

The ALEXANDRIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

VOLUME XXIX

NUMBER 2

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2009

OCTOBER MEETING

DATE: Wednesday, October 28, 2009

PLACE: The Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia

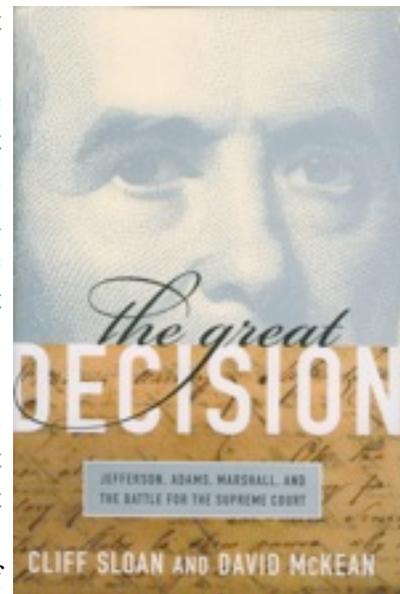
TIME: 7:30 PM

SPEAKER: Cliff Sloan, Author

The Great Decision: Jefferson, Adams, Marshall and the Battle for the Supreme Court

Cliff Sloan, the co-author of *The Great Decision: Jefferson, Adams, Marshall, and the Battle for the Supreme Court*, will tell the exciting story of Marbury v. Madison, probably the most important Supreme Court decision in the history of the United States. Marbury v. Madison established the power of the Supreme Court to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional. But it is also an Alexandria story. Three of the four plaintiffs (Dennis Ramsay, Robert Townshend Hooe, and William Harper) were Alexandrians, and the attorney for the plaintiffs (Charles Lee) was an Alexandrian. Important events leading up to the case took place in Alexandria.

More than just a court case, Marbury v. Madison, expounded by Chief Justice John Marshall in 1803, was the culmination of a piece of national political theater that had lasted the better part of two years and put the court squarely at odds with the presidency of Thomas Jefferson, Marshall's detested cousin. Jefferson, his secretary of state James Madison (who never deigned to appear before the court despite his name on the case), and the newly-elected (Continued on Page 2)



About Our October 28 Speaker. *(Continued from Page 1)* Republicans were contesting what they saw as invasive political appointments made in the last hours of the presidency of John Adams' Federalist administration. The capital of Washington, like the country, was divided and enraptured by the public spat between the parties who has just fought America's first contested election. Newspapers took highly partisan sides, senators insulted each other to the point of violence, and the Adams government was so near to collapse that a second revolution seemed possible.

To prevent the government of the young republic from coming apart at the seams, someone had to settle the contest ethically and fairly. John Marshall realized that he could in one ruling dismiss the merits of Jefferson's case, strike down an act of Congress, and place the Supreme Court above the fray. Thus, Marshall established the power of the Supreme Court to be the last word on constitutionality – a stroke that dramatically enhanced the Court and laid the cornerstone of the distinctive American rule of law.

Cliff Sloan is a magna cum laude graduate of both Harvard College and Harvard Law School. In government service, he was Law Clerk to Judge J. Skelly Wright of the U.S. Court of Appeals to the District of Columbia; Law Clerk to U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens, an Associate Counsel in the Office of the Independent Counsel for Iran Contra, Assistant to the Solicitor General of the United States, and an Associate Counsel to the President of the United States. A former publisher of *Slate* magazine, he currently is a partner at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom in Washington, DC. He has argued before the Supreme Court five times.

Alexandria Historical Society Documents Needed. Since the Alexandria Historical Society archives stored at Christ Church were destroyed several years ago, a great deal of effort has been expended in reconstructing the records. The reconstructed archives are now safely stored at the Alexandria City Archives and Records Center. However, we are still missing some important documents. We need Minutes for 1974 through 1978 and 1981 through 1991. Also needed are Newsletters for 1998 and 1999. In addition, a copy of *Seaport Saga* would be helpful. If you have any of these documents and would be willing to contribute them to the Society's archives, please call President Audrey Davis at (703) 838-4356, Ext. 11.

Interested in Serving on Our Board? We don't know you're interested if you don't tell us. If you would be interested in serving on the Alexandria Historical Society Board of Directors, please call President Audrey Davis at (703) 838-4356, Ext. 11.

Tools of the Trade: Civil War Firearms. On October 10 from 1:00 PM until 2:30 PM, Fort Ward will present a discussion and demonstration of advances in firearms from the early stages of war through Appomattox, with firing demonstrations and a display of reproduction weapons and ammunition. Learn how changes in Civil War weaponry influenced military tactics beyond World War I. The event is free, but donations are welcome. Fort Ward is located at 4301 West Braddock Road in Alexandria. For information, call (703) 838-4848.

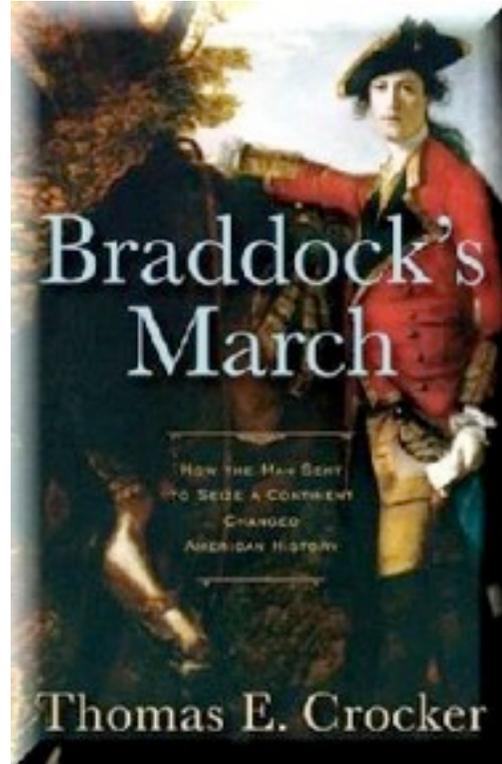
March 24 Society Meeting (7:30 PM at the Lyceum) -- “Braddock’s March: How the Man Sent to Seize a Continent Changed American History” Lecture by Thomas E. Crocker.

Alexandria author Thomas E. Crocker will discuss his book *Braddock’s March: How the Man Sent to Seize a Continent Changed American History* (Westholme Publishing). Mr. Crocker’s book tells a modern audience the story of the epic march by Major General Edward Braddock and a force of British regulars and American volunteers through the wilderness and their ultimate, devastating defeat. Braddock’s expedition is a key, but little-known, turning point in American history.

Braddock’s March is of special interest to Alexandrians because Braddock stopped in Alexandria and used it as a major staging point for the expedition. The Congress of colonial governors that Braddock summoned at Carlyle House was a turning point in America’s relations with Great Britain. In his lecture Mr. Crocker will discuss the expedition, with particular reference to its importance in Alexandria’s history.

Braddock’s march was a heroic effort by a general, who flogged his men, cursed Americans and abused the hospitality of his hosts, to blaze a trail through uncharted wilderness and haul dozens of large cannon over mountains formidable even now. The first wheeled vehicles ever to cross the Appalachian Mountains, the first effective use of rifles in combat, the opening of the road for westward expansion, the creation of a national hero in George Washington and a unique showcasing of many of America’s Founding Fathers early in their careers — the expedition also sowed the seeds for the American Revolution. The book challenges the conventional wisdom that the Braddock campaign was a one-shot loss by an arcane British general and makes the case that it was one of the most important events in the American colonial period, with a profound impact on American military and political developments of the Revolutionary period and beyond.

Thomas E. Crocker is a partner and co-chair of the International Trade group at Alston & Bird LLP, a large Atlanta-based law firm. Earlier in his career, Crocker was a Foreign Service Officer in the U.S. State Department. A native Washingtonian who grew up in Georgetown just a block and a half from General Braddock’s line of march up Wisconsin Avenue, he graduated from Princeton University and Columbia Law School. He and his wife Beth have two teen-aged sons and have lived in Alexandria for over 25 years. *Braddock’s March* is Crocker’s first published book, although there may be more in the works.



**ALEXANDRIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
NEWSLETTER**

201 SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET, ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314

President: Audrey Davis, (703) 838-4356, Ext. 11

Newsletter Editor: Bob Madison, (703) 683-2636

The AHS Newsletter is published by the Alexandria Historical Society, Inc., and mailed free to members. To join the Society, submit your check made payable to "Alexandria Historical Society," together with your name, address, and telephone numbers, to the Alexandria Historical Society, 201 South Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314. Annual dues are: \$10.00, Student; \$20.00, Single; \$30.00, Couple; \$50.00, Sustaining; and \$100.00, Patron. The membership year is July to June. Dues are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

*The purpose of the Society shall be to promote an active interest in American history and particularly in the history of Alexandria and of Virginia.
The Society is organized exclusively for educational purposes.*

**VISIT OUR WEB SITE:
www.alexandriahistorical.org**



201 South Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314