

# *A 2019 Revolutionary War Field University Program: The Virginia Campaign of 1781*

Charles Cornwallis is the quintessential British general during the American Revolution. Present in practically every major operation of the British army in North America, he had been sent south to execute the British Southern Strategy that would end the rebellion by returning less affected colonies back to crown loyalty and marginalizing the areas in rebellion. By 1781 the campaign had moved into North Carolina and Virginia.

Following the costly victory at Guilford Courthouse, Cornwallis had taken his force back to Wilmington, North Carolina, where he began communicating with General Clinton, the commander of British Forces in North America. In South Carolina, Cornwallis' deputy Lord Rawdon was doing well, whereas in Virginia newly minted British Brigadier, Benedict Arnold's raid along the James River from Portsmouth was attracting attention. Rather than face the sniping from Francis Marion's "The Swamp Fox" as he moved along the Kings Road to Charleston, Cornwallis opted to take his forces north into Virginia to support Arnold's operations. It would lead to Yorktown.

## **Wednesday, November 20, 2019**

7:30 PM. Meet at the headquarters hotel to pick up your reading books and name tags and to greet the other members of your cohort. We are delighted that Ric will open the program with a lecture on Cornwallis' Southern Campaign, which will establish the grounding for the upcoming tour, and the reasons that he elected to come to Virginia rather than return to Charleston. I would arrive early so you can have dinner before the opening lecture.

## **Thursday, November 21, 2019**

8:15 AM. The focal point of the initial British operations was Richmond and Petersburg, with the James River providing a line of demarcation. Richmond was the relatively new seat of government in Virginia and, with Gov. Thomas Jefferson reaching the end of his term of office, the operations of the British Army focused on the Peninsula and the south side of the James River. Our first stop is at Blandford Church, where Arnold's relief, Gen. William Phillips, is buried. Arnold's exposure baited Washington to send Lafayette to try and capture him, whereas Washington would publicly hang him for his West Point treachery. Proximity demands that we take you to St. John's Church, where Patrick Henry gave his famous "Give me Liberty or Give me Death" speech. We then will head to the Virginia State Capitol to see the fabulous collection of Revolutionary War art and the Houdin Statue of George Washington in the Capitol Rotunda. Keep in mind you will

be in many footsteps here, including Jefferson, who designed the building, Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, Abraham Lincoln, and Douglas Wilder—a truly exceptional stop. Return to the hotel. Lunch is provided, with dinner on your own.

### **Friday, November 22, 2019**

8:00 AM. We are on the road today headed to Charlottesville. With the arrival of the British, the Virginia government went west with us, and Jefferson, who was nearing the end of his term, went to his home at Monticello. We will talk about Cornwallis' operations toward Charlottesville from Monticello. We then will head down to Court Square—the oldest section of Charlottesville where the infamous British cavalry chieftain, Banastre Tarleton, came within a hair's breath of catching the entire Virginia Assembly—what a hanging that might have been! We will also go to the "Barracks" where the British Army that surrendered at Saratoga in October 1777 was transported and housed. On our way back, we will go to Point of Fork, where American forces under the command of von Steuben resisted the attack by British Lt. Col. John Simcoe. Our lunch will be a bountiful buffet of all-you-can-eat colonial fried chicken, BBQ, and hearty fixings at Michie Tavern. A unique and memorable lunch stop. We will then return to our hotel in Richmond, where you will have dinner on your own.

### **Saturday, November 23, 2019**

8:30 AM. Cornwallis' operations drew the attention of Lafayette, who moved toward Charlottesville from his camp at Ely's Ford on the Rappahannock River. Lafayette trailed Cornwallis to the Peninsula, where he was ambushed in the battle of Green Springs just outside of Williamsburg. We head out this morning en route to the Green Springs Plantation—site of Cornwallis' gambit. Chastised by his aggressiveness, Lafayette pulled back to await the arrival of Generals Washington and Rochambeau. We will study the campaign of Yorktown and the surrender on the field, visiting the French Grand Battery, Redoubts #9 and #10, and the Moore House. After finishing our field work, we will visit the NPS Visitor's Center and, time permitting, the new American Revolution Museum at Yorktown. Another full day in the field, and its then back to Richmond. You can depart after 6 PM.

### **Sunday, November 24, 2019**

Getaway day. While you are in the area, you may want to take in Colonial Williamsburg and a meal in one of the colonial taverns. Thanks for coming.

### **About the Faculty:**

**Rick Britton** is an award-winning historian who specializes in 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Virginia history. A much sought-after speaker, he also conducts tours, illustrates books, draws maps, and teaches courses on central Virginia history. With over 200 published articles and essays and two books under his belt, he is a master of his portfolio and an entertaining presenter.

**Hotel Information:**

This program will be headquartered at a Richmond International Airport hotel that has shuttle service to and from the terminal. We will announce when the details are available, but you can expect to spend approximately \$125 per night, plus tax.

**Transportation:**

The servicing airport is Richmond International Airport (RIC), which is served by Southwest Airlines. The hotel is centrally located and easily accessible via I-64, I-295, and I-95. Richmond is served by Amtrak.

**Recommended Reading:**

You will be provided with a handout upon arrival. We recommend the following books to enhance your preparation for this tour. *Amazon.com* has a program to support non-profits IF YOU SIGN UP to support Blue and Gray Education Society (EIN 54-1720582) at [AmazonSmile](#). When you sign up there rather than the normal Amazon site, one-half of one percent of your purchase price will be provided to BGES as a donation from Amazon. This will apply not only on this purchase but others you may make at other times.

Stanley D. M. Carpenter: [\*Southern Gambit, Cornwallis and the British March to Yorktown\*](#)

Michael Cecere: [\*Invasion of Virginia, 1781\*](#)

United States Army War College: [\*Lord Charles Cornwallis: A Study in Strategic Leadership Failure\*](#)

Marquis de Lafayette: [\*Memoirs of General Lafayette\*](#)

*Registration Form*  
*The Virginia Campaign of 1781*  
*A 2019 BGES Revolutionary War Field University Program*  
*Presented by Ric Britton*  
*November 20-24, 2019*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration includes 3 lunches, a reading book, the academic program, support of a professional historian and tour manager, plus transportation by passenger van. We also will provide snacks and bottled water.

\_\_\_\_\_ Registration \$635

\_\_\_\_\_ Current BGES member \$575

\_\_\_\_\_ Teacher/full time student with identification \$500

\_\_\_\_\_ 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

\$\_\_\_\_\_ (must be \$75 or more, which is tax deductible)

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I will pay the balance due before the event.

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Mail to BGES Seminars, PO Box 1176, Chatham, VA 24531, or fax credit card registrations to 434-432-0596. You may also register online at [www.blueandgrayeducation.org](http://www.blueandgrayeducation.org).