

1781: The Setting

Preceding the arrival of General Cornwallis into Portsmouth, VA, the infamous traitor, now British General, Benedict Arnold leads a British force into Hampton Roads. Along with Colonel Simcoe's Queen's Rangers and Captain Ewald's Jaegers, Arnold's troops occupied Portsmouth as their base and conducted raids and skirmished with Virginia forces, including Captain Weeks at Kempe's Landing and at Great Bridge. General Lafayette led a failed assault on the British in March 1781, signifying Portsmouth's importance to the beginning and ending of the Revolutionary War.

Timeline

- Jan 19-20: Benedict Arnold and forces set up Portsmouth occupation
- Jan 23: Rangers and Jaegers skirmish with militia at Great Bridge and Edmund's Bridge
- Jan 24: Capt. Weeks militia ambushes British foraging party.
- Feb 5: British expand occupation to Great Bridge and "Village Burnt"
- Feb 12-15: Multiple skirmishes between Rangers and Jaegers against militia at Kempe's Landing
- Feb 18: Skirmish at Mackie's Mill and Parker's militia around Portsmouth
- March 5-11: Skirmishes escalate between Great Bridge and Portsmouth. Losses on both sides.
- March 19: Marquis de Lafayette and Patriot forces arrive in Portsmouth. Skirmish at Scott's Creek.
- Mar 20: General Phillips and more British forces arrive in Portsmouth
- Apr 27: Actions at Osborne's Landing result in the destruction of Virginia's State Navy.
- May 20: General Cornwallis' British forces arrive in Virginia
- Jul 6: Battle of Green Springs (Chippokes Plantation) General Cornwallis, Tarleton, Lafayette, and Anthony Wayne.
- Jul (end): General Cornwallis and British forces depart Portsmouth for Yorktown where they surrender on Oct 19.

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BRITISH OPERATIONS IN PORTSMOUTH 1781

A LIVING HISTORY EVENT • MARCH 26-27, 2022

PROGRAM GUIDE





RED LION PARK

The American Patriot Militia, under the leadership of Virginia's Swamp Fox, Captain Amos Weeks (portrayed by Michael Cecere) will be on hand to describe American activities during this period. Meet Captain Weeks and learn all about his colorful life and how he became known as the Swamp Fox of Virginia.



Michael Cecere received an MA in history and an MA in political science from the University of Akron. An award-winning public school teacher in Virginia, he is the author of a number of books, including *The Invasion of Virginia, 1781* and *Peter Muhlenberg: A Continental Officer of the Virginia Line*.

SATURDAY, MARCH 26

9:00 a.m. Portsmouth Welcome Center

British troops assemble in formation for flag raising, the issue of orders, and the oath of loyalty. General Benedict Arnold addresses the troops. Troops march to the Old Courthouse. Civilians set up open markets along High Street.

10:00 a.m. Old Courthouse

Period Vignette: Press Gang. Sailors forcibly press a bystander into military service. Soldiers drill. Civilians continue to operate the markets.

11:00 a.m. Old Courthouse

Troops assemble for Tattoo March and Call to Arms. The march continues down High Street to Middle Street and over to Red Lion Square where Patriot forces await. Troops return the same way.

Noon Army Foraging Party (Lunch)

1:00 p.m. Old Courthouse

Two period vignette's feature the arrest, trial, and court martial of a Patriot spy. Civilian markets open.

2:00 p.m. Old Courthouse

Civilian is brought into camp with captured militia and reports of Lafayette's forces arriving in Portsmouth.

3:00 p.m. Old Courthouse

Period Vignette features a report of the Skirmish at Scott's Creek (March 19, 1781)

4:00 p.m. Old Courthouse

Military and civilians alike come together to hear General Benedict Arnold's speech.

SUNDAY, MARCH 27

10 a.m - 3 p.m. Same Locations

Flexible. Vignettes and activities depend on turnout.

