

BROADSIDE

The Newsletter of the
American Revolution Round Table of New York

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

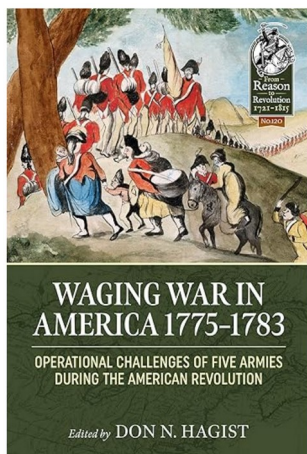
February 2025

DECEMBER SPEAKER:

HAGIST ON THE FIVE ARMIES OF THE REVWAR

Eighteen Round Tablers – some rounder than others – met through the magic of Zoom last night for the December pow wow, and heard author Don N. Hagist explain the trials and tribulations of eighteenth-century armies.

Our speaker is the editor of the *Journal of the American Revolution*. He lives in Rhode Island. The subject of his talk last night was his new

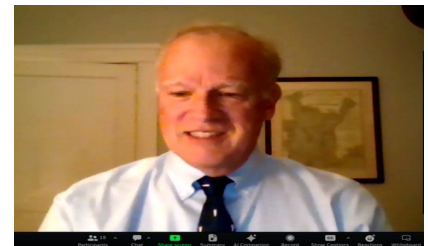


book, WAGING WAR IN AMERICA: 1775-1783: OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES OF FIVE ARMIES DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

Mr. Hagist was actually the editor of the book and not the author. He explained that he himself wrote only 1/9 of the book,

which was published in paperback in 2023 by Helion and Company.

The book, he said, came about almost by accident. The publisher wanted a collection of chapters dealing with challenges in the operations of European armies in the 18th century, but when Mr. Hagist and his colleagues submitted their chapters, they found that all of the authors had chosen the American Revolutionary War as their theater of operations, so Helion decided to make this book about that war alone.




The armies in question were those of the US, the UK, France, Spain, and the German principalities renting soldiers to King George. Hesse was not the only such principality. (By the way, if you submit an article to Mr. Hagist's *Journal*, do not make the common mistake of calling the Hessians “mercenaries.” A mercenary is an *individual* professional soldier who rents himself out. The soldiers of the German states were conscripts: it was the *Counts* who rented their soldiers out, and pocketed the proceeds. Few writers about the Revwar seem to understand this, so here's a big HALLELUJAH! to Mr. Hagist! Also, avoid using titles in the form: “The ___ That Saved the American Revolution.” It is overused.)

Why does the book not include a chapter on the Native American forces in the Revwar? The publisher did not have enough time to find an author on that subject. This was in response to a question from member Bob Wong.

Other salient points of Mr. Hagist's talk:

General Omar Bradley said "Amateurs study tactics. Professionals study logistics." The five armies of the Revwar faced challenges in logistics, training, discipline, recruiting, politics, and budget.

Mutiny in the Continental Army
Krysten Blackstone
Conventional thinking: American troops were obedient, disciplined and unified
Reality: They mutinied. A lot.



Discipline was a big one for the Americans. The Continental Army had far more mutinies than their European counterparts. Mutinies accounted for 6% of all Continental Army courts martial. And Americans did not all volunteer willingly. They were drafted. It was hard to get and keep regiments up to strength. The entire British Army, though, was volunteer.

Loyalist militia was separate from American regiments in the British Army itself.

It is a myth that the Brits and Germans were unable to adapt to frontier fighting. They both had many men trained in rapid movement and skirmishing. But not all regiments had equal training.

One third of the French Army in America was German speaking. The French government shipped over all the Germans they had, in hopes that they could encourage the Royalist Germans to desert.

The people of Rhode Island, where the French landed, were not welcoming to these monarchistic, Catholic strangers. In the Question Time, Chairman Jacobs asked Mr. Hagist how that squares with Rhode Island being the state with the highest percentage of Catholics of any state. That came later, Mr. Hagist replied, after the Irish Potato Famine.

Lastly, and most importantly, Helion offers a 25% discount to buyers from the ARRT-NY!

There were questions from Chairman Jacobs, Dr. Joanne Grasso, Bob Wong, and Andrea Meyer. Did Americans adapt British and German methods during the war? Yes. General Steuben's famous Blue Book – his manual of arms for the Continental Army – was adapted from the manuals he had used in the Prussian Army. General Washington had a list of five or ten British military manuals that he recommended. There were many other examples. The Continental Army used a British book on spy methods, which included the famous invisible ink trick. A former Round Table speaker, John Nagy, said that John Jay's brother, who lived in London throughout the war, invented invisible ink, or at least one formula for it. But that secret formula has never been found, so no one knows whether Mr. Jay invented it or just read it in a British book on spy methods.

Did the US learn methods from the British Navy? Mr. Hagist does not know – the Navy is outside his area of expertise.

Was "friendly fire" a big problem on the frontier? Mr. Hagist did not know – the frontier was, again, outside his area of expertise. (A speaker or writer should never be afraid to say

“I don’t know.” We live in the age of specialization.) In big battles, yes, friendly fire was a big problem, as at Germantown. And at Bunker Hill, some Brits were killed by friendly fire.

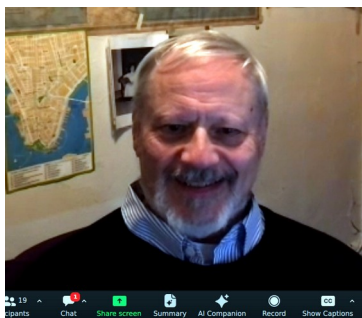
Dr. Grasso asked “Can it be fairly said that the French won the war?” Yes and no. An American victory without French help would have been unlikely, but it would be going too far to say that they won the war, period.

Finally, what will your next book be about? It will cover the wives and children of British soldiers in America.

At the meeting, Chairman Jacobs announced a Board of Governors meeting in January. Speakers Committee Chair Grasso let us know that all three spring speakers have been arranged. April’s guest will speak on Alexander Hamilton. June’s talk will be by Jack Warren, on his book FREEDOM: THE ENDURING IMPORTANCE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS

Member Fred Cookinham reviewed THE MEMORY OF '76: THE REVOLUTION IN AMERICAN HISTORY, by Michael D. Hattem,

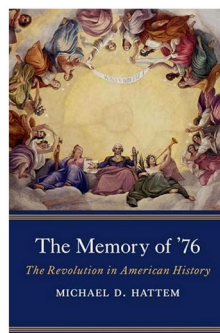


Haven Teachers Institute.

The author surveys the changing perceptions of, and especially the changing uses of, the memory

of the American Revolution among succeeding generations of Americans.

Hattem finds that the uses and perceptions fall into six broad stages. Up to 1826, the American culture sought to democratize the memory of the Revolution; in the run-up to the Civil War, the culture naturally sought to sectionalize it; and after a few more changes, the 21st century seeks to criticize the Revolution for not being up to the standards of our era on the point of inclusivity.



Hattem’s book reflects a lot of research, and a lot of analysis. He shows us how Lincoln invoked the Revolution against slavery while the advocates of slavery did the same *for* slavery. He shows how the memory of '76 was used, in the 1960s and later, by both black separatists and black integrationists.

Hattem has found a number of interesting stories that were new to this reviewer. We all know and snicker at Parson Mason Weems and his cherry tree story. Hattem points out that George Washington was not, and was not known as, a particularly religious man, until Weems targeted his book at a religious audience. Hattem tells the story of the Freedom Train – a new one on me – a train that traveled around the country in 1948 displaying the originals of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and other Revolutionary documents.

He shows how the difference between the Declaration and the Constitution, and what each implies, has been used and re-used by scholars and politicians. Hattem also tells the story of Nixon and the musical *1776*, and does so fairly and dispassionately. He is equally fair and dispassionate in evaluating the 1619 Project.

Hattem comes up with a good button to tie up the end of his epilogue: “But in recent years, following the success of decades-long efforts to include historically marginalized and oppressed groups in both the popular memory of the Revolution and American history generally, the questions have now shifted from who gets to be included to who gets to be *centered*.” In that line, Hattem reaches the happy conclusion that progress has been made.

Long time Round Tabler Victor Miranda has volunteered to replace outgoing Book Review Co-ordinator Barbara Blakeslee. The new 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 volunteer reviewer. We are streamlining the operation. We will introduce you to Vic next issue.

One book is still on offer to any member who would like to review it at a future meeting. WASHINGTON’S MARINES: THE ORIGIN OF THE CORPS AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, 1774-1777, by Jason Q. Bohm (Major General, USMC). Please contact the editor, fcookinham@juno.com to review this book. Thanks!

Chairman Dave Jacobs will review THE TRAITOR’S HOMECOMING: BENEDICT ARNOLD’S RAID ON NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT SEPTEMBER 4-12, 1781, by Matthew E. Reardon, at the February meeting.

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

IN THE NEWS

Peter Feinman, of the Institute of History, Archaeology and Education, reports that there is a *Journal of the Early Republic* (didn’t know

that), and its current issue is devoted to “America 250”: the nationwide celebration of the “semiquincentennial” of the American Revolution.

Former Presidents Bush and Obama, and their wives, have been appointed Honorary Co-Chairpersons of the Commission. The Commission wants to develop a “new national narrative for the 21st century.” They want to send the world the message that the world is a better place because of the United States, and they want this new narrative to “confront the ugly actions which have occurred in American History.” That, after all, is the difference between history and fiction. In history, you can’t expect pure heroes and pure villains. You have to take the bad with the good.

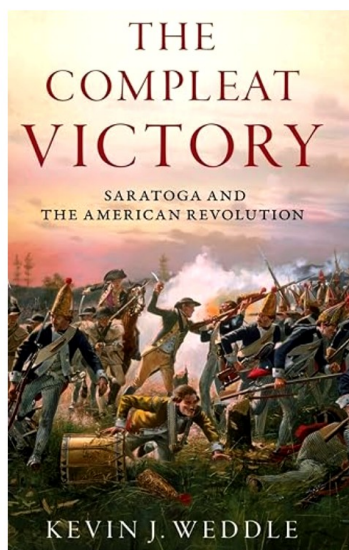
Feinman will soon put up on his website a summary of the plans for celebrations in the NYC area.

Speakers Committee Chair Dr. Joanne Grasso is trying to find where John Adams lived in NYC while serving as Vice President. No luck so far. I thought it was Richmond Hill, near today’s Varick and Charlton Streets, but maybe not. Any clues?

Just this morning, at a junk shop in Woodside, Queens, your editor found an LP record (remember those?) called “*Curso de Ciudadania Americana*.” Course in American Citizenship. At first, I thought it meant “Curse of American Civilization,” and certain Latin American leaders of the past may have preferred that translation, but it is a citizenship course in English and Spanish, and what caught my eye was the dollar bill portrait of GW on the cover. I saw that cover and I thought it was going be “George Washington’s Greatest Hits.” Always good to see our revolutionary hero remembered in today’s culture.

FEBRUARY SPEAKER

At the February Zoom meeting, our speaker will be Kevin Weddle, author of **THE COMPLEAT VICTORY: SARATOGA AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**. The book was published by Oxford University Press in 2021. It



was awarded the Gilder Lehrman Prize for Military History, the most prestigious book award in the field.

The unexpected American victory at Saratoga is what persuaded King Louis of France to throw in with the rebellious Americans. But the victory

also boosted American support for independence, and it turned many Britons against their own King's war policy.

Kevin Weddle is a graduate of West Point, and served in the US Army for 28 years, retiring as a colonel. He is the multiple award-winning author of critically acclaimed and best-selling books and articles and is an accomplished public speaker.

DEADLINE

Midnight Tuesday, March 11 is the deadline for submissions to the April **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.

Please contact **BROADSIDE** Editor Fred Cookinham at fcookinham@juno.com.

Our February Zoom meeting will convene at 7:30, Tuesday, February 4. 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.arrrt-ny.org.
