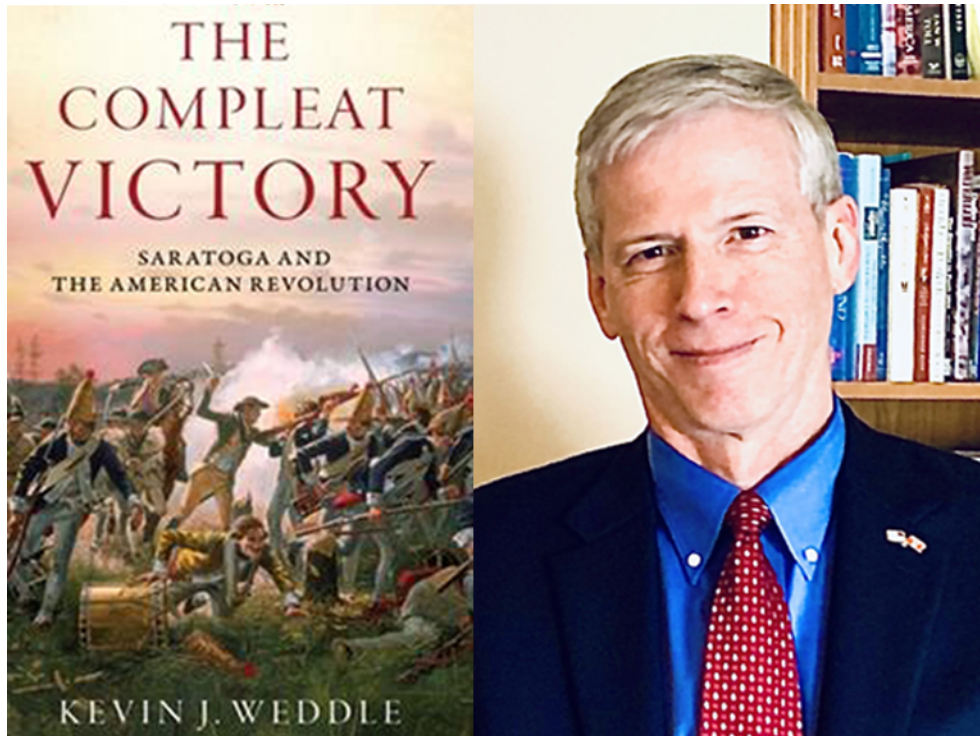# Kevin J. Weddle Wins the 2021 Gilder Lehrman Military History Prize

By The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History   30 September 2022

Kevin J. Weddle Wins the 2021 Gilder Lehrman Military History Prize

New York, NY, September 22, 2022 – The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History announced today that Kevin J. Weddle has been awarded the ninth annual Gilder Lehrman Prize for Military History for *The Compleat Victory: Saratoga and the American Revolution* (Oxford University Press). The $50,000 prize is bestowed in recognition of the best book in the field of military history published in English during the previous calendar year. An event celebrating the winner and the shortlisted authors will take place on Wednesday, November 2, hosted by the New-York Historical Society, the first museum in New York City. Tickets to attend this free program—in person or via livestream—are available online.

Professor Andrew Roberts, chair of the judging committee, said, "The judges were faced with a fine array of talented writing this year, proving

that military history for the general reader is alive and well in the English-speaking world. The object of the prize has been to reward scholarly, well-written, accessible and ground-breaking military history, and the judges had no hesitation in awarding this year's to Kevin Weddle's masterly book *The Compleat Victory* about the battle of Saratoga, which the author rightly states was the key turning point in the American War of Independence. The judges were astonished at the way Weddle kept up the tension throughout, despite everyone knowing the eventual outcome."

"The Gilder Lehrman Prize for Military History is the most important book award in the field, so I am incredibly honored and humbled to receive it," said Kevin Weddle. "The prize is even more meaningful for me because of the superb work of the other finalists. I'd like to express my deep appreciation to the distinguished jurors, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, and the New-York Historical Society."

Of his prize-winning book, Weddle said, "There are many good studies out there about the American Revolution's pivotal Saratoga campaign, but I wanted to write a book that covered the entire complex five-month campaign, all eleven battles and engagements, and one that placed the campaign in political and strategic context. I am particularly interested in military strategy and leadership, and those are the two main threads that weave themselves throughout the book. My goal is for the reader to understand how the fatally flawed British military strategy for 1777, combined with superior American leadership from General George Washington on down, determined the outcome of the campaign that helped ensure American independence."

Kevin J. Weddle is professor of military theory and strategy and Elihu Root Chair of Military Studies at the US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. He is a graduate of the US Military Academy and served over 28 years on active duty before retiring as a colonel. He holds master's degrees in history and civil engineering from the University of Minnesota and a Ph.D. in history from Princeton University. During his career he served in a variety of command and staff positions in the United States and overseas to include command of a combat engineer battalion, and he is a veteran of Operations Desert Storm and Enduring Freedom. At the Army War College, he led the Advanced Strategic Art Program and served as the deputy dean of academics. In 2019, he served as the William L. Garwood visiting professor at Princeton University. His first book, *Lincoln's Tragic Admiral: The Life of Samuel Francis Du Pont* (University of Virginia Press, 2005), won the 2006 William E. Colby Award. In addition to the Gilder Lehrman Prize for Military History, his second book, *The Compleat Victory:*

Saratoga and the American Revolution, was awarded the Fraunces Tavern Museum Book Award and the Society of the Cincinnati Prize.

Ninety-six books were submitted for consideration by publishers in the United States and the United Kingdom for the Gilder Lehrman Prize for Military History. The other finalists for this year's prize are Stephen Conway for *The British Army, 1714-1783: An Institutional History* (Pen & Sword), Thomas A. Guglielmo for *Divisions: A New History of Racism and Resistance in America's World War II Military* (Oxford University Press), Nicholas A. Lambert for *The War Lords and the Gallipoli Disaster: How Globalized Trade Led Britain to Its Worst Defeat of the First World War* (Oxford University Press), Sean McMeekin for *Stalin's War: A New History of World War II* (Basic Books), and Richard Overy for *Blood and Ruins: The Last Imperial War, 1931-1945* (Allen Lane).

The judging panel for the prize was composed of Andrew Roberts, visiting professor at the War Studies Department of King's College London, committee chair; Flora Fraser, author, chair of the Elizabeth Longford Prize for Historical Biography and founder of the Elizabeth Longford Grants for Historical Biography; Allen C. Guelzo, author, senior research scholar in the Council of the Humanities at Princeton University and director of the James Madison Program's Initiative in Politics and Statesmanship; Ian Beckett, author, chairman of the Council of the Army Records Society, secretary to the Buckinghamshire Military Museum Trust, and professor of military history at the University of Kent; and Craig Symonds, the Distinguished Visiting Ernest J. King Professor of Maritime History at the US Naval War College.

The inaugural prize for 2013 was awarded to Allen Guelzo for *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* (Knopf). Other recipients include Alexander Watson for *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I, 1914–1918* (Basic), Peter Cozzens for *The Earth Is Weeping: The Epic Story of the Indian Wars for the American West* (Knopf), Cathal Nolan for *The Allure of Battle: A History of How Wars Have Been Won and Lost* (Oxford), Andrew Lambert for *Seapower States: Maritime Culture, Continental Empires and the Conflict That Made the Modern World* (Yale), John C. McManus for *Fire and Fortitude: The US Army in the Pacific War, 1941–1943* (Dutton Caliber), and most recently, Alexander Mikaberidze for *The Napoleonic Wars: A Global History* (Oxford University Press).

The intent of the Gilder Lehrman Prize for Military History is to draw public attention to military history not only as an important staple of education in the areas of international relations, diplomacy, and conflict studies, but also as a subject in which any educated citizen should be interested. The study

of the steps to war, conduct of military campaigns, and diplomatic responses to war can play an essential role in the quest for a more peaceable future.

Funding for the prize is provided by Lewis E. Lehrman, co-founder of the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, author, and champion of studies in American political and military history.