



*Tampa Chapter  
Sons of the American Revolution  
March 2022*

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## March meeting

The next meeting of the Tampa Chapter Sons of the American Revolution will be held on Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup>. We will be meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the old University Mall on Fowler Ave. Drive to the backside of the mall. You will see a parking garage. Go to the 2nd floor and park. Enter through the door, walk straight until you reach a big hallway, turn right. Walk 15-20 feet and the room will be on your left.

We'll be recognizing Jeff Lubinski, our essay contest winner and presenting him with a check from state for finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> in the state contest. Jeff will explain to the chapter why he wrote about John Paul Jones and what he learned about Jones. Following his presentation Compatriot Bob Yarnell will field questions about the Revolutionary Note columns.

## February Meeting

Our February meeting was a tour of the American Victory ship. Based on the reports and pictures, a good time was had by all.



SS American Victory is a Victory ship which saw brief service in the Pacific Theater of Operations during the final months of World War II, Korean War from 1951-1954, and Vietnam

War from 1967-1969. Built in June 1945, she carried ammunition and other cargo from U.S. West Coast ports to Southeast Asia, then ferried cargo, equipment and troops back to the U.S. after the war ended. She survived two typhoons and one hurricane. She sailed around the world twice

## **American Revolution Note**

### Bancroft, Myth making and Whig History

The last few months we've been looking at the various historiography schools and how they are taught today. Next month we'll look at George Bancroft and the Bancroft school. But before getting to Bancroft, it is necessary to spend some time explaining the Whig Theory of History.

This is different from Whig political theory, although Whig politicians in England in the late 1700's and into the 1800's believed they were the living embodiment of Whig history (small w). And it has nothing to do with the Whig political party that formed in the 1830's in the US and lasted until the Civil War.

Simply put, the Whig view of history is that all of history is an upward march from the dark to the light. A step-by-step advance to a better world categorized by ever increasing freedom and liberty triumphing over power. That at any given point in history things were better than they had been before, and all was as it should be.

Th. Jefferson in his book Notes on Virginia gives as good a summation of the Whig view of history as you'll find. The Anglo-Saxons went to England and set up a society based on private property, free trade, and an elected King. The Normans invaded and imposed on England a feudal system, taking away the property and rights of the Saxons. Slowly but surely, they rolled back the Norman system. At Runnymede the English Barons forced King John to sign the Magna Charta. Under pressure for money for his wars, Edward I established Parliament to give towns representation. Following the upheaval of the English Civil War in the mid 1600's, the Glorious Revolution of 1688 established the supremacy of Parliament. Looking backwards, if all you view are these high points, history does look like a march towards progress.

The twentieth century was not kind to Whig history. It is hard to make the case that the trenches of WWI or the concentration camps of WWII were a step forward and represented the best of all possible worlds. However, Whig history experienced a revival in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The prime example of this is Francis Fukuyama's book The End of History in which he makes the argument that the entire world would now be governed by liberal democracies everywhere. Good had won. Evil had been defeated. We were living in the best of times and in the best of all possible worlds. All of history had led to this point.

I'm sure you are seeing there are problems with the Whig view of history. It views history as deterministic. In other words, history goes according to a plan. That plan is always for the best. The next decade or century will be better. This is an example of the problem of reading history backwards through the prism of a pre-determined conclusion. As I have argued before, to study history properly you must read history forward not backward.

Whig theory views history backwards and cherry picks evidence to prove that history is a process of constant progress towards a better world. Bradley Birzer, History professor at

Hillsdale college, in an essay entitled "Thomas Jefferson, Whig Historian", had this to say about Jefferson's history section in Notes on Virginia,

"Modern historians would rightly note that Jefferson's understanding of history was, at worst, simply incorrect, and, at best mythical. Little, however, does this matter. Jefferson believed it and most Americans believed it. And in their belief, they acted."

When referring to the writing of the Declaration, Birzer continues,

" As a good Anglo-Saxon he was enacting his Liberty against George III's power. As such, Jefferson and America were not only righting a wrong; they were also preventing a wrong from ever occurring again."

Thomas Babington Macaulay, British historian in the mid-1800's is credited with the first extensive history of England using Whig theory as its base. As I mentioned a few months ago British historian George Trevelyan was another prominent Whig historian.

The Whig historian you may be most familiar with is Winston Churchill. While stationed in India, Churchill had his mother send him Macaulay's history. Churchill read it over and over. Macaulay influenced the way Churchill wrote history. His 4 volume History of the English-Speaking Peoples is pure Whig history. In some ways it is more literature than history. It is the sweeping epic adventure of the march of progress and the eventual triumph of liberal democracy in England and America. Interestingly, Churchill ends it in 1900. A moment in time that could be used to make the point that we are at the best of all possible worlds. The British Empire was at its height. The US had begun to spread out as a result of the Spanish-American War. Progress was all around. All of history had been a journey to this point.

With this as background we can proceed next month to a discussion of George Bancroft who took the Whig theory of history and applied it to American history from colonial days until late 1800's.

(See Bob Yarnell's Addendum to this Essay at the end of the Newsletter)

## **Program Schedule**

Dates for the spring are below. Feel free to pass along any program/speaker suggestions to either President Charles Krug, VPs Robbie Robinson, Roger Roscoe or Sec. Bob Yarnell

Mar 19	Jeff Lubinski—Tampa Chapter essay winner & Q&A with Bob Yarnell
Apr 16	JROTC recognition
May 21	EMT recognition (possible Heroism recognition)
Sep 17	Presentation on the port by Compatriot Klug

Please let one of the officers know if you would be interested in an informal get-together over the summer.

## **New Members**

We have received notification that the membership application for **Christopher Meredith** has been approved.

## Color Guard Events and Opportunities

March 26	Commemoration of the Battle of Thomas Creek	Jacksonville
May 6	Commemoration of the Battle of Pensacola	Pensacola (tentative)
May 10	Honor Flight	Clearwater/St Petersburg Airport (new date)
May 30	Memorial Day	
Jun 14	Honor Flight	Clearwater/St Petersburg Airport

We can never have enough Color Guardsmen. If any of you have any interest in joining the Color Guard, please contact Dick Young, Chapter Commander or any of the members of the Tampa Chapter Color Guard. If you do not want to start with the full Continental Line uniform, we can show you how to get started with a militia "uniform" with much less cost.

## Addendum to Revolutionary Notes

*I am writing this addendum after I have already sent the newsletter to Dick Young for his finishing touches. I've asked him to add them into the newsletter.*

I subscribe to the BBC History Magazine. In this month's issue they have the results of a poll of British historians to identify Britain's 12 Greatest Monarchs. The usual suspects are there—Henry II, Henry VII, Henry VIII, Victoria, both Elizabeth I and Elizabeth II but also making the cut is George III.

The title of the section about him is "Champion of the Constitution". I'm going to quote some parts of it to make two points. First George III has always been better thought of in England than America and second, that the declassification of the George III papers is having a bigger impact on the history community than anyone might have predicted.

"George III instituted an invention of genius: the limited constitutional monarchy that we enjoy today, and which provides a bulwark against megalomania and political extremism. When he came to the throne in 1760, the monarchy had enormous power, especially over the appointment of individual cabinet ministers and lord chancellors. It wasn't out of the question for a monarch to refuse royal assent to a parliamentary bill. The prime minister did not consider himself the head of government."

"By the time George died, though, cabinet ministers owed responsibility to the prime minister, who, since the appointment of Wm Pitt the younger, had become undoubtedly the central figure in the government."

"By 1811 it was inconceivable that that the king might veto a parliamentary bill. It is a great irony that in the US, George III is still widely regarded as a tyrant. This despite the fact that he revered the constitution, as established by the Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689, which so influenced the later US constitution."

"George's greatest legacy today is to be found in the modern monarchy, so much of which is due to him rather than the person who usually gets credit—his granddaughter Queen Victoria. And, in a deeper sense George III also, set the tone for the modern monarchy. When we look at Elizabeth II, we see the same sense of financial prudence, a capacity for hard work and commitment to duty as her great-great-great-great grandfather King George III."

My quick note—this redefining of George III (based on evidence, not revisionist spin) gives greater credibility to the constitutional and imperial schools of American Revolution historiography. It destroys the Namier school and brings the credibility of the ideological school and, as you'll see next month, the Bancroft school into serious question.

### **Miscellaneous Reminders**

The face book page for the Tampa Sons of the American Revolution is Tampa Sar. The password to add anything is American1776.

Please feel free to upload pictures or comments. Invite all your friends to look.

Chapter Website—remember you can find information about the chapter and programs on the chapter website. <http://www.tampasar.org/>

One of the duties of the Chapter Chaplain is to send cards to our members that are sick. Another is to send a sympathy card to the family of a member who has passed away. If you know of anyone that should be the recipient of these cards, please mention it to Chaplain Balencie or one of the other officers at our next meeting.