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THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION INSTITUTE

**News, Events, and Commentary
from the American Revolution Institute
of the Society of the Cincinnati**

today

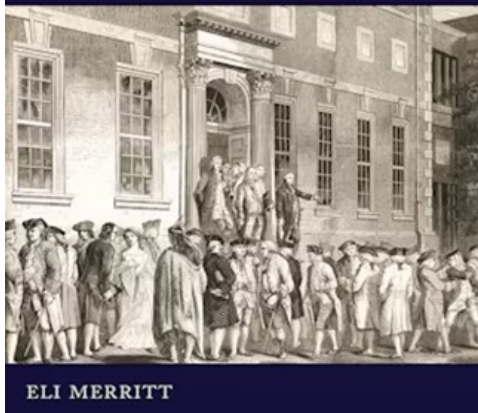
June 1, 2024

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Our Featured Story: The 2024 Society of the Cincinnati Book Prize

DISUNION AMONG OURSELVES

THE
Perilous Politics
OF THE American Revolution



We are pleased to announce the recipient of the 2024 Society of the Cincinnati Prize—Dr. Eli Merritt for his book *Disunion Among Ourselves: The Perilous Politics of the American Revolution* (University of Missouri Press, 2023)! This work explores political divisions that assailed the Continental Congress and reveals the regional forces that threatened to break apart the United States' first government. But instead of disbanding, these founders managed to unite for the sake of liberty and self-preservation, forging bold compromises including the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the Mississippi-Fisheries Compromise of 1779, and the ratification of the Articles of Confederation in 1781 that helped the young nation to band together.

Merritt's study of disunion and fear of domestic civil war contributes to the knowledge of the lasting influence of the political rhetoric from the American Revolution and shows how our national union was achieved through compromises made for the sake of peacekeeping and self-preservation

Eli Merritt is a political historian at Vanderbilt University where he researches the ethics of democracy, the interface of demagogues and democracy, and the founding principles of the United States. He received his B.A. in history and M.A. in ethics at Yale University, in addition to an M.D. at Case Western Reserve University.

[Learn more about the Prize](#)

[Watch Dr. Merritt's presentation on his book](#)

This Month in Revolutionary History: The Battle of Sullivan's Island

On the eve of the Revolutionary War, Charleston, South Carolina, was the most prosperous city in the thirteen American colonies as well as the most populated community in the South. By 1776, the South



Carolina port town became the target of the British navy.

On June 28, 1776, a British naval force consisting of four frigates and a bomb ketch opened fire on the unfinished American fort on Sullivan's Island in Charleston Harbor. Located on the southwestern edge of the island, the fort (soon to be renamed Fort Moultrie) could direct fire upon any opposing vessels intent on reaching Charleston. For a naval attack to succeed, the fort had to be neutralized. Meanwhile, British general Henry Clinton began a diversionary land attack against Sullivan's

Island. The firepower the British had to hand should have been unsurmountable, however, owing to pilot error, duplicity, or some other factor, the British ships did not sail close enough to the fort to bring their guns to the most effective range. On top of this, the American defenses were constructed from logs of the spongy palmetto tree alternated with packed sand, which neutralized the force of any British shot that did strike true.

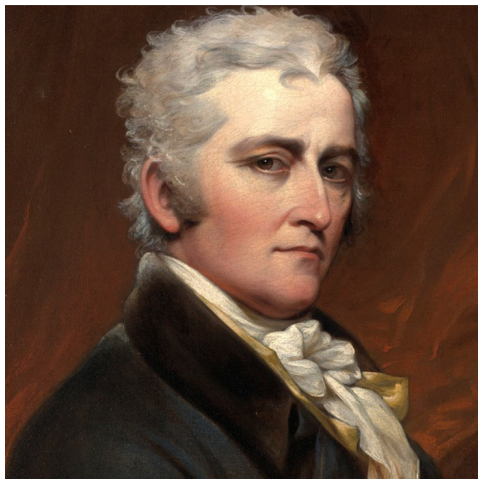
The defense of Charleston was in the hands of the newly arrived general and head of the Southern Department, Charles Lee. As for Sullivan's Island, this was garrisoned by men of the Second South Carolina Regiment under the command of Col. William Moultrie. An additional three British ships were ordered to fire on Sullivan's Island from the west. Subsequently, all three became grounded; two were later refloated but the *Acteon*, unable to be freed, was put to flame.

In his opinion, British officer Francis, Lord Rawdon, felt the Charleston campaign of 1776 was "a long train of little accidents [which] entirely frustrated every purpose of this expedition." In June 1776, the American rebellion was in its infancy. For the cause of American independence, the thwarted British attack on Sullivan's Island would prove of crucial import.

Image: *The abortive attack on Fort Moultrie, 28th June 1776*, by William Elliott. On loan from the Historic Charleston Foundation Collection and currently on display at Anderson House.

EVENTS

Glorious Lessons from an Iconic Artist



Join us on Tuesday, June 4 at 6:30 p.m. as the Institute welcomes historian and biographer Richard Brookhiser to Anderson House for a discussion of his new book, *Glorious Lessons: John Trumbull, Painter of the American Revolution*.

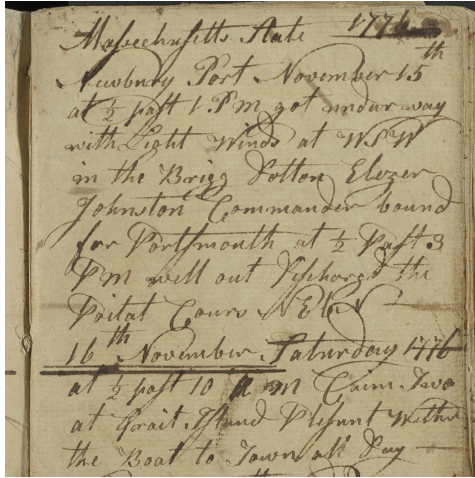
John Trumbull experienced the American Revolution firsthand by serving as an aide to American generals George Washington and Horatio Gates and being jailed as a spy. Throughout his wartime experience, he made it his mission to record the conflict, giving visual form to the great and unprecedented political experiment for the citizens of the newly formed United States. Although Trumbull's contemporaries viewed him as a painter, Trumbull thought of himself as a historian. Drawing on his new book, Mr. Brookhiser will focus our attention on the complicated life and legacy of Trumbull,

whose paintings portrayed both the struggle and principles that distinguished America's founding moment.

This program will be held in-person at Anderson House and last approximately 45 minutes. Registration is requested and virtual options are available.

COLLECTIONS

"this dismal place"



Now online! A three-volume diary attributed to Moses Stacey, an American privateer from Marblehead, Massachusetts, documents the conditions and treatment of American and French prisoners of war on prison ships and in Old Mill Prison, Plymouth, England (what Stacey often referred to as "this dismal place"), where he was imprisoned beginning in 1778 and ultimately released from captivity at an unknown date to return to Massachusetts. Stacey recounts receiving half rations, being confined to "the Black Hole," the multiple escape attempts of fellow prisoners, news of the war in America (such as the Battle of Saratoga), as well as the political climate in England. Stacey also wrote about personal news including the death of his mother in Newburyport, Massachusetts.

The diary is attributed to Moses Stacey due to the inscription "Moses Stacey His Book July the 16 1778" on the front cover of volume one, although questions have been raised whether he is indeed the author of the diary. Moses Stacey was a privateer on the brigantine *Dolton* (some sources record him as being on the schooner *Hawke*). The *Dolton* was captured and its crew imprisoned on the HMS *Raisnable* on December 24, 1776—Stacey recorded the capture, writing, "at 10 Pm I was Transported on board the Enemeys Ship which was his Majesty Ship the Raisnoble Tho Fitz Habertt [Thomas Fitzherbert] Commander of 64 Guns from off a Cruz bound in to Plymouth...I was confined in the gun Room under charg of Two Sentinel..." Stacey and the other prisoners were held on ships until April 10, 1778, when they arrived in Plymouth and were brought to Old Mill Prison. Covering the period of November 15, 1776, to January 4, 1779, this diary provides a personal account of life in a British prison during the Revolutionary War.

[View the diary on our Digital Library](#)

EDUCATION

Summer Break for the Institute's Traveling Trunks!



This month the Institute's four sets of traveling trunks are finishing their eighth academic year of circulating for forty weeks at no cost to the teachers and students who use them. Two sets tell the story of the Continental Army, and two feature the Revolutionary War at sea. All include reproduction clothing, replica artifacts, books, posters, and comprehensive lesson plans. To date, the trunks have visited classrooms in forty-five states (including Alaska and Hawaii) and the District of Columbia, and we estimate they have been enjoyed by at least 26,500 students. Like soldiers returning from a triumphant tour of duty, we welcome them home to rest and recuperate before the start of academic year 2024-2025—for which every available week has been booked!

[Learn more about traveling trunks](#)

EVENTS

A Musical Fete of Lafayette



During the marquis de Lafayette's 1824-1825 farewell tour, he was celebrated in each city and town with processions, banquets, receptions, worship services, and visits to important sites—many of which included music written for the occasion. To commemorate the bicentennial of Lafayette's return to the United States, join us on Tuesday, June 11 at 6:30 p.m. for a special concert featuring David and Ginger Hildebrand of the Colonial Music Institute performing and discussing various musical pieces created during Lafayette's life and especially his farewell tour of America—including some that are part of the Institute's collections.

The concert accompanies our current exhibition, [*Fete Lafayette: A French Hero's Tour of the American Republic*](#), on view through December 31, 2024. It will be held in-person at

Anderson House only. Registration for the program is requested.

[Learn more and register](#)

Who We Are, What We Do



We are excited to welcome Allison (Ali) Thomey to our rental events team!

With Ali on staff we now have a two-person events team to ensure that our rental program continues to run smoothly and safely. Ali comes to us via a referral from a top event planner in town, and she'd been working similar events for another respected D.C. venue, the Spy Museum.

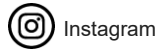
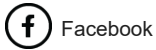
As Events Assistant, Ali will be the main contact for all corporate and non-wedding event clients. Her experience at the Spy Museum along with other local event work reflects well on her ability to take us to the next level as our rental program grows. Ali's professionalism and attention to detail are helpful diplomatic qualities for these events where good

communication is key. From thirty-five guests at a daytime seminar to three hundred for a standing reception, each event is unique in its challenges and parameters.

Ali is a native of Alexandria, Virginia, and a graduate of George Mason University. Please welcome Ali as you see her around Anderson House!

[Book your event today!](#)



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The American Revolution secured our independence, created our republic, established our national identity, and expressed ideals of liberty, equality, natural and civil rights, and responsible citizenship that have defined our history and will define our future. The American Revolution Institute of the Society of the Cincinnati promotes knowledge and appreciation of those achievements, fulfilling the aim of the Continental Army officers who founded the Society of the Cincinnati in 1783 to perpetuate the memory of that vast event. The Institute supports advanced study, presents exhibitions and other public programs, advocates effective classroom instruction, and provides resources to teachers and students to enrich understanding of the American Revolution and the principles of the men and women who secured the liberty of the American people.



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