

*A BGES Revolutionary War
Field University Program:
Revolution in the Smokies:
The Over-the-Mountain Men*

One can never appreciate the tough, indeed, internecine degree of animosity generated by the American Revolution until you study the war in the backcountry of the Carolinas. Here Tories and Rebels were truly neighbors and the frontier spirit fostered by the great land opportunities produced an independent American spirit that characterized the Rebel cause.

As Washington and Sir Henry Clinton settled into an uneasy stalemate near New York City and the new French Alliance began to crystallize, British strategy shifted to a southern campaign aimed at bringing southern colonies back into loyalty with the crown. As British men of war landed troops near Savannah and Charleston was targeted the true nature of life in the Carolinas came into focus. It had been a war of partisans with heroes like Marion, Lee and Sumter fighting men like Simcoe and Tarleton. However, Now the British had brought a commander of considerable merit and respect to the theater—Lord Charles Cornwallis had an independent command and he meant to succeed. Accompanied by other hard bit and professional British officers military actions would match the rhetoric and the region was soon aflame with animosity and retribution.

The heavy-handed rhetoric is at the core of this program. Tories under the command of the very talented Scotsman, Major Patrick Ferguson were attempting to bring a sense of loyalty to the crown in the western Carolinas region. Ferguson put out an edict that declared that anyone who did not declare their loyalty to the crown would be treated harshly. That threat reached a group of rather independent minded settlers in the region around Abington, Virginia and the Northeastern Tennessee area. Challenged by agents of the king, they opted to organize and move against the crown's soldiers and agents. The Over-the-Mountain men massacred Ferguson and his men at Kings Mountain in October 1780. This is that story.

Wednesday, August 22, 2018

6 PM: Arrive at the headquarters hotel for registration and to pick up your reading books. You will also meet your fellow students. Bert Dunkerly is one of the nation's best Revolutionary War historians and he was selected by *National Geographic* to do the definitive guidebook on the Revolution for them. Bert will provide an introductory lecture overviewing the British Southern Campaign. Dinner on your own

Thursday, August 23, 2018

7:30 AM: The nature of this program forces us to bite a tough bullet and drive nearly 3 hours to our start point at Fort Watauga near Elizabethton, Tennessee. Here at Sycamore Shoals State Park we will discuss the assembly of Virginia and Tennessee volunteers, under the command of William Campbell, Issac Shelby and John Sevier, that will march against Ferguson and his loyalist militia—we will walk parts of the mile and a half trail there. We will then start on a route that in some instances are the exact routes the Whigs followed. At Gillespie Gap we will start down the east side of the Blue Ridge Mountains stopping at a museum and examining a small section of the exact road about a ½ mile in length.

As we arrive at Quarter Meadows we will pick up more volunteers from North Carolina at the McDowell House—this landmark was the home of a local militia commander, Captain Charles McDowell. We will break off after a visit to the local Quaker Cemetery and return to Charlotte. We will leave a growing force of Patriots that will only get stronger tomorrow. Lunch is provided. Dinner is on your own.

Friday, August 24, 2018

8:00 AM: Our ride this morning is only half as long (90 minutes) as we head to the muster point for Carolina rebels seeking to join the expedition—ironically the site known as Tory Oak is so named because loyalists had been captured and summarily executed at the site. While the tree is gone the story and legend have only grown.

Continuing back towards the south we will pass and briefly stop at the Wilkes Heritage Museum and two frontier forts Fort Defiance and Fort Crider. Crider no longer exists but we will see the site. At Cane Creek, militia under Captain McDowell ambushed Ferguson but were driven off. This was the only engagement prior to the battle at Kings Mountain.

We will reach Gilbert Town where Ferguson issued his inflammatory declaration. With word of the advance of the Whig militia, Ferguson abandoned the town and South Carolina militia moved in to organize and join the growing movement of Patriot militia moving against Ferguson.

We will break the chronological narrative and take you to Biggerstaff's Old Fields. After Kings Mountain, a number of captured loyalist militia were taken here and hung—a grim and unmistakable signal to loyal civilians who sided with the King. Our day will then end as we walk a portion of the trail at Alexander's Ford. This will be our long walk of the day—up to two miles. Here the trail crossed the Green River and while there intelligence told them that Ferguson had changed his route and was trying to join Cornwallis at Charlotte. This caused them to change their route of march. This is a good spot to end the day and we will return to Charlotte. Lunch and a Carolina BBQ dinner will be provided.

Saturday, August 25, 2018

We will start again at 8 AM and drive about 90 minutes back to Alexander's Ford and the Bradley Nature preserve where we will start with a healthy walk on the original road. Bert will determine the length of the walk we take based upon what we got done the day before. We then head to the Cowpens National Battlefield—that fight was still three months in the future in 1781—we are there because of a good run of original trail that we will walk and then talk about the bivouac there. Here the Patriots selected 900 of their best conditioned militia to close the distance and intercept Ferguson before he got to Cornwallis' protective cover near Charlotte. If time permits we may take some time to let you appreciate the real battle at Cowpens hopefully dispelling the fantasy presented in Mel Gibson's entertaining movie *The Patriot*.

We will then beat feet to catch up with Ferguson whose men had holed up on commanding terrain at Kings Mountain. En route we will make stops at the grave of Colonel James Williams, the highest ranking patriot officer killed at Kings Mountain, and Cherokee Ford—the last major obstacle to the Patriots' pursuit (where we will walk on more of the original road). A final stop before Kings Mountain will allow us to visit the grave of Frederick Hambright a hero of the battle who was severely wounded and had to leave the service. He lived 37 more years before dying. His grave has recently been restored.

At last we reach Kings Mountain—it was not a complex battle but it was fought over exceptionally difficult terrain. Bert has done considerable work professionally at the site and you will get to see sites that are not on the main circuit trail around the crest of the mountain. With numerous monuments and the grave of Ferguson this is a robust end to the militia conflicts in western Carolinas. The price was steep and loyalists increasingly shied away from siding with the British as the war progressed. The Over-the-Mountain Men have been recognized by the establishment of a 300+ mile National Historic Trail—much of which you have traveled.

We will return to the hotel and dismiss. Those flying out of Charlotte can easily make flights after 7:30 PM—we cannot guarantee you will make a flight before that time so please plan accordingly. Lunch is included. We will dismiss before dinner.

This was one of Ed Bearss' favorite tours with HistoryAmerica and we hope you will enjoy our interpretation and presentation of it.

About the Faculty:

Bert Dunkerly is a supervisory ranger at Richmond National Battlefield. He has previously served at Appomattox and he was historian at Moore's Creek and Kings Mountain during the earlier portion of his career. A popular and gregarious tour leader, Bert is a former member of the BGES Board of Directors. As previously

mentioned he is the author and editor of the *National Geographic's* proposed Revolutionary War travel guide, tentatively titled, *The Revolutionary War, A Travelers Guide*. Bert has written numerous other books primarily on Civil War themes and too numerous to mention here. You can find his publications under Robert Dunkerly.

Hotel Information:

This program will be headquartered at a hotel near the Charlotte Douglas International Airport. It will be announced on this site. You can expect a rate around \$125 per night plus tax. The hotel will have an airport shuttle.

Transportation:

The servicing airport is Charlotte (CLT). Perhaps you can find a dirt cheap rental car on www.priceline.com. The program is easily accessed by car with the hotel near I-85. Charlotte is serviced by Amtrak.

Recommended Reading:

You will be provided with a reading book and maps upon arrival. The following books are suggested to enhance your readiness for the program. If you purchase through Amazon Smile, BGES can benefit from your purchases—thanks for considering us.

Robert Dunkerly: **The Battle of Kings Mountain, Eyewitness Accounts**

Robert Dunkerly, **Women of the Revolution**

Robert Dunkerly, **More than Roman Valor, The Revolutionary War Fact Book**

Ricky Roberts and Bryan Brown: **Every Insult and Indignity: The Life, Genius and Legacy of Major Patrick Furgeson**

Registration Form

Revolution in the Smokies: The Over-the-Mountain Men, A

BGES Revolutionary War

Field University Program

Presented by Bert Dunkerly

August 22-25, 2018 from Charlotte, NC

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration includes three lunches, one dinner, a reading book with maps, the academic program, support of a professional historian & tour director and transportation appropriate to the registration which will be limited to two vans: 19 people. We will also provide snacks, bottled water and a limited selection of sodas.

_____ Registration \$675*

_____ Current BGES member \$610*

_____ Teacher/full time student with identification \$550*

***10% of your registration fee is a tax deductible contribution to the BGES 25th Anniversary Capital Reserve Campaign**

_____ I am not a member but would like to join so that I can get the member's rate or I am a member who is past due to renew. Please accept my donation of

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_____ I am sending a deposit of \$200 plus full payment for any memberships.
Total enclosed is \$

I will pay the balance due before the event.

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Charge my (circle one) MC VISA AMEXP Discover \$_____

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