even though stubborn George III and Germain remained steadfast. It took a few months for reality to sink in, but in early December North told Parliament there would be no more offensive operations in America and Cornwallis' lost army would not be replaced. In early February Germain resigned. In late February the House of Commons voted to abandon the war in America. On 20 March North's ministry fell. Seven days later the opposition formed a new ministry whose policy was to withdraw the army from the mainland.

I cannot recommend this book.

We will expand our definition of books for a moment, and include audio tape cassettes. Your editor finds, on his bookshelf, a tape set called BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: DIPLOMAT. This is a set of three cassettes totaling four and a half hours of narration. It was recorded in 1988 by Recorded Books, Inc. The narrator is reading Franklin's own informal record of his affairs, intimate negotiations, and secret deals.

The narrator here is Adrian Cronauer, who served as the basis of Robin Williams' character in the movie GOOD MORNING, VIETNAM.

IN THE NEWS

JIM DAVIS, 1949-2024

Our long-time Treasurer, and founder of another Round Table, Jim Davis, passed away September 11, 2024.

Jim was the Treasurer of the New York RT from the early 1980s, having joined the RT in the early 70s. When Jim retired in 2012, he moved to Fredericksburg, Virginia and founded the Fredericksburg Round Table.

Jim was also briefly active in New York's Village Light Opera Group, participating in a



Jim Davis at the ARRT-NY's 50th Anniversary party, with Deborah Litwak, music director of *1776*, and Belén Negrón Cookinham, who was its producer.

joint production with the Philbeach Society, a London Gilbert & Sullivan group. In 2009, Jim arranged for the VLOG to entertain the RT on the occasion of its 50th anniversary. The group did an abbreviated concert version of the musical *1776* at the Williams Club.

Archival research has revealed a Rev-related cartoon in the February 1969 issue of *Playboy*. It shows young George Washington standing next to a chopped cherry tree, with an ax in his hand. He is being confronted by his father. Young George says "...and Father, that's not all." Behind George stands a maid, very, very pregnant. Well, maybe "employee" should be the word.

The Broadside is always on the lookout for examples like that, of the lasting memory of our Revolution and its famous, and not famous, and infamous, characters, in today's popular culture. Keep those cards and letters coming in, folks!

Maria Dering, who has maintained the Round Table's Facebook page for several years, is handing that responsibility over to Andrea Meyer. Andrea has agreed to take the post only temporarily, though. We need someone well-versed in Facebook and social media generally to become our new permanent Facebook Page Manager. And we are still looking for a permanent Treasurer to replace Jon Carriel.

Thank you, Maria, for your service as Facebook Page Manager. Thank you, Andrea Meyer, for picking up the ball.

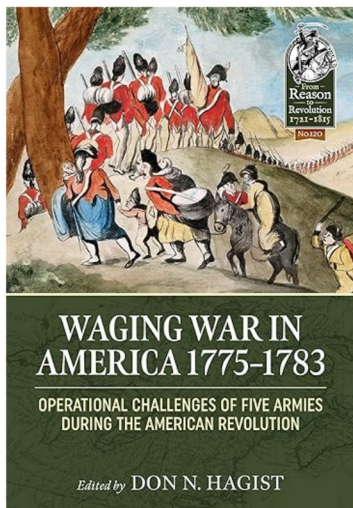
Maria is also resigning from the Board, creating a vacancy there too.

Finally, we also need a new Book Review Coordinator. Barbara Blakeslee would like to pass that baton to some kind volunteer. The next

BRC need only see that the volunteer reviewer gets a copy of the book from the publisher, directly. No need for the publisher to send a copy of a book to the BRC, who then has to send it to the reviewer. We are streamlining the operation.

DECEMBER SPEAKER

At our December Zoom meeting, we will hear from Don Hagist, on his new book, *WAGING WAR IN AMERICA: OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES OF FIVE ARMIES DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION*. Hagist is the managing editor of the *Journal of the*



American Revolution (www.allthings-liberty.com). He is an independent researcher, and lives in Rhode Island, where he works as an engineering consultant. His historical specialty is the lives and material culture of British soldiers in

the Revolutionary War. He uses nothing but primary sources in his research, including regimental muster rolls, personal accounts, pension records, and orderly books. He is a consultant for an upcoming PBS documentary on the American Revolution. He has written several recent books for the Westholme and Helion publishing companies.

Mr. Hagist sends the following message:

The US distributor of the book, Casemate Publishing, has set up a 25% discount code for attendees of my talks who order the book; if they go to this site and use my last name as the discount code, they'll get 25% off:

<https://www.casematepublishers.com/9781804513460/waging-war-in-america-1775-1783/>

DEADLINE

Midnight, Tuesday, January 14, 2025 is the deadline for all submissions to the February 2025 *Broadside*. Any news item related to the American Revolution is welcome. The new year, 2025, will be the 250th anniversary of the battles of Lexington and Concord and the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, so there ought to be lots of items reported in print and broadcast media pertaining to the Rev. Send submissions to the editor, Fred Cookinham, at fcookinham@juno.com. Thanks!

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

The December Zoom meeting will convene at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, December 3, 2024. The link to the meeting is in the same email that this *Broadside* came in.

Yr most Obdt svt,
Dr. David W. Jacobs