

# The American REVOLUTIONARY WAR IN THE WEST History Conference II



JUNTA DE GUERRA OF BERNARDO DE GÁLVEZ, JULY 13, 1779,  
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**SEPTEMBER 27–29, 2024 | ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI**

The St. Charles County Historical Society, the Saint Charles Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Fernando de Leyba Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution, and the España Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution will present a second American Revolutionary War in the West History Conference during September 27–29, 2024 at the Sheraton Westport Plaza Hotel, St. Louis County, Missouri. This conference will focus on the military, political, social and material culture history of the western theater of the American Revolutionary War, but will include a few other topics requested last year, featuring scholars from across the country and from Spain.

## FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2024

### 6–8 p.m. | Social Event at the Heritage Museum and Pre-Registration for those Attending

The Heritage Museum hosts the American Revolutionary War in the West Museum Exhibit. Sandwiches and light refreshments will be served. The museum is about 15 minutes from the hotel and transportation can be arranged for those without vehicles.



## SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2024

### 8–8:30 a.m. | Welcome and Registration

The East Ballroom of the Sheraton Westport Plaza Hotel.

### 8:30–9:15 a.m. | “To Arms!” Weapons of the American Revolutionary War

The men who fought the Revolutionary War, from professional British “Redcoats” to Native American irregulars, were most often armed for combat with common muskets. But there were other critical arms employed on the battlefield, including rifles, pistols, swords, and bayonets. Based on primary sources, this presentation will give an overview of the small arms employed in the fight for American independence. **Erik Goldstein** is the Senior Curator of Mechanical Arts, Metals, and Numismatics at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. He has written more than three dozen articles in his specialties, and six books relating to antique weaponry and military history. These include: *The Bayonet In New France 1665–1760* (1997), *The Socket Bayonet in the British*

*Army, 1687–1783* (2000), *18th Century Weapons of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers from Flixton Hall* (2002), *The Brown Bess: An Identification Guide and Illustrated Study of Britain's Most Famous Musket* (2010), *The Swords of George Washington* (2016), and *Don Troiani's Soldiers of the American Revolution* (co-author, 2017). Goldstein is also the curator of the current exhibit at Colonial Williamsburg, “To Arm Against an Enemy: Weapons of the Revolutionary War,” which opened in 2019.

### **9:15–10:00 a.m. | “We were surprised by the firing of small arms”: The Hamilton Expedition and its Capture by George Rogers Clark**

In an event celebrated in Midwestern History, George Rogers Clark attacked Fort Sackville at Vincennes, in present-day Indiana, on February 22nd/23rd, 1779. This presentation will follow the British expedition of Lt. Governor Henry Hamilton, particularly through the experiences of the British 8th or King's Regiment of Foot, which formed the core of his expedition. The presentation will conclude by contrasting the failure and capture of Hamilton's expedition with a generally successful record of the King's Regiment in other actions in the western Revolutionary War. **Alexander S. Burns** is an Assistant Professor of History at Franciscan University of Steubenville. His research focuses on the Atlantic World, the American Continental Army, and Military Europe. Burns received his PhD from West Virginia University in 2021. His dissertation focused on letter writing among common soldiers in the eighteenth-century British and Prussian armies. His first sole authored book, *Infantry in Battle, 1733–1783* (2024), shows how eighteenth-century common soldiers fought in surprisingly flexible ways. His next book project, *Firm Battalions and American Fire: The Continental Army and Military Europe*, explores European influence on the tactical practices of George Washington's Continental Army.

### **10:00–10:15 a.m. | Break**

### **10:15–11:00 a.m. | Benjamin Franklin, Francisco Saavedra de Sangronis and Spain's Grand Strategy in the American Revolutionary War**

This presentation will cover the important contributions of Francisco Saavedra de Sangronis to the Spanish war effort in the American Revolutionary War as well as Spanish grand strategy during the war. Coverage will also include all new research on the interaction of Benjamin Franklin with Spanish officials during the war and induction of Benjamin Franklin into Spain's Royal Academy of History. **Thomas E. Chávez** received his PhD from the University of New Mexico and for twenty-one years was director of the New Mexico State History Museum, The Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He later served as executive director of the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque. King Felipe VI of Spain bestowed upon him the Orden del Isabel la Católica level of “Encomienda” and he recently became the first New Mexican to be voted in as a “Corresponding” member of Spain's Real Academia de la Historia. Chávez is the author of twelve books, including *Spain and the Independence of the United States* and most recently, *The Diplomacy of Independence: Benjamin Franklin Documents in the Archives of Spain*.

### **11:00–11:45 a.m. | An Underappreciated Victory: Gálvez's Mississippi River Campaign of 1779**

Once Spain entered the American Revolutionary War, Spain rightfully feared an attack against New Orleans. Spanish Lt. Governor Bernardo de Gálvez brushed aside the recommendations of his *junta de guerra* to stay on the defensive, and decided on an offensive campaign against the British to conquer all the British posts along the lower Mississippi River. This presentation will examine the details of this campaign from a wide variety of primary sources, many of which are not considered in other studies. As a sidebar, the Distinguished Company of Carabineers of New Orleans formed by Gálvez and who participated in the campaign will be briefly covered. **Stephen L. Kling, Jr.** is an independent researcher focusing on the western theater of the American Revolutionary War. His books include *The Battle of St. Louis, the Attack on Cahokia, and The American Revolutionary War in the West* (co-author, 2017), *Cavalry in the Wilderness: Cavalry in the Western Theater of the American Revolutionary War and the French and Indian War* (2021), *James Colbert and His Chickasaw Legacy* (2022) and *The American Revolutionary War in the West* (editor and co-author, 2020, released 2022). Kling was also the primary historical consultant for the award-winning *House of Thunder* documentary on the Battle of St. Louis and the co-curator of the new American Revolutionary War in the West Museum Exhibit.

### **11:45–1:15 p.m. | Lunch**

### **1:15–2:00 p.m. | Courting Native American Favor in the Western Borderlands of the American Revolutionary War: Flags, Gorgets and Medals**

Following the French practice, the British and the Spanish attempted to curry favor with various Native American groups through trade and gift giving but also by ceremoniously awarding badges of allegiance in the form of medals and flags to those Native leaders they perceived to be major and minor chiefs, and gorgets to war captains in times of war. The medals and gorgets often depicted the reigning monarch or coat of arms of the European power. The perception of the significance of these gifts often varied between the European powers and the Natives receiving them. This presentation will discuss the diplomatic competition among imperial powers through the use of these items of material culture in the western theater of the American Revolutionary War. **Frances Kolb Turnbull** is an historian of colonial America with a specialty in the eighteenth-century Mississippi Valley. She received her PhD from Vanderbilt University and teaches at the University of North Alabama. She is the editor of the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*. Her book *Spanish Louisiana: Contest for Borderlands, 1763–1803* will be available through LSU Press in the fall of 2024.

### **2:00–2:45 p.m. | “To uphold the reputation of the Spanish troops”: Martial Culture and Self-Fashioning in Revolutionary San Luis**

A month after successfully repelling British forces during their attack on St. Louis in May of 1780, Fernando de Leyba drew his last breath. Born in the Spanish-held North African port of Ceuta, Leyba had previously served as commandant of the Arkansas Post and was appointed lieutenant governor of Spanish Upper Louisiana

in 1778. As required by law, an inventory of his property was drafted shortly after his death. In addition to a diverse assortment of serving wares, clothing, furniture, and other goods, a small earthenware jar of *polvos de peluquero* did not fail to catch the notary's attention. Translated literally to "wigmaker's powder," this probably imported, typically starch-based product was used to dress and style both natural hair and wigs in the 18th century. Drawing its cues from the French *toilette*, the lieutenant governor's Spanish colonial dressing table appears to have been well outfitted, with fourteen bars of soap, two shaving bowls, two beard cloths, and two black wig or hair bags of the sort often made from silk. Upending stereotypes of St. Louis as a frontier backwater devoid of refinement or creature comforts, Leyba's inventory will provide an entry point for a discussion of the interplay of martial culture and self-fashioning in a revolutionary borderland. **Philippe Halbert** is an art historian and the Richard Koopman Associate Curator of American Decorative Arts at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art. In 2022 he received a PhD in history from Yale University, where he studied the intersections of art, empire, and self-fashioning in the Atlantic world. Halbert's work centers on the art and material culture of the Americas broadly, from its Indigenous roots to interconnected phenomena of diaspora, colonization, and creolization. He is the author of many articles on material culture of Early America. His doctoral dissertation, "Letters of a Canadian Woman: Identity and Self-Fashioning in the Atlantic World of Madame Bégon (1696–1755)," proposed a thematic rereading of a French Canadian woman's trans-Atlantic correspondence spanning the period from 1748 to 1753.

### **2:45–3:00 p.m. | Break**

### **3:00–3:45 p.m. | Revolutionary Blacks: Discovering the Frank Brothers, Freeborn Men of Color, Soldiers of Independence**

This presentation will cover William and Benjamin Frank who joined the Second Rhode Island Regiment in the spring of 1777, following the tradition of military service established by their father, a veteran of the French and Indian War. The brothers became part of a cohort of free Black soldiers serving in an integrated Continental Army. Ben Frank deserted and ended up in British service. His brother William remained with his unit and served during the American victory at Yorktown. William Frank served until the end of the war. The Rhode Island Regiment was involved in a tragic and failed expedition to upstate New York after the Battle at Yorktown. **Shirley L. Green** received her PhD in history from Bowling Green State University after a twenty-six year career in law enforcement. She is an Adjunct Professor of history at the University of Toledo and Bowling Green State University. Green is currently the Director of the Toledo Police Museum in Toledo, Ohio. She is the author of a book of the same name as her presentation published in 2023.

### **3:45–4:30 p.m. | Stories about the Louisiana Territory and its Inhabitants through the Documents of the Archivo General de Indias.**

In 1785, King Carlos III ordered the creation of an archive of documents relating to Spanish colonies. The Archivo General de Indias now consists of approximately 43,000 files, containing over

80 million pages and 8,000 maps and drawings. This presentation will use stories gleaned from the archives to give a sense of the rich history stored there. Many of these stories relate to life around the Mississippi River in the late 18th century. European immigrants, Native Americans, Africans—all of them lived together in those vast territories, sometimes peacefully and sometimes not, but all contributing to the transformation of a new nation. The documents of the Archivo General de Indias help us to know their stories, which are hidden in letters, files, accounts, and more. **Antonio Sánchez de Mora** earned his doctorate in history in 2004 from the Universidad de Sevilla and has been the Head of Reference Service at the Archivo General de Indias, Seville since 2017. He began his research in Spanish Medieval History, and since 2010 he has devoted his research skills to archivism, cultural dissemination and recently to food history. Since 2005 he has been working with the documents from the Louisiana and Florida territories that are preserved in the Archivo General de Indias, organizing them and assisting researchers in their studies.

### **6:00–9:00 p.m. | Reception in the Plaza Ballroom**

Join our speakers at an opening reception in the Plaza Ballroom of the Sheraton Westport Plaza Hotel. Food and a cash bar will be provided. The reception will include a presentation by Peter J. Kastor, PhD: "**Revolution From Afar: The Fall of Empires in the American Heartland.**"

**Peter J. Kastor** is the Samuel K. Eddy Professor of History and American Cultures Studies and Associate Dean of Research at Washington University, St. Louis. He studies the politics of the early American republic and the long history of the American Presidency. Kastor received his PhD from the University of Virginia. He is the author or editor of eight books on the Founding Era, along with numerous articles and essays. He is currently completing a major digital project that reconstructs the early federal workforce. A regular guest on St. Louis Public Radio, Kastor has written for outlets including *The Washington Post*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Conversation*, and *Fortune*. Two of his courses have been featured on C-SPAN's Lectures in History. In addition to participating in Washington University's Brookings Executive Education, he has contributed to professional development programming for groups including the St. Louis Public Schools, the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, and the Air War College. An active contributor to numerous local organizations, he is currently vice chair of the board of trustees at the Missouri Historical Society.

## **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2024**

### **8:45 a.m. | Doors Open**

The East Ballroom of the Sheraton Westport Plaza Hotel.

### **9–9:45 a.m. | Reclaiming Women's Power in the American Revolution**

The American Revolution was a war for independence. Yet during this conflict, ordinary American women, in managing crises in their lives, claimed their dependence on husbands, on officials from local institutions, and on the state itself—all patriarchal

forces that governed their lives. This presentation explores the experiences of women who submitted thousands of petitions in the Revolutionary era, demanding remuneration, clemency, property rights, and even divorces, all using language that parroted presumptions of their legal, economic, and social subordination to men. This rhetoric belied the astute and purposeful strategy women employed in their petitions to patriarchal officials. Ultimately, women in the revolutionary era were able to advocate for themselves and express a relative degree of power not in spite of their dependent status, but because of it. **Jacqueline Beatty** is Assistant Professor of History at York College of Pennsylvania. She earned her PhD from George Mason University in 2016. Her book, *In Dependence: Women and the Patriarchal State in Revolutionary America*, was published with NYU Press in 2023.

### 9:45–10:30 a.m. | **Leyba & Clark: Spanish-American Collaboration in the Illinois Country during the American Revolutionary War**

The Spanish-American relationship in the north-western theater of the American Revolutionary War is epitomized in the Leyba-Clark connection. An unlikely duo – the one a Spanish career army officer, family man, middle-aged and reportedly unapproachable; the other a young, charismatic fighting Virginian turned military leader – coincided on the frontier of the North American conflict where they served as a bridge between the Spanish government in New Orleans and the newly-formed American government. This presentation centers on the Leyba-Clark relationship, both personal and professional and Spanish-American collaborations in the Illinois country during the war. **Kristine L. Sjostrom** is an independent researcher from Seville, Spain. Her books include *The Battle of St. Louis, the Attack on Cahokia, and the American Revolution in the West* (co-author, 2017); *The Militiamen of St. Louis & Ste. Genevieve 1779–1783* (co-author, 2020); *The American Revolutionary War in the West* (co-author, 2020, released 2022); and *Fernando de Leyba (1734–1780): A Life of Service and Sacrifice in Spanish Louisiana* (2022). She is also the past historian for the España chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and was a consultant for the *House of Thunder* documentary on the Battle of St. Louis.

### 10:30–10:45 a.m. | **Break**

### 10:45–11:30 a.m. | **To Amuse Clark at the Falls of the Ohio**

In the spring of 1780, British authorities and their Native allies launched a powerful offensive against American settlers living in the Ohio Valley. As planned, the expedition was to attack Fort Nelson near present-day Louisville and then move down the Ohio River to the Mississippi where it would join other British forces and lay siege to St. Louis. But Native anxiety that their extended

absence from Ohio would leave their villages undefended and vulnerable to attack caused the mission to change its objective and to attack instead Ruddle's, Martin's, and Grant's Stations in northern Kentucky. Nelson's presentation will examine the expedition's planning and execution, and the role that Native peoples played in defining objectives and tactics in their alliance with the British military. **Larry L. Nelson** holds a PhD in American history from Bowling Green State University. He worked for the Ohio Historical Society (now the Ohio History Connection) for nearly twenty-five years as the site director at Fort Meigs State Memorial. While with the OHS, he participated in numerous archaeological investigations of military sites, including Fort Laurens (1778–1779) and Crawford's Defeat (1782). Following his retirement, he joined the history faculty at BGSU as an assistant professor. Nelson also contributed to or appeared on many PBS and History Channel productions including the Emmy-nominated History Channel presentation *First Invasion – The War of 1812*. His books include *A Man of Distinction among Them: Alexander McKee and the Ohio Frontier* (1999), *A History of Jonathan Alder: His Captivity and Life with the Indians* (2002), and *The Sixty Years' War for the Great Lakes, 1754–1814* (coauthor, 2010). His most recent book, *To Your Posts! A Documentary History of Fort Meigs* has just been published by the Michigan State University Press.

### 11:30 a.m.–12:15 p.m. | **The Vast Deserts of America: The Quixotic Life and Death of Augustin Mottin de la Balme**

De la Balme was a French cavalry officer with military service during the Seven Years' War, authorship of two treatises on cavalry, and an aggressive ambition for adventure and recognition. Like many of his fellow officers, he found service with a volunteer unit in the American War of Independence, although he was one of only a few with a personal recommendation from Benjamin Franklin. He quickly achieved the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Continental Army and became its inspector of cavalry, but he soon resigned when Casimir Pulaski was given the latter role. He moved west and collected enough men to launch an attack on Fort Detroit, which ultimately resulted in his death in combat in 1780. De la Balme's life and death offer an example of the many ways the French participated in the American War of Independence, particularly outside of the more well-known operations and campaigns. **Jonathan Abel** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Military History at the US Army Command and General Staff College. He earned his PhD in History from the Military History Center at the University of North Texas in 2014. Abel is the author of several works on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French army, including *Guibert: Father of Napoleon's Grande Armée* (2016) and *Guibert's General Essay on Tactics* (2021). He also hosts the podcasts *A Confused Heap of Facts and Broad-Gauge Gossips* at CGSC.

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