

A BGES Revolutionary War Field University Program Washington Between the Fourths in 3 Parts:

Part 3: Valley Forge to Monmouth Courthouse and July 4, 1778

Presented by Gary Ecelbarger
December 5-9, 2023, from Princeton, New Jersey

As we approach the 250th Anniversary of the Revolutionary War, this landmark period in our history is already in the midst of a renaissance with a renewed dedication to “The Cause” expressed in literature as well as in the arts. Fresh attempts during the Digital Age to address the history of the Revolution and the War that it spawned have produced new discoveries and intriguing interpretations of traditional sources. More fortuitously, lands and properties have become more accessible today than they were even at the turn of the 20th century. For interpretive history programs, this renaissance has produced the most accurate and exciting results imaginable; in some instances, an up-to-date tour of the battlefields and other sites related to a military campaign has rendered obsolete similarly themed programs even a generation ago. This is particularly true for Valley Forge (1777-1778), and the Monmouth Campaign (1778).

BGES continues this updated, Revolutionary War program with its final installment of a three-part series that chronologically covers all three campaigns. In December 2023, we go back to December 1777 and then proceed through seven dramatic months of our history.

Our tour leader for this series is historian Gary Ecelbarger, a 20-year veteran of touring this campaign who is nearing completion of the manuscript of his 10th book, *George Washington Between the Fourths*—a single year, two-volume campaign biography of His Excellency and his headquarters, July 4, 1777 to July 4, 1778. This

perfect pairing of guide and history theme assures another top-notch offering by BGES.

Note: This tour is a stand-alone event and required no participation in any of the previous programs to gain a full appreciation of the first six months of 1778.

Itinerary

Tuesday, December 5, 2023

6:00 PM: Meet at the Holiday Inn Express Scudders Mill Road, Plainsboro, NJ to greet all the members of the program as well as pick up your nametags and handout packets. Gary Ecelbarger will present an introduction to the events leading to the winter of 1777-1778 and follow up with an overview of the program, including a Q & A session.

Dinner is on your own; hotel is included.

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

8:00 AM: Our entire day will drill deep on the six-month winter and spring encampment at Valley Forge. Here we will take advantage of the upgraded visitor center as well as an in-depth tour of the National Park, focusing on updated scholarship from our guide—to present the story of Valley Forge as it has never been revealed. Both thematic and chronological history will be unveiled, incorporating new discoveries regarding hut construction, numbers of troops, and the story behind at least one known burial during the encampment. Sites within the National Park, such as Washington's Headquarters, the facsimile log huts, and the Parade Ground will be freshly presented based newly analyzed source material. Included in our adventure will be a visit to nearby Moore Hall, where George Washington often met with delegates from Congress, as well as a short trip to the still-standing foundation of a Revolutionary War Hospital, where most of the 2,000+ tallied deaths at Valley Forge actually perished.

On our return to the hotel, we will divert to view one of several skirmishes that transpired during the winter and spring of 1778.

Crooked Billet, where on April 30, John Simcoe's Queen's Rangers surprised and defeated Pennsylvania militia commanded by General James Potter. This action is unique for the alleged atrocities that were committed by the Loyalists upon the Patriots in the immediate wake of this encounter.

Back to the hotel. Lunch is included and dinner will be on your own.

Thursday, December 7, 2023

8:00 AM: We dedicate the earliest part of the tour day to another small battle involving some of the biggest names of the Revolution that transpired during the spring 1778 encampment at Valley Forge. We head to Barren Hill for a small, limited engagement, where General Marquis de Lafayette encountered the Crown Forces commanded personally by the two top British military leaders in North America – Generals Howe and Clinton. We will dissect the implications of this action and detail how Lafayette barely escaped the trap they set for him.

After viewing these engagements, we time travel to the third week of June 1778 and follow George Washington's army as it departs Valley Forge and attempts to chase down and engage General Clinton's British, Hessians, and Loyalists before they reach the safety of New York City. We will proceed to Coryell's Ferry for another Crossing of the Delaware; after this the short jaunt to the Jacob Holcombe house, used as Continental army headquarters for the second time in a year.

After lunch we proceed through "The Jerseys" by following the British route toward New York after they departed Philadelphia via Coopers Ferry. This includes an engagement against Continentals and militia at Crosswicks, where damage from the artillery duel of June 23-24 can still be viewed today. We also will walk through the one street town of Historic Walnford to view General Knyphausen's HQ and the site of the mill where the Continentals made a concerted effort to slow the advance of the Crown Forces.

After a brief view of Allentown, we go back to Washington's side of the line. We will view his army encampment at the John Hart homestead (a signer of the Declaration of Independence). From there

we will get a glimpse of Washington's headquarters in Hopewell (now privately owned), where an all-important council of war was held to detail plans to thwart Clinton's escape and battle him into submission. We will follow the army out of Hopewell and into Monroe Township for our last stop of the day – a visit to the Housman Farm for Washington's pre-battle, overnight stay at the Anderson home.

Back to our hotel. Lunch is included, but dinner is on your own.

Friday, December 8, 2023:

8:00 AM: Day #3 of the tour will be entirely dedicated to June 28, 1778, the prelude to and the epic Battle of Monmouth. For this special day we are treated to the expertise of John Resto, a Monmouth battlefield ranger who will join Gary Ecelbarger to cover this battle blow by blow, beginning with Major General Charles Lee's 5,000-man American advance at Englishtown, the opening hours-long action which ultimately led to Lee's controversial decision to fall back in retreat. We will then pick up with Washington's Mammoth Monmouth Moment, when he dressed Lee down and inspired the retreaters to become attackers once again. Now reinforced to nearly 12,000 men, Washington led his army in a stand-up fight he had prepared his men six months to fight during a grueling 100-degree heatwave, defying the Little Ice Age in which it was fought. We will visit the key sites of this prolonged afternoon fight, including the famous "Molly Pitcher" moment in this fight. Our battle and tour day ends with our tour group defying historical interpretation of Monmouth being a "drawn" battle. We will determine the tactical victor.

Return to the hotel. Lunch and dinner are included.

Saturday, December 9, 2023

8:00 AM: Our final morning will pick up the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Monmouth in Elizabethtown. From there we will move

with the British army and view their entry to Sandy Hook (and subsequent retreat to New York) from Mt. Mitchell Scenic Overlook in Atlantic Highlands. After we see the Crown Forces off we will be off to lunch and from there we will pick up the Americans along the Raritan River on the 4th of July to discuss three events this day, beginning with a dramatic duel in Philadelphia that morning. At the site of Whitehall Tavern in New Brunswick, we will cover the Charles Lee Court Martial Trial. Finally, from the river's edge at Johnson Park we will review the spectacular Independence Day parade near Washington's HQ at Ross Hall, an event recounted by a spectator as "Marvelous Beyond Description." Lunch is provided, but dinner is on your own.

About the Faculty:

Gary Ecelbarger is an award-winning author of nine books relating to 19th-century personalities and events, as well as more than three dozen monographs, essays, and articles of Revolutionary War and Civil War-era topics. As a historian, symposium speaker, and tour guide for the past 25 years, he has led his audiences through complex campaigns and prides himself on crafting well-researched, thought-provoking programs that maintain an intriguing, chronological flow and feature off-the-beaten-path historical sites.

Hotel Information

This program will be headquartered at the Holiday Inn Express Princeton Southeast, 870 Scudders Mill Road, Plainsboro, New Jersey 08536 (609-936-6600). We have a group rate of \$119 per night plus 14.625% taxes. The Blue and Gray Education block expires on November 14th. After that higher rates may apply.

Transportation

The servicing airports are Philadelphia (PHL), and Trenton (TTN), or Newark (EWR). All will likely require a rental car to reach the hotel.

Recommended Reading

You will receive maps and a reading book that will meet your onsite requirements. The following books are suggested to enhance your readiness for the program.

Wayne K. Bodle: [***Valley Forge Historical Research Project***](#)

Robert Dunkerly: [**An Explorer's Guide to America's Revolutionary War**](#)

Michael C. Harris and Gary Ecelbarger: [**A Reconsideration of Continental Army Numerical Strength at Valley Forge**](#)

Mark Lender: [**Fatal Sunday: George Washington, the Monmouth Campaign, and the Politics of Battle**](#)

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Name (s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

This program includes the services of your historian, a tour director, four lunches, one dinner, maps, appropriate transportation for the registration and light refreshments and snacks.

_____ Registration \$995

_____ Dues Paying BGES Member \$925

_____ Deposit only—per person \$300 Net Due on or before December 1st, 2023

Total Enclosed: \$ _____ **Make checks payable to BGES** and mail to
PO Box 1176, Chatham, VA 24541

You may also fax your registration with credit card details to 434-432-0596

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